SPECIAL REPORT
United Nations
International Day of Peace
September 21, 2008
Celebrations in more than 100 locations of 58 nations
Organized by Universal Peace Federation
in collaboration with
UN and Government Agencies and
Non-Government Organizations
Image on cover created by the Department of Public Information, United Nations, New York in connection with the International Day of Peace 2007. Reproduced with permission of the publisher.
This year, the International Day of Peace takes on special meaning.

This is the year we also mark the sixtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We know that human rights are essential to peace. Yet too many people around the world still have their rights violated — especially during and after armed conflict. That is why we must ensure that the rights in the Declaration are a living reality — that they are known, understood and enjoyed by everyone, everywhere. It is often those who most need their human rights protected, who also need to be informed that the Declaration exists — and that it exists for them.

At the same time, we face a development emergency. This year, we pass the midpoint in the race to reach the Millennium Development Goals — the common vision agreed by leaders of all countries for building a better world in the 21st century. Reaching these goals is also essential to peace. Yet many countries in Africa are not on track to reach a single one of the goals by the deadline of 2015. That is why, just after the International Day of Peace, Governments, civil society and business will meet at the United Nations to forge a broad coalition and try to bridge the gap.

There is so much to unite around on this International Day of Peace. To mobilize people around the world, the UN is launching a text messaging campaign. My message reads: “On 21 September, the International Day of Peace, I call on world leaders and peoples around the world to join forces against conflict, poverty and hunger, and for all human rights for all.”

Together, let us send a powerful signal for peace that will be read, heard and felt around the world.
The International Day of Peace was established in 1981 by the United Nations General Assembly for “commemorating and strengthening the ideals of peace within and among all nations and people.” A resolution sponsored by Costa Rica designated the third Tuesday of September, the opening day of regular sessions of the General Assembly, for the celebration of this day.

The opening of the General Assembly Session each year is marked by ringing the “Peace Bell” on the grounds of the UN headquarters. The bell was obtained from coins donated by delegates of 60 nations who were attending the 13th General Conference of United Nations Associations held in Paris, France in 1951. It was cast in Japan and presented as a gift of the Japanese people to the UN on June 8, 1954, before Japan was admitted as a member of the UN. The inscription in Japanese characters on its side reads: “Long live absolute world peace.” In presenting the bell, Renzo Sawada, the United Nations Japanese Observer, said: “The bell embodies the aspiration for peace not only of the Japanese but of the peoples of the entire world.”

Designating September 21 as the International Day of Peace grew out of the vision of British filmmaker Jeremy Gilley. Jeremy had an idea: what if there was one day when the world stopped fighting? A worldwide ceasefire - a non-violence day? A Peace Day? In 1998, Jeremy began meeting with students, peace negotiators, NGOs, government representatives, heads of state, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, United Nations’ officials, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, United Nations Commissioner for Human Rights Mary Robinson, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States Amre Moussa, Peace Laureate and former Israeli President Shimon Peres, former Costa Rican President and Nobel Peace Laureate Oscar Arias Sanchez, and Nelson Mandela. He learned that a UN resolution would be the best way to establish such a day.

He filmed all of his travels and meetings and compiled them to create the documentary film Peace One Day.

After years of persistence and hard work, Jeremy’s dream came true. On 7 September 2001, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution, sponsored by the UK and Costa Rica formally establishing an annual day of global ceasefire and non-violence on the UN International Day of Peace - Peace Day - fixed in the global calendar on 21 September. Each year, the UN Secretary-General issues a peace message on September 21. In 2005, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan called for a worldwide observance of a 24-hour cease-fire and day of nonviolence to mark the International Day of Peace. A minute of silence is traditionally part of the observance of the International Day of Peace.
On the occasion of the International Day of Peace on September 21, 2008, the year we honor the 60th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Universal Peace Federation presents the following resolution:

First, the Universal Peace Federation calls upon all people to give great consideration to the profound relevance and significance of religion to the effort to secure human rights. Religions, after all, teach that we share a common origin, the source of our sacred value. Religions teach the value of each human being and the need to love and serve others. With increasing spiritual awareness, there emerges a great collective will to ensure the well-being of all people. As such, we should advance the universal values found in the teachings of all the world’s great religions.

Second, the family is the primary school of ethics and should serve as the school where we learn to love, respect, and serve others. By strengthening marriage and family, we can educate our children to respect all people, thereby establishing a culture of peace.

Third, our educational curricula should teach about peace and conflict resolution. This can be done through a character education or moral education curriculum. Men and women who are taught to fulfill their moral obligations and responsibilities in their families, among friends and associates, will respect and live for the greater good and fulfillment of others.

Fourth, lasting peace is secured not merely through laws, backed by the power of government enforcement, but by a rising awareness of our universal solidarity as one human family, brothers and sisters who share a common spiritual and moral heritage. We are one family under God.

Fifth, by fostering a culture of service, guided by an ethic of living for the sake of others, we contribute to building a world of lasting peace.

The Universal Peace Federation thereby resolves to join the United Nations to declare September 21st as “The International Day of Peace.”
PICTURES Top left: Cameroon, UN Information Office spokesman read peace declaration and UPF volunteers mopped floors at a Rehabilitation Center for Handicapped People. Center left: Chad, government ministers and UN Mission to Maintain Peace congratulate the youth competing in sports for peace, planting trees, listening to character-building seminars. Center right: Tanzania, UN Information Officer and government leaders read Peace Declaration at Sports Fest. Bottom left: Somalia, Muslim leaders recite prayers and invoke the Holy Qur'an for peace to reign among the people. Bottom right: Mali, President of Mali honored UPF’s environmental clean-up including planting of hundreds of trees.
Cameroon: At a meeting co-sponsored by the UN office in Cameroon, at the Hotel des Députés in Yaoundé, participants sang the National Anthem, read peace declarations and heard a speech by a representative of the UN Information Office in Cameroon. Afterwards, they traveled by bus to Etoug Ebe, where they mopped floors and visited patients at the Rehabilitation Center for Handicapped People.

Chad: A football match at the National Stadium; tree planting at Gaoui; lectures with a film on character education in schools at the Gassi Heath School in N’Djamena; lecture and discussion at the CEFOD conference center on human rights and peacekeeping; speeches by government ministers and a representative of the United Nations Mission to Maintain Peace in the Central African Republic and Chad.

Côte d'Ivoire: Cutting grass, cleaning the grounds and visiting patients at the hospital in Agboville; a football match for peace among teams of young people from different communities; speech by a member of Parliament.

Kenya: A gathering at the Peace House in Nairobi attended by the mayor of Nairobi, Ambassadors for Peace, political, business, NGO leaders, and religious leaders.

Mali: Two hundred trees were planted around the cemetery of Lafiabougou. Other activities included cleaning the yard of the Maternity Hospital in Quartier Mali; parade led by a military band; speech by Minister of Defense in the name of the President of the Republic.

Somalia: A Muslim leader recited prayers and read passages about peace from Qur’an and peace declarations were read. A youth leader talked about the hopes of young people to live in peace.

Tanzania: Athletic demonstrations; reading of poems about peace; reading peace declarations.

Zambia: Reading peace declarations at 15 Acres Church Hall, Lusaka; repairing a road to the Baralastone Park School, which had been heavily eroded by recent rains.
PICTURES Center left: Afghanistan, NGO’s and educational societies in Afghanistan celebrate the International Day of Peace in Kabul and two locations. Center right: Nepal, Assemblymen supported students gathered in two cities for rallies and clean up campaigns. Bottom left: India, Hundreds join a peace walk, tree planting, candlelight ceremonies and interreligious prayers. Bottom right: Philippines, Senators, congressmen addressed the interreligious, interethnic audience of 10,000.
**Afghanistan:** Meetings at the Marifat Educational Society in Dast-e-Barci, and Fetrat Educational Society in Kabul. Participants included the District Leader of Dast-e-Barci and Directors of the AIMS Educational Society, Maqsoodi Educational Society, and Shibar Cultural Association. UPF representatives attended the International Day of Peace Event sponsored by the UN Development Programme at the Kabul Medical University.

**Cambodia:** The celebration in Phnom Penh included a Japanese Tea Ceremony and martial arts demonstration as well as a speech by a cabinet official and the President of the Buddhist Association of Cambodia.

**China:** At the Unesco Center in Macau, interfaith prayers were offered by representatives of the Baha’i faith, Buddhism, and Christianity. Speeches about peace were given at a gathering in Hong Kong.

**India:** A Catholic priest planted a sapling in the compound of Bholagiri Ashram near Agartala, and a Hindu leader planted a sapling at the Don Bosco Peace Centre in Nandannagar. Candles were lit in prayer for victims of violence in various parts of the world. A peace walk along Sterling Road in Chennai was followed by interreligious prayers from representatives of Christianity, Hinduism, and Islam and a release of peace balloons.

**Indonesia:** The president of the Islamic Forum for Peace, Human Rights and Development in Indonesia spoke at a gathering at HAMKA University in Jakarta, along with the Director of the International institute of Education and the Center for Civic Education. Another gathering in Jakarta included reading of peace declarations.

**Japan:** Peace declarations were read and prayers for peace offered in Nagoya at a celebration attended by people from throughout central Japan. An explanation was given about the history of the International Day of Peace. In Arakawa, young people gathered for a reading of peace declarations and prayer; then, they gathered up trash from along the Arawaka River, sorted the trash and mowed the grass.

**Nepal:** Students and adults worked together on clean-up projects in Kathmandu and Pokhara. A member of Nepal’s Constituent Assembly addressed a rally in a park.
Pakistan: Officials from the Independent Bureau for Humanitarian Issues and the Institute of Peace and Development spoke at a gathering and signed an agreement for the two organizations to work together.

Philippines: Members of different ethnic groups in Mindanao, including the Subanens, Higa-onons, and Balangas marched together in a parade in Cagayan de Oro and performed traditional dances at the Capitol grounds. Speeches were given by the president of the Senate, former speaker of the House of Representatives, and governor of Misamis Oriental province.

Singapore: Children wearing traditional clothing from various cultures gathered around a peace candle to express their commitment to peace and placed strips of paper of different color into the flame, representing people of all races coming together to eliminate boundaries for the sake of peace. Cultures represented included Korean, Japanese, Chinese, Indian, Malay, Taiwanese, and Western.

PICTURES Top: Japan, prayer gatherings and clean up campaigns in 4 cities mark the International Day of Peace celebrations. Center: Singapore, children show their talents in peace gathering. Bottom: China, Unesco Center is venue for interfaith peace day forum.
**Sri Lanka:** Students in the western provinces took part in a talent competition on the theme of peace. There were several categories according to age, and participants offered songs, poems, dances, mimes and dramas. Organizers included school officials and the Director of Physical Education and Sports for the Western Provinces. The finals were held at Muesaes College in Colombo, in front of a large gathering.

**Thailand:** People from 18 countries in Asia participating in a conference in Bangkok watched a video about the International Day of Peace and listened to a concert of peace songs. The conference was held in collaboration with the Thailand Ministry of Social Development and Human Security. The keynote address was given by a former Deputy Prime Minister of Thailand.

PICTURES  Top left: Azerbaijan, The President of the NGO Forum and Azerbaijan World Congress addresses an audience at the NGO Forum Hall, with reading of a Peace Declaration. Center left: Georgia, Orphans and displaced children at Tbilisi Yake Park Theatre made pinwheels, doves, cranes and peace banners for a peace walk. Center right: Estonia, “Where does Peace Begin?” was the main theme of the IDP meeting in Estonia, followed by a musical presentation. Bottom left: Russia, The President of the UN Peacekeeping Missions briefs members of the Moscow National Peace Council on the UN peacekeeping program for peace around the world. Bottom right: Moldova, A student forum and seminar on nonviolent communication was co-partnered by the Faculty of Applied Psychology, at the State Pedagogical University, Chisinau.
Azerbaijan: Peace declarations were read at a celebration of the International Day of Peace at the NGO Forum office in Baku. The NGO leaders in attendance included the president of the World Azerbaijan Congress and President of the NGO Forum, which has 491 member NGOs and oversees all NGO activities in Azerbaijan.

Estonia: Music opened the International Day of Peace gathering at the Peace Embassy in Talinn. After an introduction and explanation of the International Day of Peace, the program continued with a PowerPoint presentation on the topic: “Where does peace start from?” This was followed by a report about the Global Peace Festival and International Leadership Conference in Mongolia.

Georgia: At the Yake Park summer theater in Tbilisi, orphans and displaced children from Abkhazia and Ossetia heard stories about famous peacemakers and answered peace quiz questions. The children made pinwheels, origami doves and cranes, and peace banners and then went on a peace walk through the park, sharing their handicrafts with the people in the park. The day also included a soccer competition and a speech by the Minister of Labor, Health and Social Affairs.

Moldova: In Chişinău, a student forum was held on nonviolent communication; educators, administrators, and health professionals attended a leadership forum. Other activities in commemoration of the International Day of Peace included an event at the Tîrgovişte Public Library and a seminar on non-violent communication at the State Pedagogical University organized by the Chief of the Faculty of Applied Psychology.

Russia: The president of the Organization of Veterans of UN Peacekeeping Missions addressed members of the National Peace Council about UN peacekeeping missions at a meeting in Moscow.

Ukraine: Students at the New Vision Secondary School for Oriental Languages in Kiev attended a peace gathering.
Europe

Austria: Sufi music and Buddhist readings on peace were features of an International Day of Peace gathering in Vienna, along with descriptions of programs connecting Austrians with people of African and Mongolian descent.

Belgium: Speeches about how to promote peace by representatives from various religions were highlights of a gathering in Antwerp. An official of the United Nations Regional Information Center called people to re-invest in the UN and be part of the slogan “We the people.”

Czech Republic: Dances, music, and informational displays were highlights of the gathering in Prague. The theme of the event was “When we change, the world changes.” An information table had materials about the importance of the family, United Nations programs, the Middle East Peace Initiative,
the Bering Strait Crossing project, and the Global Peace Festivals. People responded by talking about their volunteer activities and their ideas about how to build peace.

**France:** Various Christian leaders spoke at a special peace service at the Shekina church in Venissieux. In Vannes, people collected books, medicine, medical supplies, bicycles, clothing, and shoes to send to people affected by flooding in Togo. They then packed two containers to send to Togo. Demonstrations of origami, calligraphy and facial massages were highlights of a public gathering.

**Italy:** In Milano, Bergamo, Monza, and Sesto San Giovanni, trees were planted in public parks and prayers offered by Catholic priests, Protestant pastors, Orthodox priests, Buddhist monks from Tibet and Burma, and Muslim imams. Peace conferences were also held.

**Monaco:** An interfaith meeting at a private golf club in the Monaco-Nice region featured classical music and speeches by representatives of different religions: Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, Jewish, and Muslim. There was much interest in the relationship between religion and human rights and the potential role of increased interreligious dialogue and cooperation in promoting peace.

**Netherlands:** A meeting on the theme “Living Together in Peace” was organized by “Het Turkse Platform” in the Hague. Prominent Hindu, Muslim, and Christian speakers discussed what constitutes a peaceful society and how diverse people can live in harmony. At a commemoration of the life of Afghan national hero, Ahmad Shah Massoud, prospects for peace in Afghanistan were discussed. A European Leadership Conference included presentations about developments in China and Israeli-Palestinian relations.

**Norway:** Cultural performances at the Amati Conference Center in Oslo, ranging from contemporary music to traditional classical music; presentations by NGO leaders, religious leaders, and an advisor on foreign affairs at the Norwegian parliament.

**Slovakia:** Painting postcards on the theme of peace at the Unesco school in Bratislava and an elementary school in Dunajska Luzna; setting up an information table about the International Day of Peace at a shopping center and selling the cards to raise funds for the schools.
PICTURES Top: Ecuador, The National Congress of Ecuador was host to an audience of political, religious and NGO leaders, along with the diplomatic corps. Center: St. Lucia, 10,000 students from 29 UNESCO schools in Santa Lucia read the peace proclamation. Bottom: Honduras, 210 political, civil society, and religious leaders made a call for harmony among all religions, races and ethnic groups.
**Latin America and the Caribbean**

**Argentina:** Celebrations began with planting an olive tree and laying flowers at the Patricios Soldier Monument in Parque Patricios, Buenos Aires. The traditional Guard Corps, established in 1806, has the mission to watch over the historical places of Argentina, like the Cabildo, the Plaza de Mayo, the Government Palace in Buenos Aires, and the Monument to the National Flag in Rosario. This Regiment, together with representatives of other civil associations, led a traditional parade along Caseros Avenue.

**Brazil:** At the Pateo do Collegio in Sao Paulo, a children's ecumenical choir sang the national anthem. The Mark of Peace Trophy was awarded, followed by an interfaith ceremony with representatives of Judaism, Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, and spiritism. Speakers included representatives of civil society, businesses, and international organizations, including Unesco. A toast for peace concluded the celebration.

**Dominican Republic:** Words of welcome were offered by a Catholic bishop, and an Evangelical pastor offered the invocation at a celebration that included music and dancing at the National University in Higuey. A Senator talked about the need to uproot hate, resentment, and arrogance from our hearts and replace them with forgiveness, and a professor referred to the importance of true love and the role of women in building a culture of peace.

**Ecuador:** Religious leaders, political leaders, educators, NGO representatives, and the mass media attended a celebration in the Plenary Hall of the National Congress of the Republic of Ecuador in Quito. In addition, diplomats attended from the embassies of China, Bolivia, Bulgaria, Portugal, and Thailand.

**Guyana:** A peace march to the Kingston Sea-wall of Georgetown was followed with prayers by representatives of different religions. The acting president of Guyana unveiled a Peace Pole at the Non-Aligned Monument with the words “May Peace Prevail on Earth” in English, Spanish, French and Dutch. Also present at the ceremony were the Minister of Culture Youth and Sports, the Mayor of Georgetown, NGO’s, and members of other peace groups.

**Honduras:** Political leaders, government officials, civic leaders, businessmen, trade union members, and leaders of both Catholic
and Evangelical churches attended a gathering in Tegucigalpa.

**Jamaica:** People from various faiths attended a lecture in Kingston on conflict resolution by a Youth Facilitator trained by UNICEF and the Dispute Resolution Foundation.

**Paraguay:** The audience at a celebration in the former Senate Chamber of the Cabildo in Asuncion included officials from the ministries of Education, Culture, and the Environment as well as Ambassadors for Peace, lawyers and educators. A presentation was given on character, heart, love, and family as essential elements of a culture of peace.

**Peru:** The celebration in Lima included an interfaith candle lighting ceremony, an international folk music group, and a theatrical performance entitled “Breaking the Chains for Peace.”

**St. Kitts & Nevis:** Thousands of people assembled in Warner Park, Basseterre, in an all-day celebration coordinated together with the Silver Jubilee Committee. Following the national anthem, there were dances and songs about peace, peace messages, and prayers, culminating with the release of 500 white PICTURES Top: Brazil, UNESCO spokesman, religious leaders and an ecumenical children’s choir participated in the program for an interfaith audience in Sao Paulo. Center: Dominican Republic, The National University in Higuey celebrated with music, dancing and singing. Bottom: Argentina, NGO leaders and the National Guard organized a traditional parade to lay flowers and plant trees at the Patricios Soldier Monument.
balloons. Performers included international and local bands and well-known singers.

**St. Lucia:** The coordinator of the National UNESCO Commission Project sent word to 10,000 students to observe the International Day of Peace as a day to make an extra effort to care for other people, promising them that as a result “St. Lucia will be a better place.” The message was read at student assemblies and followed up with classroom discussions.

**Uruguay:** A celebration took place at the Uruguay National Garden in Montevideo.

**Venezuela:** At the San Martin Orphanage in Caracas, orphans joined volunteers in painting the facility’s multi-purpose sports course, filled the holes in the walls and then painted them. Other activities included a play about good character and discussions about teamwork and peace.

**PICTURES Top:** Guyana, Acting President unveils a Peace Pole at the Non-Alignment Monument with the Mayor of Georgetown, political leaders, peace groups in attendance. **Center:** Venezuela, orphans joined volunteers in painting the sports arena of the San Martin Orphanage in Caracas. **Bottom:** St. Kitts & Nevis, The Silver Jubilee Committee in partnership with UPF, gather thousands for an all day peace celebration.
MIDDLE EAST

Israel: Young people from several groups worked together to clean a garden in Jerusalem and listened to a former Jerusalem City Councilman describe principles of peacebuilding.

Jordan: Young people from Jordan University, Jordan Badia, Iraq Unity, and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East participated in a football tournament, with the final match at the King Hussein Park Football ground in Amman; a religious leader and an NGO leader offered their perspectives on peacebuilding.
**Fiji:** International Day of Peace activities with the children at the Gospel School for the Deaf in Suva included making origami and cleaning up the school grounds. An NGO leader spoke about international peace activities, and, after a moment of silence, a musician sang an original song. The celebration concluded with afternoon tea.

**New Zealand:** At the Manurewa Marae in Auckland, inspirational readings and prayers for peace were offered by people of various nationalities and traditions. A Marae is a sacred place for the Maori people of New Zealand where culture can be celebrated. After Maori cultural singing and dancing, and a martial arts demonstration, one girl sang a song of peace composed especially for the occasion.

**Marshall Islands:** Reading and signing a peace declaration at the Convention of the Traditional Chiefs of Micronesia in Majuro. Participants included leaders from the Marshall Islands, Kosrae, Pohnpei, Yap, Tuck, Palau, Guam, and Kiribati. A former president of Micronesia addressed another peace gathering in the capital city.

**Palau:** A football tournament took place among young people in Palau in cooperation with the World Association of NGOs. Two secondary schools and three elementary schools each fielded a team. Explanations were given about how good sportsmanship and lessons learned in football can be applied in daily life to promote good relationships and teamwork.

**Tonga:** A prayer service in commemoration of the International Day of Peace was held in Nuku’alofa. A television station aired a 30-minute forum of three Ambassadors for Peace discussing the history of the International Day of Peace and ways people can work together to overcome barriers and build understanding.
More than 100 celebrations for the UN International Day of Peace took place throughout the United States. The following are selected reports from some of the locations in the different states:

**Alaska:** Young people made peace signs and held them up at busy intersections in downtown Anchorage.

**Arizona:** At the Franciscan Renewal Center in Paradise Valley, peace activists gathered for a sunrise service featuring songs, prayers, and words of wisdom from 12 representatives of various faith traditions. This was the fourth annual sunrise celebration organized by Arizona Department of Peace Campaign at the Franciscan Renewal Center.

**Arkansas:** People from different faiths cleaned, painted, spackled, and sanded the Harmony Health Clinic in Little Rock. At the State Capitol Building, representatives of various faiths and NGO groups exchanged gifts and sang together. Jewish, Sikh, Christian, Buddhist and Hindu prayers were
offered. Volunteers came from nearby states of Alabama, Tennessee, and Missouri.

**California:** A Red Cross blood drive, a speech contest, crafts projects and musical performances were part of celebrations in Los Angeles and included speeches by the president of the United Nations Association and a yoga master from India. Young people at a coffee shop in Monrovia made pinwheels with peace messages and handed them out to people walking down the street.

**Colorado:** Promoting “One Family Under God,” prayers for peace were offered in Denver by various religious leaders, including Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, and Native American. This was followed by Arabic, Jewish, Christian, Chinese, and Indian music and releasing white balloons with messages of peace.

**Illinois:** A march through Chicago’s Englewood neighborhood, famous as the site of violent outbreaks and a protest march led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., in 1966. This annual march was followed by a “Spirit Fest” at Marquette Park featuring musical groups and awards given to outstanding community activists.

**New Jersey:** Various religious leaders took a boat trip through the New York Harbor, past the Statue of Liberty and the United Nations headquarters. In a “Peace Ceremony” each participant poured their own holy water into one common bowl and prayed for peace, then emptying the larger container into the sea.

**New York:** The video “Peace One Day” was distributed widely to schools and community groups, along with fliers about peace. All-day festivities at the UTS Interfaith Seminary in Barrytown included a peace vigil, kite flying, and a peace concert.

**Wisconsin:** A celebration at the State Capitol Building in Madison included a Native American peace ceremony and prayers for peace by representatives of the Buddhist, Muslim, and Christian faiths. A skit by a multicultural group of young women portrayed different regions of the world and ways to resolve prejudices and bias. This was followed by releasing white doves.