

**MESSAGE OF PEACE FROM H.E. JUDGE BERNARDO SEPÚLVEDA AMOR,
VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE,
“DAY OF PEACE” IN THE HAGUE**

21 September 2012

On behalf of the International Court of Justice, it is an honour and a pleasure to welcome you all to the Peace Palace on the occasion of the “International Day of Peace”.

For the past 30 years, every month of September, the United Nations, its Member States as well as organizations, peoples and individuals around the globe devote one day to commemorate and strengthen the ideals of peace within and among all nations and peoples.

I cannot think of a higher or more urgent goal than the one to which we are paying tribute today in this magnificent setting. Not only is the achievement of peace the most cherished aspiration of humankind, it is also the very *raison d’être* of the United Nations as well as the guiding thread of the work and activities of its organs.

The maintenance of international peace through law is certainly the main function of the International Court of Justice as the principal judicial organ of the United Nations. The Court discharges its responsibilities through the judicial settlement of disputes between States in accordance with international law, thus offering States an alternative to armed conflict.

The theme of this year’s observance is “Sustainable Peace for a Sustainable Future”. Peace is not simply a state of fact characterized by the absence of violence at a given point in time. To be sustainable and to be lasting, peace must not be disassociated from notions of social justice, solidarity, equal access to the benefits of development and the uncompromising respect for human rights and the dignity and worth of every human being.

It is about guaranteeing the highest standards of living to all individuals without distinction as to race, sex, language, religion or social and economic background. It is about empowering individuals to reach their full potential in society and ensuring the opportunity to participate in the conduct of public affairs. Last, but not least, it is about economic progress which does not come at the expense of a healthy environment.

As parts of the world are being ravaged by violence and armed conflict and, as I speak, refugees flee from their homelands in a desperate attempt to reach safety, the preamble of the United Nations Charter resonates more vividly than ever, starting with the determination of the founding fathers “to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind”.

The challenges ahead of us are formidable, but so is our determination to contribute, to the best of our knowledge and abilities, to build a society solidly grounded on foundations of peace. We are not powerless if we understand that peace is a process, that is, a collective endeavour and a life-time commitment made up of the sustained efforts of each one of us in our different capacities: teachers, diplomats, public officials, judges . . .

Today more than ever, in the face of the troubled times in which we are living, we must rise above the difficulties and renew our commitment to be active agents of peace as opposed to passive observers, particularly those who, like us, have the privilege of enjoying the bliss of peace in our daily lives. And let us lead by example. The questions, here and now, for each and all of us are: What will I do? How will I contribute effectively and meaningfully to enhance solidarity among individuals and communities? How will I foster friendly relations among peoples and nations?

May the “International Day of Peace” stand as a symbol of our pledge to peace and as a reminder of our collective and individual responsibilities in the world community. And let us pay tribute to the untold suffering of victims of armed conflict around the world through our actions by honouring our commitment faithfully and conscientiously.
