

Address by H.E. Dr. A. K. Abdul Momen, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the UN on *“Current situation and future of the UN Culture of Peace”* at the conference on “Brain Education and Earth Citizen Awareness in the context of a Culture of Peace “co-hosted by IBREA, CoNGO and the Permanent Mission of El Salvador to the UN at the Salvation Army from 1.15 pm to 3 pm on 29 May 2013.

Excellencies,
Representative of UNESCO,
Director, IBREA and
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased and privileged to participate today at the conference on “Brain Education and Earth Citizen Awareness in the context of a Culture of Peace “ co-hosted by IBREA , CoNGO and the Permanent Mission of El Salvador. I like to thank the organizers for arranging this interesting and thought –provoking conference.

Today, I have been told to speak on *“Current situation and future of the UN Culture of Peace”*. Let me begin by emphasizing the significance of the “Culture of Peace”. “Culture of Peace” is an aspiration of all humanity and also the essence of the United Nations Charter. Culture is an integral value of human development and only by recognizing this value can we start any negotiation for peace. Culture of peace is thus an initiative of tremendous importance. It is a structural prerequisite for peaceful co-existence of different cultures and religions around the globe.

Everything that is needed to build a culture of peace already exists in each one of us. As stated in the UN definition, a Culture of Peace is a set of values, attitudes, modes of behavior and ways of life that reject violence and prevent conflicts by tackling their root causes to solve problems through dialogue and negotiation among individuals, groups and nations.

The Culture of Peace compliments and strengthens Bangladesh’s principle of democracy, which, in turn advocates principles of tolerance, dialogue, mediation, and understanding and peaceful

coexistence of different cultures and religions. The Culture of Peace is deeply ingrained in Bangladesh's pluralistic societies. Enshrined with the spirit of peace and tolerance, Bangladesh has been tabling this resolution on Culture of peace since 2001 .This resolution has always been adopted with the overwhelming support of Member States by consensus.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

While we promote a Culture of Peace and all such initiatives, we remember that these objectives cannot be achieved in a vacuum. To make peace sustainable, it is imperative to create right conditions for our people to live in dignity and in freedom from want and fear, from hunger and poverty, from deprivation and discrimination, from exclusivity and injustice. Political, economic and socio-cultural injustices across nations must also be addressed. People should be empowered and be at the center of development. To this end, Bangladesh also tabled a resolution last year termed 'People's empowerment and development' a peace-centric model. This resolution entails seven interrelated components of peace, development and stability which the Prime Minister of Bangladesh Sheikh Hasina designed and developed from her personal experience of long four decades of political career. We are thankful to all member states for their overwhelming support to the resolution by consensus.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Bangladesh has always played an active role in the maintenance of international peace and security. Our commitment to the UN Peacekeeping has remained unflinching. We are continuing to be one of the top troop contributing countries of the world. Our peacekeeping forces have been discharging their duties in difficult situations. They carry in their hearts the idea of 'culture of peace' and put the idea into action. Some of our valiant soldiers have made supreme sacrifice in line of duty to uphold the essence of peace. Bangladesh, being a founding member of UN Peacebuilding Commission, is now engaging actively in peacebuilding.

I also would like to take this opportunity to highlight that Bangladesh played an important role in UNESCO to adopt the 'International Mother Language Day' - a testimony to preserve, protect

and promote cultural diversity and native languages basically to enrich humanity and to be sensitive to diversity of cultures.

Now coming to the future of the “Culture of Peace”, no one can deny that upon completion of more than a decade for a “Culture of Peace”, there is clearly still a need of this resolution, might be even more than we did years back. Recent tragedies and violence, conflicts, killings, witnessed by the world is a testimony of the fact that in spite of immense effort for attaining peace and understanding, they remained elusive. We have impressive frameworks in papers, but translating these into actions is still challenging. It is really worrying to see about chronic and emerging divisions along cultural, religious and sectarian lines. Inequalities, discrimination, misunderstanding, and intolerance around the globe are generating new dimensions of conflicts. There are also new threats to international peace and security, emanating particularly from mindset of intolerance and hatred, disproportionate use of freedom of religion and expression.

We need to have a balanced approach of freedom of religion. Living in a context of growing diversity and pluralism presents a multi-fold challenge for society. Striving to uphold the universal right to freedom of religion, thought, speech and conscience is necessary. However, in order to realize this fundamental right, we must promote a culture of peace and tolerance, which in turn requires corresponding education and awareness-building across nations.

We must not forget that freedom of expression constitutes most certainly both a right and a responsibility. Realizing the potential of free flow of information is the order of the day, it needs however to be accompanied by adequate education and responsible leadership by governments and practitioners alike.

The issue of migration and integration constitutes another important factor. We have to highlight the economic, social, and cultural benefits of migration and integration. There is a great need to de-politicise the subject of migration and to counterbalance negative perceptions by changing the approach to this issue.

There are many other critical dimensions to be contextualized in the future of “Culture of Peace”. However, the most important recognition for future is that “Culture of Peace” cannot be achieved alone by the governments only. It needs the commitments by and concerted efforts of all stakeholders, youth, teachers, religious and community leaders, parents, grass-roots group, civil society.

I like to mention here that under the provision of the “Culture of Peace” resolution, President of the General Assembly would be convening a high-level forum, as appropriate and within existing resources, devoted to the implementation of the Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace on the occasion of the anniversary of the adoption of the Programme of Action, on or around 13 September. We are looking forward to this high level forum.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Now I would like to talk a little about the important role of education in promoting the concept of “Culture of Peace”. The “Culture of Peace” resolution itself includes “education for peace” as one of its key points. Adopted by the General Assembly in 1999, the Programme of Action includes actions aimed at fostering a culture of peace through education – such as ensuring that children, from an early age, benefit from education on values and attitudes to enable them to resolve any dispute peacefully, as well as actions to promote sustainable economic and social development. The High-Level Forum, organized by the President of the General Assembly on 14 September 2012 provided us with a unique opportunity to bring together all these stakeholders and to reinvigorate our common endeavor. It was echoed that education could tackle the roots of conflict by promoting an understanding of common humanity.

Excellencies, ladies and Gentlemen,

In this context, “Brain education” could play a holistic type of education that works at physical, emotional and cognitive levels at the same time. The bigger purpose of this education is to awaken our morals and to manage our emotions to view diversity and differences as a blessing not as a scourge. To start having real impact, we need to understand our current challenges in a

way that will shake us to the core of our being and awaken our full creative power. Only then will we be able to make the changes we want to see in the world. Brain Education can help us immensely in translating our knowledge and dreams into action and leading to long-term mutual understanding that transcends religious, national, and cultural boundaries.

Let me conclude by reiterating Bangladesh's continuous commitment to uphold Culture of Peace, to strengthen the objectives of Culture of Peace, and foster co-operation. We thank all the Member States for supporting "Culture of Peace". We are also thankful to UNESCO for their leading role in promoting a culture of peace. Our sincere appreciation to all stakeholders, individuals, NGOs and civil society that have been supporting our Culture of Peace. Their enthusiastic support to this cause has been instrumental in continuing our efforts towards promotion of the culture of Peace. May I look forward to a day when all people of this planet earth will live in harmony and peace, will love and respect each other irrespective of their caste, creed, colour, ethnicity, religion or cultural background and will divert money and resources away from war and terror for the wellbeing of people and environment for the good of mankind? May I conclude by reciting a poem in *Bangla* that moulded my life, "*Ghahi sammer Gaan, Sovor Uprey Manush Sat-tho Thaher Uprey Nai*" or "*Manusher Chey Nohe kichu Mohiyan*" It means, let us sing the song that there is nothing greater and truer than that of human being---- let all of us work for humanity.

Thank you all.