

SUSTAINABLE PEACE FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

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IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE COMMEMORATION OF THE
INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PEACE 2012 AND CHINA
SOUTHEAST ASIA PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT FORUM
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Mr. Ma Wenpu
The CPAPD Executive Vice-President and Vice-Chairman of
Foreign Affairs Committee
National People's Congress

Madam Renata Lok-Dessalien
Coordinator
Office of the United Nations, China

Honoured guests from Southeast Asian Countries

Leaders of Guangdong Province

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my pleasure and honour to attend and to be given this privilege to speak at this auspicious event in conjunction with the commemoration of the International Day of Peace 2012 and China Southeast Asia Peace and Development Forum

I wish to take this opportunity to applaud the Chinese People's Association for Peace and Disarmament (CPAPD) for taking the initiative and effort to organize this event today, 21 September 2012, to commemorate the Day as a mark of respect for a cessation of hostilities.

It is indeed a commendable and laudable effort on the part of CPAPD to help educate and enhance public awareness about the imperative importance of sustaining peace for a sustainable future.

Taking note of the happenings around the world today, sustainable peace will be the most important legacy that we must not only uphold, but defend and advocate for the sake of our children before we depart from this world.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The International Day of Peace is a significant peace activity proclaimed and adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1981 to “strengthen the ideals of peace, both within and among all nations and people.”

This year’s theme, *Sustainable Peace for a Sustainable Future*, is a revelation of our vision for the future and the impetus for nations around the world to ensure peace and harmony for human continuity.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The United Nations should not be left alone to shoulder the burden of this heavy responsibility of ensuring sustainable peace to the world. The United Nations is not a world government. It is only an initiative in preventive diplomacy. It is an intergovernmental organization of sovereign states that works by seeking common ground among us to cooperate for the benefits of our long term self interests.

The sovereign states that joined this organization to “save succeeding generations from the scourge of wars” agreed, as an obligation of our membership, to resolve our disputes peacefully.

Article 33 of the UN Charter offered a menu of choices for resolving disputes before they turned into violence. The article stated that “the parties to any dispute, the continuance of which is likely to endanger the maintenance of international peace and security, shall, first of all, seek a solution by negotiation, enquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlement, resort to regional agencies or arrangements, or other peaceful means of their own choice.”

The preamble to the UN Charter stated:

“We the people of the United Nations determined.... to reaffirm our faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small, and to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained, and to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom.”

The UN Charter’s prescription goes beyond the peaceful settlement of disputes to the wider issues that create the conditions for sustainable peace – and includes social and economic justice, human rights, and respect for the rule of law.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The most secure nations are those that are able to provide the greatest human security to their populations. Sustainable peace, unfortunately, is still elusive in spite of a number of positive measures taken in this direction.

It is disheartening to note that the conflict regulation mechanisms set out in the UN Charter are never fully realized. Threats to global peace and security continue to sabotage its promise. In spite of the obligation that the UN Charter imposed on member states to settle their disputes peacefully, they often fail to do so.

Many countries around the world continue to fall prey to civil war and social disintegration. Armed conflict continues to wreak havoc, both for the many who suffered directly from its devastation, and for those who suffered indirectly from the diversion of resources away from the more pressing human needs.

The ideological power struggle and the race to accumulate the largest arsenal of nuclear and conventional weapons have a profound effect on all regions of the world. Power struggles to gain political, economic, and cultural rights often ensue and range from non violent protest to intractable civil war.

Many of these contemporary conflicts are the result of the current manifestation of a cycle of historical grievance. Contemporary circumstances are what most likely to trigger conflict.

Studies on conflict have indicated that conflicts most often occur when basic human needs, such as the need for physical security and well-being; communal or cultural recognition, participation, and control; and distributive justice are repeatedly denied, threatened, or frustrated, especially over long periods of time. Another relevant factor is a nation's political and military relationships.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Problems are ameliorated when governments listen to grievances and act to address them. How governments respond to grievances is conditioned by how they perceive their own interests.

Governments may be especially fearful of losing, through secessionists movements, regions with particular economic or military value. Governments also tend to have fear of disloyalty among minority groups which affect government responses to communal demands.

In order to control the mobilization of discontented groups, governments sometimes adopt heavy-handed military or police actions against members of these discontented groups, often under the auspices of special legislation, such as martial law or a state of emergency.

Governments also sometimes try to deal with group grievances by simply denying that a problem exists. Ignoring grievances, however, does not make them go away.

Unfortunately, governments often draw the wrong conclusions, leading to the same errors being repeated over and over again. Governments that choose this path will not resolve their problems successfully and effectively.

Success is sometimes claimed for severe repression, but record has shown that gains from repression are usually short lived. Although it may temporarily quash the expression of demands, it typically adds to the intensity of out-group grievance and hostility. This may eventually lead to other forms of violence, such as terrorism or resurgence of an even more intense protest at some later time.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Sustainable peace will continue to provide a comprehensive agenda for the international community in the decades ahead.

One of the most vexing questions that continually hounds us is how do we sustain peace in a critically divided world under turbulent conditions? Another unsettling question is the viable reconstruction and revival of societies torn by armed conflict.

The violent collapse of countries has consequences far beyond their borders and is in turn fed by trans-boundary influences. There is a rising need to provide the modicum of political and economic stability to initiate the transition to sustainable peace.

The new strategic environment offers a fresh opportunity for us to re-examine how to attain sustainable peace. To achieve sustainable peace, a clear vision of our goals and how to proceed is required. This vision has to be complemented with a determined and focused effort for it to be successful.

It is crucial to note that too little attention has been devoted to resolving the real issues and grievances that are behind such conflicts. A greater degree of understanding of the causes of conflict is important to attain sustainable peace.

Understanding the root causes of conflict should therefore be the first point of departure. It will help us to establish effective preventive diplomacy to keep disputes from turning into violent conflict and launch a long term approach to tackle the structural causes of conflict.

Both short term problem solving and long term structural approaches to conflict prevention are essential. For peace to be sustained, it will need to be supported by a long term approach that will address the structural causes of conflict and promote the kinds of distributive and procedural justice that are able to ensure that violent conflict less likely to arise.

Conflict prevention is best not only in avoiding undesirable circumstances, but also in creating preferred alternatives. We will be most successful in preventing deadly conflict by focusing on ways to avert direct confrontation through the aggressive promotion of democracy, economic development and protection of human rights.

We are therefore challenged to design conflict preventive arrangements that can meet the tests of representativeness, democratic accountability, effective governance, and political stability. We need to craft the preferred remedy for building peace that can both initiate the transition from intense conflict in such diverse settings across countries in Europe, Middle East, Asia, Africa and Americas, to peace in the short term that will subsequently facilitate the consolidation of these over the longer run.

A problem-solving approach will have to replace positional bargaining. Peacekeeping has thus become the major area of innovation and the primary instrumentality for containing conflicts.

Good governance must be instituted at all levels of society – local, national, regional, and international – that safeguard and promote civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights.

We need to create a set of mutually reinforcing, self-correcting dispute settlement systems, through the development of interlocking good governance systems that will operate effectively to prevent and resolve dispute in a constructive manner.

To bridge and reconcile these differing worldviews, a better understanding of the problems and a more effective methodology are thus required, that is, a more integrative agenda comprising of conflict resolution and international peacemaking.

An effective preventive diplomacy will be able to keep disputes from turning into violent conflict. And the pairing of good governance and conflict prevention offers the best path to sustainable peace.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The United Nations has made substantial inroads in establishing a set of rules for the interaction between governments and those they govern. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the many declarations and conventions that followed their wake specified in great detail exactly how “human security” should be provided by governments and provided a recipe for conflict prevention and good governance.

The development of treaties and conventions expand to all aspects of interstate relations. Even though these standards are not universally applied and many instances of gross human rights violations remained, significant progress has been made in a number of countries.

With multiple forums on peace such as today evolving – internationally, regionally, and bilaterally – governments have the platform to exchange perspectives, explore ideas, and come to a consensus about issues.

Such forums will help to contribute to conflict prevention, not only by elaborating rules by which all should abide, but also by allowing negotiations to occur over conflicting interests. Another remarkable development will be the spread of democratic aspirations and ideals.

However, the absence of a truly viable multilateral forum means that future threats to peace and security are often neglected. To overcome this impasse, a new process for conducting multilateral negotiations is urgently needed.

Sustainable peace will result from a thorough reform of governance, or democratization in a broader sense. International community should focus its effort toward this end, particularly within countries that have either been affected by, or face the potential for, violent conflict.

To conclude, Malaysia is happy to witness that cooperative relation between member countries and the network of international law that governs these relationships has deepened. We need to work together to jointly boost effort towards sustainable peace. Malaysia indeed hopes to see a power strategy stewardship for sustainable change that will lead to a more enduring peace.

On that note, ladies and gentlemen, I once again wish to thank the organizing committee for this privilege given to me to deliver a speech in conjunction with the commemoration of the International Day of Peace 2012 and China Southeast Asia Peace and Development Forum.

Thank you.