

As UN marks International Day of Peace, Ban makes appeal for disarmament



Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon rings the Peace Bell in observance of International Day of Peace

18 September 2009 – Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today called on nations to intensify efforts to reduce stockpiles of weapons capable of inflicting large-scale devastation and death, as the United Nations held a series of events worldwide to observe the annual International Day of Peace.

“As long as such weapons exist, no one is safe,” **said** Mr. Ban after ringing the UN Peace Bell in a ceremony at UN Headquarters. “On this **International Day of Peace**, I have a simple message for all: We Must Disarm! We must have peace.”

The Secretary-General’s 100-day campaign on weapons of mass destruction – “WMD-We Must Disarm” – culminates on 21 September to coincide with the International Day of Peace, which is being marked today by the UN because Monday is a public holiday in much of the world.

During the campaign Mr. Ban, UN Messenger of Peace Michael Douglas and the United States actor Rainn Wilson raised awareness of the dangers and costs of nuclear weapons by issuing a reason a day explaining the importance of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation on social networking websites and tools such as Twitter, Facebook and MySpace.

“Most of the victims of conflict are powerless, innocent civilians, fathers, mothers, [and] children,” said Mr. Ban at the Peace Bell ceremony, adding that without peace “they have little hope of improving their lives. Little hope of escaping poverty.”

Later in the morning, Mr. Ban **underscored** his message at a gathering of over 1,000 students and teachers at UN Headquarters, noting that he sent messages on Twitter to involve the whole world in the campaign to eliminate weapons of mass destruction.

“Not just political leaders but citizens everywhere – including students like you. You are the future leaders and owners of this planet earth,” he said.

Mr. Ban read some of his own reasons for disarming that he tweeted, including: "Because the world is over-armed and peace is under-funded... Because disarmament contributes to development... And because nukes threaten humankind. Let's get rid of them 4 good."

Next week's Security Council summit on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation – to be chaired by US President Barack Obama – and a 2010 review conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty are signs for cautious optimism, he said.

The International Day of Peace was first established by the General Assembly in 1981 as an opportunity for people around the world to promote the resolution of conflict and to observe a cessation of hostilities.

Other UN events being held today include a commemoration with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and Permanent Missions at the UN Office in Geneva (**UNOG**), where a round-table discussion on nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and peace will take place.

Twenty-one white doves were released into the sky at the Kabul headquarters of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (**UNAMA**) on Wednesday. In Egypt, a signing ceremony in support of the WMD-We Must Disarm was also organized by the UN Information Centre (UNIC) in Cairo in partnership with the Human Rights Department of the Arab League and the Youth Arab Council for Development.

The International Criminal Court (**ICC**) in The Hague will open its doors to the public on Sunday in a bid to raise awareness of its work and the link between justice and peace. The ICC is one of string of international organizations in the city allowing the public entry, including the Peace Palace, the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (**ICTY**), the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (**OPCW**), and the European Patent Office (EPO).

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