

The Role of Labour in Promoting World Peace

The call for unity and peace across the globe has been long promoted by the United Nations. This international organization which was founded in 1945 after the Second World War by fifty-one countries, has committed itself to maintaining international peace and security, developing friendly relations among nations, promoting social progress, better living standards and human rights. It must be reemphasized that the central purposes for the United Nations remain those of maintaining international peace and security, promoting respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The International Labour organization (ILO) which is an agency of the United Nations was created by the 1919 Peace Conference that followed World War I. It is important to stress the fact that promotion of peace laid at the centre of the establishment of the ILO. The role of the ILO in promoting peace was recognized in 1969, when it was awarded the prestigious Noble Peace Prize for improving peace among classes, pursuing decent work and justice for workers, and providing technical assistance to other developing nations. It may well be argued that the ILO's remit is that of addressing labour problems, but it cannot be easily dismissed that its work also concentrates on the promotion of peaceful action as opposed to the use of force.

It makes for interesting reading to know that there are 187 member states of the ILO. Further, that whereas the UN has 193 member states, 186 of these in addition to the Cook Islands are members of the ILO. This is important information given that the membership of the UN and ILO both share a common goal as it relates the promotion of world peace. The peace agenda is clearly outlined in Article 2 of the United Nations Charter, which reads:

“The Organization and its Members, in pursuit of the Purposes stated in Article 1, shall act in accordance with the following Principles.

1. The Organization is based on the principle of the sovereign equality of all its Members.
2. All Members, in order to ensure to all of them the rights and benefits resulting from membership, shall fulfill in good faith the obligations assumed by them in accordance with the present Charter.

3. All Members shall settle their international disputes by peaceful means in such a manner that international peace and security, and justice, are not endangered.
4. All Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations.”

On 21st September, 2017, World Peace Day was observed across the globe. Based on the ongoing reiterate of the North Korean leader Kim Jung Un and Donald Trump, President of the United States of America, it would seem that the idea of world peace is far removed from reality.

In his speech to the United Nations on 20 September, 2017, President Trump focused on the threat posed by North Korea, and on Iran’s government and the Iran nuclear deal. Trump referred to North Korean leader Kim Jung Un as “rocket man,” and described him as being on “a suicide mission for himself and for his regime.” He also threatened to “totally destroy” North Korea if the US finds itself “forced to defend itself or its allies.”

It is strange that there has been a pronounced silence by world leaders on this ongoing saga. It is even more disconcerting, when the United Nations Assembly has not denounced the open threat made by President Trump to totally destroy another nation. Since the United Nation mandates that all members **shall settle their international disputes by peaceful means in such a manner that international peace and security, and justice, are not endangered**, it would seem as appropriate if that body was to denounce the utterances of the President of the United States. Is this a case of the world body failing to uphold the very principles to which it subscribes and promotes?

This saga of Kim Jung Un and Donald Trump, represents a sad indictment of the ability of world leaders to engage the dispute resolution process. It would seem that that the collective bargaining mechanism has either failed or been disregarded and/or, that consultation, dialogue, conciliation and mediation have all been placed on the back burner. Inasmuch that labour has a vested interest in maintaining world peace, it is hoped that the ILO which reserves the right to register complaints against entities that are violating international rules, will undertake to do so, despite the fact that it does not impose sanctions on governments.

