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# Report of the International Day of Peace 2013: The Visit to Kigali Health Institute - KHI

Jean-Bosco Habyarimana  
jhabyarimana@nur.ac.rw

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## International Day of Peace (The Visit to Kigali Health Institute, KHI)

*By Jean-Bosco Habyarimana*

### Introduction

Every year on Sept 21, the world celebrates the International Day of Peace. The Center for Conflict Management (CCM) of the National University of Rwanda (NUR) with the support from the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) conducts public talks related to this day of peace in various schools and institutions of higher learning.

On Nov 23, 2012, CCM conducted a public talk in the framework of the International Day of Peace. This public talk was conducted at Kigali Health Institute (KHI) under the annual theme given by the United Nations “Sustainable Peace for Sustainable Future.” The present is a report of the talk conducted by Mr. Jean-Bosco Habyarimana, Researcher at the Center for Conflict Management.

### The History of the International Day of Peace

International Day of Peace, also known as “Peace Day”, takes place on an annual basis on the 21<sup>st</sup> September. It is devoted to commemorating and strengthening the ideals of peace, by sharing practical acts of peace<sup>1</sup>.

It was established by the [United Nations](#)’ resolution 36/67 in 1981, and sponsored by the United Kingdom and Costa Rica. Originally, it was celebrated on the third Tuesday of September, as it coincided with the opening of the regular session of the General Assembly. However, in 2002 the General Assembly officially declared September 21 as the permanent date for the International Day of Peace. It also then became an official day of global ceasefire and non-

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<sup>1</sup> [United Nations General Assembly, Resolution 6, session 36 International Year of Peace and International Day of Peace](#), 30th November 1981, page 1

violence<sup>2</sup>. In 2007, Secretary General Ban-Ki-Moon asked for a minute of silence to be observed around the world<sup>3</sup>.

By creating the International Day of Peace, the UN devoted itself to worldwide peace and encouraged all of mankind to work in cooperation for this goal. During the discussion of the U.N. Resolution that established the International Day of Peace, it was suggested that:

“Peace Day should be devoted to commemorating and strengthening the ideals of peace both within and among all nations and peoples...This day will serve as a reminder to all peoples that our organization, with all its limitations, is a living instrument in the service of peace and should serve all of us here within the organization as a constantly pealing bell reminding us that our permanent commitment, above all interests or differences of any kind, is to peace<sup>4</sup>.”

Peace Day has gradually grown to include millions of people in all parts of the world, and each year events are organized to commemorate and celebrate this day. Events range in scale from private gatherings to public concerts and forums where hundreds of thousands of people participate.

### **The United Nations’ Theme for 2012: “Sustainable Peace for a Sustainable Future.”**

It is in the context of the Rio+20 Conference that took place in June 2012 that “Sustainable Peace for a Sustainable Future” is the theme chosen for this year's observance of the International day of Peace.

There can be no sustainable future without a sustainable peace. Sustainable peace must be built on sustainable development.

The root causes of many conflicts are directly related to or fuelled by valuable natural resources, such as diamonds, gold, oil, timber or water. Addressing the ownership, control and management

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<sup>2</sup> [United Nations General Assembly, Verbatim Report, meeting 111 session 55](#) page 2, [Sir Jeremy Greenstock United Kingdom](#) on 7 September 2001 (retrieved 2008-08-23)

<sup>3</sup> ["International Day of Peace 2007"](#). Retrieved 2008-01-06

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.needcsi.org/2012/06/2012-united-nations-international-day-of-peace/>

of natural resources is crucial to maintaining security and restoring the economy in post-conflict countries. Good natural resource management can play a central role in building sustainable peace in post-conflict societies.

The International Day of Peace offers people globally a shared date to think about how, individually, they can contribute to ensuring that natural resources are managed in a sustainable manner, thus reducing potential for disputes, and paving the road to a sustainable future, the **"Future We Want"**.

In his speech on June 13<sup>th</sup> 2012<sup>5</sup> Secretary General Ban-Ki-Moon, argued that the International Day of Peace, marked every year on 21 September, gives us all a chance to reflect on the unconscionable toll — moral, physical, material — wrought by war. Those costs are borne not only by us today, but by future generations as well.

That is why this year's theme is "Sustainable Peace for a Sustainable Future." It highlights the fact that we cannot possibly think about building a sustainable future if there is no sustainable peace. Armed conflicts attack the very pillars of sustainable development, robbing people of the opportunity to develop, to create jobs, to safeguard the environment, to fight poverty, to reduce the risk from disasters, to advance social equity and to ensure that everyone has enough to eat.

One week from today, as the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development opens in Rio de Janeiro, the world will have an opportunity to fight back. With tens of thousands of politicians, policy-makers, social activists, business leaders and others mobilized for action, Rio+20 can help us to create a global roadmap for a sustainable future, the future we want.

We want a future where natural resources are protected and valued rather than used to finance wars, where children can be educated at school and not recruited into armies, where economic and social inequalities are resolved through dialogue instead of violence.

If we are to build such a future, we must all play our individual part. I urge everyone, between now and 21 September, to think about how they can contribute.

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.needcsi.org/2012/06/2012-united-nations-international-day-of-peace/>

Let us work together to ensure that the Road from Rio leads us to sustainable development, sustainable peace... and a secure future for all.”

### **Celebrating the International Day of Peace at KHI**

At the Kigali Health Institute, around 60 staff and students gathered in the main hall of the institute. This came after several contacts between CCM and KHI, regarding the organization of this event. In the main hall, KHI was officially represented by the Deputy Academic Registrar, Mr. Jean de Dieu Samvura, who welcomed all participants introducing them to the topic of sustainable peace as a pre-requisite for all activities of development. He also called upon all participants to carefully follow the presentation that was going to be done in relation to the International Day of Peace. He then introduced and invited the guest speaker, Mr. Jean-Bosco Habyarimana, from the Center for Conflict Management of the National University of Rwanda.

The talk started with a short introduction of the International Day of Peace. The speaker reminded participants that this day had been established by the international community of which Rwanda is a member, as a day when all peoples of the world should reflect on the concept of peace, and its meaning in human daily living. Relating it to the reasons for the gathering, Jean-Bosco introduced participants to the relationship between development, conflict and peace. He built from various resolutions including Rio+20 to show the linkage between sustainable peace and sustainable development or future. After analysing the human society in various aspects, participants agreed with the idea that the world needs the future where natural resources are protected and valued rather than used to finance wars; the future where children can be educated at school and not recruited into armies, where economic and social inequalities are resolved through dialogue instead of violence.

It is within this context that the discussion looked at violent conflicts, as the main challenge to sustainable peace, therefore to sustainable future as well. Participants got introduced to the “conflict equation”, discussing how unmet needs grow into grievances that lead to the existence of unsatisfied individuals who gather into key actors. Once unhappy individuals manage to organize into active actors; they exploit existing windows of vulnerability or structural, political, economic ... weaknesses, which finally result into unavoidable violent conflicts.

Then, such violent conflicts attack the very pillars of sustainable development robbing people of the opportunity to develop, to create jobs, to safeguard the environment, to fight poverty, to reduce the risk from disasters, to advance social equity, and to ensure that everyone has enough to eat.

The presentation and discussion went on to question the individual responsibility in creating the needed peaceful environment that would ensure the possibility for sustainable future. Here, participants agreed that education had a big role to play in order to provide the world with people capable to make necessary transformation for sustainable future. Therefore, discussing principles of peace education in relation to the culture of peace, participants gave the following reflections relating the presentation to future generations and health studies, participants gave the following reflections:

- Young people go through various influences from people of elder ages. However, the youth must be able to meet and discuss matters related to the future. In this country, older generations have failed, which resulted into genocide. Young people should be able to define their own model of life, other than the one that led to the 1994 genocide against Tutsi. This should be the difference between educated people and uneducated ones.
- Research in peace, conflict and development studies should be focused on community problems. Research findings should be availed to inform policy makers, especially policies related to education. If today the main problem is about employment, educators and researchers should be able to expose learners to self-employment experiences in order to ensure that education and research tackles existing problems in the community.

## Conclusion

It is in the mission of CCM to disseminate its research findings through what is known as Community Outreach programs to ensure that research is used to benefit the communities for and with which it is carried out. The International Day of Peace as a framework is a good opportunity that the center should always use to show that peace is a key to the future we all need, especially in this post-genocide period.

