

**Statement of Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky
on the occasion of the International Day of Peace
Palais des Nations
19 September 1995**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to welcome you all to the Palais des Nations on the occasion of the International Day of Peace which has been observed each year in conjunction with the opening of the United Nations General Assembly in New York.

It is indeed my pleasure and privilege to read the message of the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

“In a few hours from now the General Assembly will meet. This will be a historic session. The United Nations completes a half century. The world, once more, cries out for peace. And for the economic and social development that peace alone can assure.

The toll of the bell is but a heartbeat long. Like a heartbeat, its message is vital. It speaks of life and energy. It speaks of serenity and contentment. It speaks of physical and spiritual strength. It speaks of the passion that great causes command. It speaks of our ability to fulfil them -- if we have the will.

Let that be our pledge and resolve today. Let us keep our goal clear and simple, like the song of the bell. Let us work for peace with the strength and clarity of this great sound.”

Ladies and gentlemen,

This year's observance is of particular significance since it takes place amidst the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the United Nations and on the International Year of Tolerance. I would like to thank the World Peace Day Association for having taken the initiative of organizing today's commemoration. This is a good illustration of cooperation between non-governmental organizations and the United Nations.

As you all know, the United Nations, born of years of devastating war, was conceived as an institution that would bring together the countries of the world to work for the progress of all nations and all peoples, as the best way to ensure lasting peace. As stated in the Charter, the founders of this world body were determined to "practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours".

We are still very far from this ideal! Both States and peoples continue to resort to force to impose their views instead of exploring peaceful means.

This is a task which the United Nations has been trying to accomplish with some success as well as shortcomings for the past 50 years, taking over in that respect from the League of Nations. The end of the cold war opened a unique opportunity seized by the Secretary-General in putting forward proposals in "Agenda for Peace" and its addendum published at the end of last year. Agenda for Peace includes a wide-range of proposals pertaining to peace promotion and maintenance from preventive diplomacy and good offices to enforcement actions and sanctions, from peace-keeping and peacemaking actions to post-conflict peace-building. In this document, as well as others, the Secretary-General raised the idea of integrating disarmament which is one of the issues to be addressed in working towards development, social progress, respect for human rights and peace.

As the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament, I should like on this occasion to mention that this single multilateral negotiating body has already successfully contributed through treaty-making to arms limitation and disarmament processes. It is currently finalizing the drafting of the comprehensive test-ban treaty which should be concluded within the earliest possible time and not later than 1996.

The agenda for disarmament demands the increasing role of the Conference on Disarmament and other instruments of multilateral diplomacy. Progress since 1992 in the area of weapons of mass destruction and major weapons systems should be followed by parallel progress in conventional armaments, including in the area of all light

weapons and anti-personnel mines. It is also essential that the existing conventional arms register should be developed into a universal and non-discriminate mechanism.

The tangible results in disarmament are a substantial contribution to security in all aspects, including environmental.

It is in the minds of men and women that the protection of peace must be built. This is one of the reasons why the United Nations is developing a renewed approach to its relations and cooperation with the non-governmental organizations. This is where non-governmental organizations, like the World Peace Day Association and many others play an important role in assisting the United Nations to promote peace in people's minds and to build a culture of peace. Only then can a spirit of tolerance be made possible. Without tolerance, the foundations for democracy and respect for human rights cannot be strengthened, and the achievement of peace will remain elusive.

One of the most important targets of the International Year of Tolerance are young people since the younger generations will be the actors of tomorrow's society and I am very happy to see many of you here today. You have a crucial role to play - at school as well as in social, sport and other gatherings - in improving communication and understanding between yourselves, between boys and girls, between people from different cultures, different religions, different political persuasions. Societies are becoming increasingly multicultural and the world smaller and smaller. Human solidarity is more than ever needed if we want all to survive.

As a way of marking this International Day of Peace as well as the International Year of Tolerance, you will hold this afternoon an inter-religious conference and ceremony. As the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, said on 3 July to a gathering of religious leaders, here in the Palais des Nations: "the dissemination of a message of peace and brotherhood is one of the chief roles of the churches ... more than ever before, the churches embody an echo of brotherhood. And they owe it to themselves, as well as mankind, to preach a spiritual tolerance. These great and noble objectives coincide, once again, with the concerns of the United Nations."

In concluding the opening of the 1995 International Peace Day ceremony, let me wish you all a very enjoyable day at the Palais des Nations as well as a productive exchange of views and a fruitful reflexion on the theme of peace and tolerance.

