

INTERNATIONAL PEACE DAY:

EXTRACT FROM FW DE KLERK'S SPEECH IN ACCEPTANCE OF THE NOBEL PEACE PRIZE: OSLO, 10 DECEMBER 1993

Peace does not simply mean the absence of conflict. Throughout history, there has been an absence of conflict in many repressive societies. This lack of conflict does not have its roots in harmony, goodwill or the consent of the parties involved - but often in fear, ignorance and powerlessness. There can thus be no real peace without justice, consultation or consent.

Neither does peace necessarily imply tranquillity. The affairs of mankind are in incessant flux. No relationship - between individuals or communities or political parties or countries - remains the same from one day to the next. All relationships involve clashes of interest and interpretation. New situations are forever arising and demand constant attention. Tensions build up and need to be defused.

Peace is the manner in which people deal with these inevitable tensions without resorting to violence, force or compulsion.

- It is a frame of mind in which countries, communities, parties and individuals seek to resolve their differences through agreements, through negotiation and compromise.
- It requires a framework of rules, laws, agreements and conventions - a framework providing mechanisms for the peaceful resolution of the inevitable clashes of interest between countries, communities, parties and individuals.
- It is a framework within which the irresistible and dynamic processes of social, economic and political development can be regulated and accommodated.

In our quest for peace we should constantly ask ourselves what we should do to create conditions in which peace can prosper. It is easy to identify those forces and conditions that militate against peace and that must be eradicated:

- Peace does not fare well where poverty and deprivation reign.
- It does not flourish where there is ignorance and a lack of education and information.
- Repression, injustice and exploitation are inimical with peace.
- Peace is gravely threatened by inter-group fear and envy and by the unleashing of unrealistic expectations.
- Racial, class and religious intolerance and prejudice are its mortal enemies.

Since the vast proportion of human history has been characterised by such conditions, it should not surprise us that much of history has been a lamentable tale of violence and war.

But there is reason for optimism. Around the world forces that favour peace are on the move. Amongst them, economic development is fundamentally important. Economic growth, generated by the free market, is transforming societies everywhere:

- It is helping to eliminate poverty and is providing the wealth that is required to address the pressing needs of the poor.

- It is extending education and information to an unprecedented portion of the global population.
- It is changing social and economic relationships and is placing irresistible pressure on archaic political and constitutional systems - whether these are of the left or of the right.

And hand in hand with economic development goes democracy. Wherever economic growth occurs it tends to promote the establishment of representative and democratic institutions - institutions which invariably contribute to the peaceful resolution of disputes.

It is highly significant that there has never been a war between genuine and universal democracies. There have been countless wars between totalitarian and authoritarian states. There have been wars between democracies and dictatorships - most often in defence of democratic values or in response to aggression. But there are no instances of truly free and democratic peoples taking up arms against one another. The reasons for this are evident:

- It is difficult to incite people to aggression if they are educated and informed, and if their basic rights are properly protected.
- It is difficult to persuade people who have achieved a degree of material well-being to risk all in unnecessary conflict.
- Such people will not easily be seduced by militarism or allow themselves to become cannon fodder.
- The media - and particularly television - have stripped war and conflict of any of the glory or illusions which it might once have held.
- Democracies that have developed mechanisms for the peaceful resolution of disputes within their own societies will almost always try to resolve differences with other democracies through negotiation, compromise and international law.

Through these forces good progress is being made. The present world-wide constitutional development toward democracy, underpinned by economic development, augurs well for peace.