

Statement

by

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Agenda Item 42: Global Agenda for Dialogue among

Civilizations and Agenda Item 43: Culture of Peace

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Mr. President,

Let me begin by thanking the Secretary General for the reports on Promotion of Inter-religious Dialogue (A/60/201) and on Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations (A/60/259), I wish to also thank the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization for providing us with the extensive report on the midterm global review of the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World, 2001-2010 (A/60/279) and for having undertaken numerous initiatives over these years in the promotion of the Decade and of the Global Agenda. The Manifesto 2000 which had been signed by over 75 million people worldwide is a truly commendable initiative and should be continued. Each and every one of us should serve as a messenger of peace and a goodwill Ambassador. And for this reason, my delegation wishes to express our appreciation to the civil society for engaging so actively in promoting the Decade and the Global Agenda. **My delegation welcomes the report on the contributions by almost 700 civil society organizations from over 100 countries as appeared in the annex of the UNESCO's report. We do recognize that Governments and the civil society, including non-governmental organizations and the private sector need to continue working closely together to maintain the momentum of the Decade until its completion in 2010 and, I would believe, beyond.**

Mr. President,

Thailand is supportive of many international initiatives in support of the Culture of Peace and the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations. We are part of the Alliance of Civilizations initiated by Spain and Turkey as announced on 14 July this year. Thailand is also part of the Interfaith Dialogue initiated by the Philippines which held its Summit at the side of the General Assembly in September. We are traditional cosponsors to the

relevant resolutions under these agenda items. And we will continue to support all initiatives and efforts towards these ends. Given the prevailing state of violence in the world, we do need more of these initiatives and we need to spread these messages of peace and understanding as far as we can. We need to put these words of goodwill into practice and we need to make peace an integral part of our living. Each individual each family, each community must serve as a building block for a global peace.

Peace, Mr. President, is not an ultimate, idealistic end. Peace is a process. Peace is not merely a state of absence of violence, but peace is about human security; it is about freedom to live free from want and fear and to live in dignity. We need to create not only a culture of peace but an enabling environment for peace. If we live in absence of violence but with an empty stomach, that will eventually lead to conflicts. If we live with absence of violence today but with mistrust for one another, that will lead to conflicts tomorrow. Peace is not a state frozen in time. We need to continually cultivate and foster it.

Mr. President,

Today, can we really say to ourselves that any country is truly living in peace? The world has become so interdependent and as members of the global family we are all vulnerable to violence and conflicts. On a global scale, we are living in daily risks of terrorist attacks. On a smaller scale, we are living in communities prone to conflicts.

What factors contribute to depriving us of peace? Let me cite just three main factors: anger, greed, and wrong thinking.

Anger is the most obvious factor for and manifestation of violence and conflicts. On the ideological side, to overcome anger, we need love, compassion, and understanding. We need to think of others as one of our kin and we need forgiveness. Did history not teach us that violence will only breed more violence? We need to realize that we are all in this together. No one, no society, no country will be safe if others are living in abject poverty and conflicts. No arms, no weapons will ever suffice to overcome human anger. To create a culture of peace, we need education that enhances understanding and fosters respect for diversity and differences. We also need to analyze factors that breed anger in many societies, such as marginalization, a sense of powerlessness, and a perception that their local traditions and identities are being attacked by the globalization processes, so that we can effectively address them at an early stage.

Mr. President,

Greed is another factor that undermines peace. Greed presents itself in the form of competition for and exploitation of wealth and resources. This has led to conflicts everywhere in the world. Injustice is a fertile ground for breeding violence. In Africa, competition for natural resources is one of the main factors for conflicts which have been plaguing the Continent. Unjust economic competition and business rivals in all of their sophisticated forms can also be breeding ground for mistrust and conflicts among nations.

Also when we talk about greed and exploitation, my delegation would like to highlight one fact that we must not live in peace only with one another, but also with nature and the environment. To ensure sustainable peace, we must respect the environment. If we live without sufficiently caring for our environment, we will find ourselves in a very perilous

situation one day. Today the world begins to show all these weary signs, with the increasing incidence of natural disasters and the consequent tragic loss of lives. With the Indian Ocean tsunami, with Hurricane Ivan and Emily, with Hurricane Katrina, with mudslide in Guatemala, with the earthquake in Pakistan and India, even if we can live without any conflict with our neighbours, we still find ourselves vulnerable to natural risks. We need to recognize the butterfly effect that what we do in our very own home will also affect our brothers in another distant corner of the world. To cultivate a culture of peace then is not only to do away with conflicts, anger, and hatred, but to also stress the need to lessen, if not to rid off, our greed, and to instill a sense of responsibility for us all to respect and protect Mother Nature.

Mr. President,

One last factor that seriously threatens peace everywhere is wrong thinking. We should begin by having the right thinking that, despite differences and diversity, we can all live together in peace and harmony. We have to learn to make room for compromise. We might say we do not choose to live with people in another country whose religion is so far different from ours, whose skin is of another colour, and whose thinking we do not share. But do we really have any choice? Like it or not, we are bound together by humanity. We are all in this boat together and we must recognize this fact and try to do our best to live together in peace and harmony.

Of course, we need tools to assist us in realizing this fact. Governments must ensure that education at all levels, both formal and informal, will lend itself to creating understanding, tolerance, and respect for diversity. History should be written to record facts and to give useful lessons so as not to repeat itself. We must make conscientious efforts to do away with wrong perception, misunderstanding and ignorance. Children and youth from different cultures should be encouraged to meet and exchange views and experiences. Bringing together children and youth from countries engaging in armed conflicts, enabling them to understand one another's world is a step forward in creating peace in the long run. Teaching children about the cost of violence and conflicts can also be an investment in peace. The use of media can be of tremendous value in cultivating a culture of peace and dialogue among civilizations. The media must be responsible and uphold ethical standards in reporting. Communication and advertisement industry must not think only of profits but also of social impacts. Incitement of hatred and stereotyping must be done away with altogether. Even the use of video games with simulation of violence scenes among children should be thought twice. Indeed, we should not take violence for granted. Parents should be responsible not only to their children but for the society. Governments must work with parents to provide an environment for children to grow up into responsible citizens. Education, work and living must be for the sole purpose of peace.

Mr. President,

At the September Summit, our leaders recognized the linkages between development, peace and security, and human rights. This is not simply a political message to remain on a high ground. It is a working philosophy that needs to be put into practice. In our future initiatives and activities to promote the culture of peace and the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations, we need to reflect on this critical linkage between development, peace and security and human rights. Peace will need to be cultivated in a holistic manner, both in ideology and in real practice, both in the mind and on the ground.

In this regard, my delegation supports the various recommendations of the UNESCO in document A/60/279, among others:

- to develop coordination mechanisms at the international, regional, and national levels to strengthen cooperation between all relevant actors: the United Nations system, Member States, civil society organizations and non- governmental organizations;
- to reinforce more explicitly the links with other international decades or years, such as the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2010) and the Millennium Development Goals;
- to develop communication and information tools that will perpetuate the global momentum for the Culture of Peace Decade as well as for the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations; and
- to encourage the mass media at the international and national levels to support the culture of peace and dialogue among civilizations.

Mr. President,

Peace is a process. Peace is multi-dimensional and must be cultivated and fostered in a comprehensive manner. Each and every one of us can be a messenger of peace. My delegation hopes to look back in five years' time, upon the completion of the Decade in 2010, that our world will be safer from violence and conflicts, from terrorist attacks and natural disasters, as well as from other threats. We do not have to look elsewhere, but to ourselves. Be kind to our neighbours and be responsible to Mother Nature. A culture of peace will not start from elsewhere but from ourselves.