



“Civic Society Voice on the International Day of Peace Commemorations”

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All protocols observed

It is great an honour to be part of this momentous event, the Commemorations of the International Day of Peace (IDP) 2021 .

Allow me to start by thanking the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission for facilitating this key discourse and platform that plays a pivotal role in shaping the narrative around peace, conflict prevention, management, resolution and transformation. Indeed, the mandate of the Commission is at the epicentre of shaping the direction and extent of peace agenda in our country.

My sincere thanks also go to Government for demonstrating its commitment to really work around the issues of addressing the effects of violent conflict by putting in place institutions that are mandated with that responsibility and allocating resources to support that agenda.

I'm so delighted and grateful that though we are still within the period of COVID-19 which has impacted and reformed in a huge way, the way we programme our actions today, we still have a platform to convene and have deliberations on the ideals of peace and tranquillity. This dialogue is very crucial as it has a dual responsibility of contributing towards conflict prevention and at the same time resolving some of the grievances that the communities, public and the aggrieved may be having.

It has to be known that, a peaceful environment is fundamental to the achievement of inclusive and sustained economic development that will ensure that there is poverty alleviation, reduction of inequalities, promotion and protection of human rights including the rights of the environment.

Societies that are peaceful are positioned for stellar economic and social development.

This year's International Day of Peace commemorations are running under the theme “Building Back Better in the aftermath of Covid-19: Pathways for Peace” As the nation and the globe at large recognise the implications of COVID-19 in exacerbating conflict and violence across the communities due to various reasons chief amongst them being loss of livelihoods, increased inequalities, rampant and wanton abuses and further marginalisation.

COVID-19 has further compounded and exposed the glaring susceptibilities of a greater number of citizens to issues of conflict and violence. The pandemic has come with a surge in human rights abuses, stigmatisation, discrimination, and animosity, which further escalate the existing challenges of conflict and violence. Thus, our responses to the scourge of the pandemic further educated us that there is need to mainstream and cultivate the ideals of peace in the response mechanisms. This is key to ensuring a more just, inclusive and peaceful nation.

We are reminded ladies and gentlemen, that conflicts can be solved in a sustainable way if we are able to address sources and drivers, which to a greater extent are related to unfairness, injustice, poverty and inequality, disempowerment and disrespect amongst others.

We saw that women, youths and children have been further exposed to more dreadful abuses perpetrated on them. This then saw a fractured society that needs more healing than ever before. It is against this background that we note that the theme of this year's International Day of Peace is very appropriate in guiding our key interventions to resolve the simmering and evident forms of conflicts within our societies today.

Conflict resolution and management cannot be ignored, but should be addressed and worked on, the more it is delayed the more it gets concentrated. As such timely resolution is better for a stitch in time saves nine.

As we continue to live with the COVID-19 pandemic, we are inspired to adopt ways of collectively working together to help everyone and in particular the marginalised to recover better and build resilience, this is pivotal in transforming our country into a more equal, just, equitable, inclusive, sustainable, and healthier state.

As I have already alluded to, this starts with prioritising peace more, and taking a more proactive and responsible role in spreading peace and protecting peace when it is threatened, in our own lives and the country at large.

The observance of the International Day of Peace provides a valuable opportunity for us to assess our progress in the peace agenda, and to resolve and commit to do more together, for issues of peace are everyone's responsibility.

The UN General Assembly has declared this as a day devoted to strengthening the ideals of peace, through observing 24 hours of non-violence and cease-fire.

International Day Peace, continue to demonstrate that in the current context peace is still a fragile dove, thus our precious dove still needs much more protection. I recognise, that in other jurisdictions today they fly the peace doves. This is symbolic to new beginnings, love and peace. Thus, releasing peace doves uplifts our hopes for true celebrations of a peaceful country. As we may not have the opportunity to fly doves today, we however are expectant to receive the peace, love and dawn of new beginning in our work places, communities, and country at large. This is key for a better nation we all cherish and love and will bequeath to the future generation a nation known for peace and tranquility.

As Civil Society we join the efforts of the Government, National Peace and Reconciliation Commission, United Nations family amongst other stakeholders as we focus on recovering better for a more equitable and peaceful country. We celebrate and advance peace, further demonstrating our commitment to be partners and players in ensuring a peaceful and prosperous Zimbabwe. We castigate all forms of abuse, violence and hate speech online and offline, and by spreading compassion, kindness, and hope in the face of the pandemic.

As we draw closer to the 2023 harmonised elections, we hope that we will work together to ensure that these plebiscites are undertaken in a violent free environment. This has to start from now so that we may not be taken aback by possible eruptions of violence linked to the elections.

There is need to invest more through the fiscal policies to support the ideals of peace, our NPRC should be adequately funded to support their actions towards peace. Peace is a key enabler for sustainable development. Thus, without peace we will not be able to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, Vision 2030 and also the implementation of the National Development Strategy I will be compromised.

For the country to build back better there is need to bring on board all stakeholders who play a pivotal role in ensuring that there is peace in the nation. As such community engagement targeting the hard-to-reach areas, women, youths, persons with disabilities are crucial.

With such diversity and wealth of knowledge and experience on peace issues in attendance today in this International Day of Peace Commemorations, we are well placed as a nation to raise the bar in our peace endeavours, and to contribute towards better ways to achieve deeper and sustainable peace. Our previous lessons and experiences are key in informing our future interventions.

As CSOs we remain committed to contribute towards a peaceful Zimbabwe.

And, I personally believe, that a better Zimbabwe is possible. If we all, as the public infuse interactions with the values of peace, fairness and human dignity we will surely conquer. Our dream is for this generation, is to bequeath a peaceful Zimbabwe to the next generation and be accounted for as the generation that left an indelible mark of peace that will not be erased. We have all what it takes as a nation to play that role, yes through the NPRC.

I wish you all a very meaningful and inspiring International Day of Peace Commemorations!

Happy International Day of Peace 2021.