

## **SPEAKING NOTES**

**H.E. Rhoda M. Jackson, Ambassador/Permanent Representative of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations in Geneva, 2<sup>nd</sup> Dialogue on Faith, Peacebuilding and Development – Palais des Nations, Room, 9 February 2017**

- I am indeed honoured to address you, following today's insightful, thought-provoking panel discussions and exchanges.
- Our gathering on this occasion is to commemorate World Interfaith Harmony Week as well as to consider the important linkages between faith, peacebuilding and development, is indeed timely.
- In many ways, we have witnessed a global paradigm shift in the way faith and religion are conceived at the international level, from a force for good and the promotion of fraternity and mutual respect, to being misunderstood, in many corners of the world, as a force for divisiveness and hatred.
- These notions are antithetical to principles on which the major religions of the world are founded – the common principles of Love of God/Love of Good and Love of Thy Neighbour
- Our gathering here today is therefore, also significant and necessary, as we have been able to bring focus to the positive role of faith, religion and interreligious dialogue in the promotion of a culture of peace and, of course, the role of peace in development is well established.
- However, we know that we are swimming against the tide. As many speakers have alluded to, the current international environment is a challenging one, however this must give us pause for both reflection and for action.
- The international community as a whole, however, owes it to the victims perishing day after day amidst this escalating culture of violence, to meaningfully and actively tap the wellspring of, what I believe, is yet an undying vision of a culture of peace that we all share. The threat of the culture of war is one commonly shared; and so our responsibility to act through a counter-culture of peace, is similarly collective.
- Our discussions today have given us the opportunity to candidly reflect and build on the increasing momentum following the observance of the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World, from which we emerged seven years ago, and, to ensure that we do so with all, equally necessary partners, working side by side.
- I am reminded by the words of Pope Francis in his message on World Day of Peace in January, 2017. He describes the world with (I quote) “wars in different countries...terrorism, organized crime and unforeseen acts of violence, abuses suffered by migrants and victims of human trafficking and the devastation of the environment.” As a broken world. He stresses that violence is not the cure for our broken world. Pope Francis continues, noting that Jesus, who also lived in violent times, taught that the

battlefield is in the heart for it is within the human heart that evil intentions come. Pope Francis noted however, the radically positive approach of Jesus based on God's unconditional love and a path of nonviolence.

- This brings me to share briefly about the United Nations Christian Association (UNCA), one of the co-organizers of today's event. UNCA is dedicated to fostering inter-faith dialogue within the United Nations system and raise awareness about faith and dialogue as tools for peace. It's a not-for profit entity which seeks to promote inter-faith dialogue from the perspective of The Bible and of Jesus Christ. It is not part of the UN systems but carries the name United Nations as it was created by and for United Nations civil servants for UN Staff and diplomats accredited to the United Nations.
- I would also wish to take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation, to our most distinguished panellists and all of you who have come today and who have so meaningfully participated in our discussion this morning. Your valuable and insightful interventions have contributed significantly to the successful outcome of our exchange.

9 February, 2017

Geneva