UN International Day of Peace Observance:
Sustainable Peace – Sustainable Development

remarks by

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Organised by the Permanent Mission of Jamaica to the United Nations
and the Permanent Secretariat of the World Summit of Nobel Peace Laureates

Conference Room 3
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Ms Leymah Gbowee, Nobel Peace Laureate
Ms Shirin Ebadi, Nobel Peace Laureate
Ms Tawakkol Karman, Nobel Peace Laureate
His Excellency, Mr Courtenay Rattray
Mr Jonathan Granoff

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

I thank the three Nobel Laureates for joining us today. Each of these global leaders represents those values that the United Nations strives to uphold.

I also want to thank Ambassador Rattray and the Permanent Mission of Jamaica and the Permanent Secretariat of the World Summit of Nobel Peace Laureates for arranging this event.

I bring you the greetings of the Secretary-General. For the last decade he has been a tireless champion for both sustainable peace and sustainable development.

As he said this morning, “peace, sustainable development and human rights – the three pillars of the United Nations – are mutually reinforcing. They are three sides of the same triangle.”

The 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda recognises that sustainable development cannot be realized without peace and security. Peace cannot be sustained without development.

There can also be no sustainable peace without disarmament. In the words of your fellow Nobel Peace Laureate, Alfonso Garcia Robles, “There is an organic relation between peace and disarmament.”

This link was explicitly recognized in Goal 16 of the Sustainable Development Goals, which calls for significant reductions to the global illicit arms flow.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

The need for urgent action on disarmament is greater than ever. Weapons fan the flames of war. Their cheap and easy availability drives conflicts, endangers civilians and multiplies serious human rights violations.

As Messenger for Peace, Michael Douglas, said this morning, direct deaths from conflict have tripled from 2008 to 180,000 deaths in 2014. The number of refugees and internally displaced people also tripled. When explosive weapons are used in urban environments, 90 percent of casualties are innocent civilians.
In the Middle East, the United Nations-Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (UN-OPCW) Joint Investigative Mechanism found that toxic chemicals had been used as weapons by State and non-state actors.

The prospect of an attack by a non-state actor using other types of weapons of mass destruction is growing. We can only imagine the carnage a pathogen such as Ebola could cause if deliberately released to cause maximum harm. Yet the investment in preventing and responding to such an incident is vastly unequal to the threat.

Finally, there remain some fifteen thousand nuclear weapons in the world, when even one is too many. The human and environmental costs of the use of even a small fraction would be horrific.

There have been some significant reductions in nuclear arsenals, but, unfortunately the dependence by some States on nuclear deterrence is deepening, not weakening. Billions of dollars are being spent upgrading nuclear arsenals. Sadly, divisions continue to grow over the future of multilateral disarmament.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

As we all strive for a safer and more secure world on this International Day of Peace, I would like to seek some assistance from all Nobel Peace Laureates.

First, I ask you to use your collective moral authority to convince all people of the need to press their governments to fully implement their disarmament commitments. From The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Chemical and Biological Weapons Conventions, to the Arms Trade Treaty, these instruments will only reach their potential when completely and universally implemented.

Second, I ask that you help to build international will for immediate progress on nuclear disarmament. I am concerned that too many people believe the possibility of nuclear war ended with the Cold War. I count on you to use your global platform to remind them that the dangers posed by nuclear weapons are very real. Informed citizens and civil society have an important role to play in upholding global norms for arms control and disarmament.

Third, I ask you to engage with our young peacemakers. They will have an important role to play in building a safer and more secure world. They will need your wisdom and your guidance.

On behalf of the Office for Disarmament Affairs, I look forward to working with all of you. As Secretary-General Ban says, “Nothing is impossible when we work together. Together we can build the future we want.”

Thank you.