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UN Day: Peace, development, human rights and opportunity for all

United Nations Day, on 24 October, marks the anniversary of the day in 1945 when the UN Charter entered into force. The UN is made up of 193 Member States.

By Robin Gomes

“The values that have powered the United Nations Charter for the last 76 years - peace, development, human rights, and opportunity for all - have no expiry date.” UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres made the point in a message for United Nations Day, October 24, urging the international community to “unite behind these ideals, and live up to the full promise, potential and hope of the United Nations”.



United Nations Day, on 24 October, marks the anniversary of the day in 1945 when the UN Charter entered into force. Celebrated every year on this day, the annual observance is an occasion to reaffirm the purposes and principles of the UN Charter that have guided the body of nations for over 7 decades.

“Vehicle of hope”

“Seventy-six years ago, the United Nations was created as a vehicle of hope for a world emerging from the shadow of catastrophic conflict,” Guterres said, adding, “Today, the women and men of the UN carry this hope forward around the globe.”

He pointed out that Covid-19, conflicts, hunger, poverty and the climate emergency are a reminder that our world is far from perfect. “But,” he said, “they also make clear that solidarity is the only way forward.” He thus urged all “to come together to tackle great challenges and advance the Sustainable Development Goals” (SDGs).

Solidarity, the way forward

The SDGs are a collection of 17 interlinked global goals that that UN member states in 2015 committed themselves to achieve by 2030, for a better and more sustainable future for all. Among these goals are ending poverty and hunger, ensuring health, wellbeing, education, opportunities, water and sanitation for all, and promoting peaceful and inclusive societies, leaving no one behind.

Among the current challenges, Guterres pointed out, is the need to ensure that “every person, everywhere, has access to Covid-19 vaccines sooner rather than later”.

The rights and dignity of all people – especially the poorest and most disadvantaged, girls and women, and children and young people – need to be secured and upheld. “Conflicts that scar our world” need to end.

The world needs to make “bold climate commitments to save our planet”, and live up to them. There is also the need to build global governance that is more inclusive, networked and effective, as laid out in his report, *Our Common Agenda*, which looks ahead to the next 25 years and represents the Secretary-General’s vision on the future of global cooperation.

“As we mark UN Day,” Guterres urged, “let’s unite behind these ideals, and live up to the full promise, potential and hope of the United Nations.”

UN Day Concert

This year’s UN Day Concert at the UN headquarters in New York was anticipated by 3 days on Thursday, October 21, and was in a hybrid format, with part live and part pre-recorded performances, with a small audience attending in keeping with physical distancing protocols.

The concert under the theme, “Building Back Together for Peace and Prosperity”, was sponsored by the Permanent Mission of South Korea to the United Nations.

Music and “Building Back Together”

Speaking at the concert in the UN General Assembly Hall, the Secretary-General said that the “spirit of solidarity and action” that marks UN Day, “is reflected in the theme of this concert: ‘Building Back Together for Peace and Prosperity.’” Guterres said, “It is wonderfully expressed in the power of music. Music reflects the profound diversity and unique contributions of cultures around the world. At the same time, music is universal, a language that bridges all divides, an example of how individuals can come together in harmony, and create something lasting, beautiful and inspirational.” “This same spirit of coming together,” he said, “has brought generations of people to these halls over the decades.”

Noting that the “last 20 months have been an extraordinarily difficult and even isolating moment for the human family,” he urged all to “watch as one, listen as one, and be inspired as one.” “And let us commit, once again, to the United Nations Charter and the values that have brought it to life for the last 76 years — peace, dignity and prosperity for all.”

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