

THE MWALIMU NYERERE FOUNDATION



STATEMENT BY DR. SALIM AHMED SALIM

**FORMER PRIME MINISTER OF THE UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA
AND
FORMER SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE ORGANIZATION OF
AFRICAN UNION**

**AT
THE GLOBAL CONVENTION ON PEACE AND NON-VIOLENCE**

**31ST JANUARY 2004
NEW DELHI,
INDIA**

**Honourable Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Prime Minister of
the Republic of India,
Mr Chairman,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentleman,**

It gives me great pleasure and honour to address this important and historic Convention on Peace and Non-violence. I would like therefore to thank the organisers – the Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti – for their kind invitation.

Above all, I wish to express my appreciation for their hosting this Convention, which provides an opportune occasion for participants to exchange views on critical issues of peace and security. Such an exchange on some of the global challenges that face us, can I believe make an important contribution to a broader international understanding and cooperation in dealing with the

enormous challenges that face our world especially in the areas of peace and security.

The fact that this Convention is taking place here in New Delhi and inspired by the legacy of Mahatma Gandhi is indeed of special significance. For we are very cognisant of the great contribution made by India in the search for international peace and security and in efforts aimed at strengthening the institutions that are vital for the attainment of this objective as well as for the promotion of international harmony and cooperation. The world is also only too aware of the indelible mark made by the great Mahatma in the quest for freedom, peace and human dignity.

Mr. Chairman,

I am particularly delighted to be back in New Delhi. I have very fond memories of my stay in this country in the 1960s as the High Commissioner of Tanzania, at a very young age. The three years that I spent in India were a learning and fulfilling experience. I had the opportunity to learn firsthand the great history and rich civilisation of this great country which, through its

steadfast struggle against colonialism and injustice and through its tremendous economic and social development as well as its recognized rapid advancement in the areas of science and technology, has been and continues to be a source of inspiration to many of us in Africa and beyond.

It is noteworthy that this Convention which, among other things, will enable us to discuss the Gandhian concept of World peace and some of the challenges that face us today, is taking place a day after the anniversary of martyrdom of the great Mahatma. In many ways the very convening of this conference is a tribute to Mahatma Gandhi. Coming from Africa, I recall with particular satisfaction the fact that Mahatma Gandhi, the Great Fighter of Indian independence remains a shared icon for both India and Africa, as President Mbeki of South Africa succinctly described him during the inauguration of the African Union two years ago.

Mahatma Gandhi was strongly committed to non-violence and peace. Indeed his commitment was total and to him non-violence was of the brave not of the cowards. Gandhi taught

us that violence would only lead to destruction. The truth of this assertion is very much self evident today.

Indeed the principles upheld by Gandhiji are particularly significant today as we view the international situation where violence in one form or another has been widespread. Many parts of the world are strewn with violent conflict, ethnic upheavals, increased levels of intolerance, and escalation of terrorist attacks. These ills have continued to cause death and destruction and increasingly assumed ugly and indiscriminate international proportions.

The current international situation compels us to listen, as Mahatma Gandhi said, "to the inner voice". The voice of reason. The voice of non-violence as a means to achieving peace and justice.

The world today is confronted with injustice, poverty, inequality, despicable acts of terrorism, drug abuse and organised crime, proliferation of weapons, corruption and humiliation. The sense of helplessness is raging even in better-endowed societies.

Almost sixty years ago, the United Nations was created with the aspiration to create a better world. The United Nations was created to save succeeding generations from the scourge war and created conditions for fighting against injustice and suffering through the promotion of independence from colonial domination, economic and social development as well as peace and justice. The United Nations achievements were attained through international co-operation. Indeed the incontestable fact remains that the world body well placed to promote and sustain international understanding and cooperation is the United Nations. This truism is no way negated by the challenges and setbacks faced in recent years.

Admittedly, the authority of the United Nations is at present being put to test. The current unilateral tendencies in solving international problems have ushered in a crisis of confidence in international relations. We need to restore the shaken confidence, by reaffirming the sanctity of the United Nations Charter which calls for peaceful settlements of disputes. It is important to

promote dialogue so as to be able to take collective action and measures against the ills facing the world today.

The United Nations remains the only forum within which humanity can promote peace, security and justice for all. It must remain central to our collective efforts in facing and tackling the multitude of challenges and threats that face our planet. These include conflicts among and within states, the threats of terrorism in all forms and manifestation, the growing misery and abject poverty facing millions of our people, the increasing disparities between the rich and the poor nations, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) as well as the illicit spread of small and light weapons (SALW) and pandemics like the HIV Aids which the UN Secretary General Kofi Annan has rightly described as a weapon of mass destruction.

Mr Chairman,

Let me, before concluding, warmly welcome the recent steps towards the normalisation of relation between India and Pakistan. We salute the courage and vision demonstrated toward the

realisation of this goal. We encourage these positive developments as we do encourage the two parties to enhance their co-operation which will not only benefit the people of these two countries but will also contribute to world peace and security.

I would, in these difficult and sometimes violent times in international relations, like to conclude my remarks by recalling what Mahatma Gandhi once said. And I quote:

“Non-violence and cowardice are contradictory terms. Non-violence is the greatest virtue, cowardice the greatest vice. Non-violence springs from love, cowardice from hate. Non-violence always suffers, cowardice would always inflict suffering. Perfect non-violence is the highest bravery. Non-violent conduct is never demoralising, cowardice always is”

Thank you for your kind attention.