
"...As Lovely as a Tree"

WELCOMING
STATEMENT

by

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UNITED NATIONS UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL
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at the

TREE PLANTING CEREMONY IN COMMEMORATION OF UN50

sponsored by the

ASSOCIATION OF FORMER INTERNATIONAL CIVIL SERVANTS - GENEVA

Palais des Nations, Geneva - Sunday, 15 October 1995, 12h45

Dear Colleagues and Ladies and Gentleman,

It is indeed an honour to take part in this tree planting ceremony with you. The donation of this tree by the Association of Former International Civil Servants to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations is a most thoughtful and meaningful gesture. Your choice of a sequoia, one of the most majestic trees, is most appropriate.

I am reminded of the famous poem:

I think that I shall never see
A poem as lovely as a tree
Poems are made by fools like me
But only God can make a tree

The American poet, Joyce Kilmer, who composed this poem in 1913, was certainly no fool. In four lines he captures perfectly and most eloquently the wonder and spirituality of life.

The young poet was killed in action five years later during the First World War.

Let this tree - which may grow almost 100 meters high - stand as both a memorial to those who have fallen in war, and as a calling for us, the living, who strive for peace.

As United Nations personnel - many who willingly have served in very difficult situations in the field - and international relief workers who work amongst us and many of whom join us here today know too well, peace is something which cannot be taken for granted. It involves the active participation of everyone. As the Secretary-General has stressed in his most recent Report on the Work of the Organization, those who choose to serve in such dangerous and demanding and dangerous conditions must be afforded every protection. Too many dedicated and talented people are losing their lives in their efforts to help others.

The sequoia is not simply one of the tallest trees, it is also one of the oldest, with some known to be 3,000 - 4,000 years old. With age comes wisdom. The expertise of the women and men who make up the Organization contribute a great tree of knowledge and expertise, the branches of which reach into every aspect of human activity and needs. The former staff members of the Organization possess critical experience and important skills are the roots of this tree. Their contribution has made our Organization into the indispensable tool for peace and prosperity that it is today.

Let us continue to work together to meet tomorrow's challenges.

