



6

Hate speech and the seeds of genocide: a call to action

by Alice Wairimu Nderitu

106

Role of youth in advocating against "weapons of widespread destruction"

by Monalisa Hazarika, United Nations Youth Champion for Disarmament



92

Human trafficking and the hidden link to the climate change crisis

by Maria Paula Zamorano Castano



Turning the tide or the same old story?

by Leif Villadsen
Acting Director of UNICRI

WE THE PEOPLES OF THE UNITED NATIONS DETERMINED to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind, and to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small, and to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained, and to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom."

With these words, the Charter of the United Nations, our founding document, entered into force in 1945, committing a world that had just witnessed the horrors of World War II to laying the foundations for a new era. Yet, the promise of peace has not been fully realised. If we could speak on behalf of the millions of victims of World War II and the countless wars and civil conflicts that have scarred humanity since 1945, they would tell us that the lessons of history have not been learned. >>>

The paradox of war is that it is desired by few, and there are never any true winners. The paradox of peace is that it is desired by all, as everyone would benefit, yet it remains elusive. This edition of *Freedom from Fear* addresses two types of conflict: those waged by humans against each other and those waged against nature. Neither has victors, only victims. Both reveal a failure of humanity to evolve.

The common thread linking these conflicts is crime and injustice. Crime and extremism thrive in conflict and often serve as the root causes of wars; injustice provides the foundation upon which wars and hatred are built. In a world of deep inequalities and systemic injustices, these forces find fertile ground to grow, further destabilising and polarising societies, making them more vulnerable to violent conflicts and environmental destruction.

Humanity can no longer afford wars, nor can it continue destroying the Earth that sustains it. The technological tools for destruction at our disposal today far exceed our capacity for survival. In recent years, one of the fastest-growing sectors has been arms production, to the detriment of the true priorities of humanity: peace, development, and the protection of our planet.

As Isaac Asimov's First Law of Robotics dictates, "A robot may not harm a human being, or through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm." This principle, though initially applied to robots, should guide the development of all technologies and serve as a moral compass for humanity. These rules remind us of the dangers of innovation disconnected from ethics. Instead of rushing toward the militarisation of emerging technologies, we must ensure that technological progress serves the greater good.

It is time to reaffirm our commitment to environmental protection, sustainable development, and peace through multilateralism. We must acknowledge that tackling these global challenges requires more than just national or regional self-interest; it demands a unified, international approach.

Divisions, intolerance, and the wrong assumption that a belief, group, or ideology should prevail over others, and the greed to further exploit our planet are contributing to fuel conflicts. The risks of national and regional conflicts, climate change, biodiversity loss, and resource depletion demand urgent, coordinated global action. Investing in green technology, sustainable development, and conflict prevention is not only a moral imperative but also the most effective

path to prosperity for all and long-term security.

At the same time, ensuring justice and combating crime, corruption, and extremism is critical to addressing the many global crises that are either fuelled or exploited by transnational organised crime and extremist groups. These forces thrive in environments of injustice, where people feel excluded, oppressed, or deprived of opportunity. Tackling the root causes of crime and extremism, as well as their infiltration at all levels of society, through the promotion of development and justice, can help prevent violent conflicts and environmental crimes, including the illegal exploitation of natural resources. A just world is not only a safer one but also a place where people are less vulnerable to those who seek to destabilise and polarise societies for their own ends.

When we speak of crime and extremism, we must also acknowledge the complicity of many corrupt institutions and private entities. Crime and extremism would not flourish without economic interests or misguided political choices. The simplistic division between "good" and "evil" is reductive. The grey zone where these actors converge is a no-man's land, one that we must confront with clarity and determination.

This grey zone is not merely a space of moral ambiguity but a critical battleground where corruption, economic greed, and failed governance intersect, creating the conditions for violence, extremism, and exploitation to flourish. To dismantle crime and extremism, we must confront not only the visible symptoms but also the underlying systems and interests that perpetuate them in many contexts. Working within this complex and uncomfortable space is essential if we are to build a world grounded in justice and peace. Cooperation with governments, the private sector, civil society, and the media is essential to eradicate the culture of illegality that has infiltrated many sectors

During the recent General Assembly, world leaders adopted the “Pact for the Future” on 22 September 2024, a landmark agreement that aims to transform global governance. The Pact includes the Global Digital Compact and the Declaration on Future Generations and is the most comprehensive reform in decades. Key elements of the Pact include reforms to the UN Security Council, renewed commitments to nuclear disarmament, and measures to prevent the weaponisation of emerging technologies. It also focuses on sustainable development, climate change, financial reform, and digital cooperation, while emphasising

ing youth, future generations, human rights, and gender equality.

Multilateralism, based on cooperation and collective decision-making, remains the most effective way to address global challenges. No single nation can solve these problems alone, especially when the majority of the world’s population desires peace, justice, and dignity. International institutions, conventions, treaties, and agreements are vital platforms that amplify the voices of less powerful countries, and vulnerable populations ensuring that global policies reflect the will of the many, not the few. This collaborative approach is crucial to fostering a world where diplomatic solutions are prioritised over military interventions, and where global resources are directed toward improving lives rather than escalating conflicts.

Most people on this planet wish to live free from war, inequality, and environmental destruction. Global leaders must respond to this common aspiration by embracing multilateralism and prioritising policies that advance peace, justice, and sustainability. By working together, we can address the current crises and create a world where all people, regardless of nationality, ethnicity, or faith, can live with dignity. The *Pact for the Future* offers a clear framework, but

it will only succeed if we unite our efforts and prioritise the well-being of both people and the planet. This is our chance to build a just, peaceful, and sustainable world for future generations.

We must recognise that we stand at a pivotal moment in history: the actions we take today will shape our future and set a lasting course for younger generations to follow. We are handing them a world in crisis, burdened by polarization, conflict and environmental degradation. Yet, we have the opportunity to offer them something far more meaningful to believe in and work towards - a vision of a world where peace, justice, and cooperation form the foundation for a better, sustainable future. However, this vision must be backed by genuine global will and concrete action ■