



UNITED NATIONS 70TH ANNIVERSARY

SPEECH BY PRESIDENT UNAS
TO MARK THE 70TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE UNITED NATIONS



Dear Members & Friends,

A Gala Dinner to celebrate the 70th Anniversary of the United Nations 1945-2015 in conjunction with the 50th Anniversary of Singapore's Independence was held at:

Venue: Swissotel The Stamford, 2 Stamford Road Singapore 178882
Raffles Convention Centre, Padang & Collyer Function Hall

Date: 5th November 2015

Time: 6.30pm

Appended below is the text of the Speech of the President of UNAS at the dinner.

"As we commemorate the 70th Anniversary of the UN, it is timely that we remind ourselves of the aims and purposes of the UN as enshrined in the Charter.

They are:

- (a) to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war
- (b) to affirm fundamental human rights
- (c) to establish conditions of respect for international law and obligations
- (d) to promote social progress, better standards of life and larger freedoms

And to secure them, member states of the UN are called upon to:

- (1) practice tolerance
- (2) unite to maintain international peace
- (3) avoid the use of military force except in defending the common interest
- (4) employ international machinery for the promotion of economic and social progress.

While much is achieved, there is still much that is left undone. The world has changed and a new equilibrium is struggling to emerge. The problems that confront the world are more numerous and complex. They recognize no national boundaries. They are stark and pointed at the heart of mankind.

What can be done? What has the UN achieved over the last 70 years?

These are questions that I would ask you to ponder. As citizens of the world, we owe it to ourselves to do something about it however small or localized our effort. In to-day's turbulent world we need to keep faith with the aims and purposes of the UN Charter.

It might be said that the existence of the UN has been the key factor in containing the threat of a 3rd World War. Equally its actions and initiatives have reduced intra-state conflicts and helped rebuild fragile states

It might be claimed that the UN has successfully fostered and developed a network of free trade benefiting developed and developing member states of the UN alike since the setting up of the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and in recent years the World Trade Organization (WTO).

It might be argued that it was due to UN prescience that we now have treaties and conventions to deal with the threats posed by environmental degradation and climate change. In this special mention should be made of the International Framework Convention of Climate Change (IFCCC), The International Convention on Bio-Diversity and the Statement on Forests Principles adopted at the 1992 World Conference of the Environment and Development.

It might be argued that the UN Human Rights Council and the UN High Commission for Human Rights (UNHCHR) through sustained efforts in promoting and protecting human rights have freed millions from poverty, abuse, enslavement, homelessness and all other forms of deprivation. The refuge and assistance granted by the UN

High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and the World Food Program are critical in this regard. The New Development Agenda 2030 announced in September 15th, 2015 and adopted unanimously by the UN General Assembly represents no less a great leap forward in promoting the rights of the vulnerable worldwide.

Finally, it might be argued that in ensuring that nuclear proliferation is kept under control, the role of the international Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has been crucial throughout the UN's history. Not only has it monitored the peaceful use of nuclear power but has been in the forefront of promoting the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty(NPT) and the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty(CNBT). Furthermore, the international conventions banning chemical-biological weapons, land mines and illegal trade in small arms have been critical to ensuring safety and still, the pressing threats and dangers to peace and security are growing. These include:

(1) The tension arising from geo-political and geo-strategic contestations among the major powers resulting in the lack of unity purpose in Security Council decisions,

(2) The continuing uncertainty of securing a comprehensive legally binding agreement in dealing with the impact of climate change. In this the outcome of the November Conference of Parties 21(COP21) in Paris will be closely watched.

(3) The obsession with war and conflict as exemplified by the billions of dollars spent on arms and military build-up. It has been estimated that to achieve the 8 Millennium Development Goals aimed at countering global poverty, illiteracy, lack of maternal care, environmental degradation etc. would only take up about 2 percent of the total amount spent on rearmament per annum. It is indeed a sad and tragic commentary on how humankind handle its affairs and set its priorities.

(4) The endless flow of refugees who risk life and limb to seek safe havens in an inward looking world marked no less by racism, xenophobia and extremism.

(5) The growing divide between rich and poor within a country and between countries amidst economic uncertainties and last but not least,

(6) The clash between claims of national interest and respect for international law.

The need to see the inter-relatedness of all that surround us to-day is never more urgent and clear. Either the nations of the world or the world community grappled with them or be overwhelmed. The challenges and problems outlined are our

problems. The second Secretary-General of the UN, the late Dag Hammarskjöld had said in response to UN sceptics that the UN exists not to lead mankind to the heavens but to prevent mankind from descending to hell. The current Secretary-General Mr. Ban Ki-Moon has likened the UN to a beacon of hope, peace and security. If snuffed out the result can only be ruin and darkness.”

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