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Press Release SG/346
23 October 1953

TALK BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL AT THE
CITY HALL ON FRIDAY, 23 OCTOBER

Mr. Mayor, Mr. Whalen, Members of the Board of Education, Teachers and Students of the Public Schools --

The initiative that is expressed in your meeting here this morning demonstrates your support for the aims and work of the United Nations. In this manifestation you are joining hands with peoples everywhere around the world who, on or near United Nations Day, are expressing through countless gatherings the deep yearning of mankind for peace.

Peace is not a gift that comes to us without effort. Peace is an achievement attainable only for those who are willing to work for it and to make the sacrifices that it may call for.

Peace is not just the passive state of affairs in a world without war. It is devoted to action in order to build a world of prosperity a state of living/and equity where occasions for conflicts either disappear or are quickly challenged if they arise.

In our own lifetime we have seen two world wars fought to their bitter conclusions. Each has brought in its wake new tensions, new hatreds, new fears as well as worldwide distress. The United Nations is a reply to the challenge presented by those experiences. It is an attempt to give to the governments and the peoples an instrument by which they may in cooperation win and preserve peace.

The United Nations has no magic formula with which to cure the tensions in our world, but it offers new ways to peaceful settlement of disputes. It also gives us new means in our efforts to create a world where the reasons for dispute are reduced or eliminated. The Organization offers justice in the place of force, respect for the human person instead of oppression. It dares to believe that man need not live in misery and calls upon the expert knowledge of the whole world to help the neighbour in distress. Finally it opens possibilities to collective security and collective efforts for repelling aggression, possibilities which in Korea have been tested and developed with a reasonable degree of effectiveness.

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The United Nations has met with failures and with successes. It has the weaknesses of all human endeavour but also the strength of men animated by an honest desire to seek, selflessly, constructive solutions to the problems of man. The United Nations has no living reality apart from us. It has no volition of its own, separate from the wills of the nations that compose it. It is us, all of us.

So you can understand why I believe that you, the Commissioners of Education and members of the Board of Education of this great city -- the host city to the United Nations -- have a magnificent and compelling opportunity. The boys and girls who are here, students in your high schools, have their counterpart in every nation. They will soon replace us. In them we see the future of our world. We have the duty to assure them full access to our own hard-won knowledge. We have the duty to teach them about the United Nations and to instill in them a vision of what can be done through it; to set them, as far as we are able, on the path that can lead to enduring peace.

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