**UNON Director-General’s remarks for the International Day of Peace,**

**22 September 2014**

Thank you all for being with us today to observe the 2014 International Day of Peace.

Each year, we celebrate this occasion as a day of global ceasefire and non-violence.

For Kenyans -- and for all of us who are proud to call Kenya our home -- this day is also a grim reminder of the horrible terrorist attack on the Westgate shopping mall, which began on the International Day of Peace last year.

As we come together to celebrate the International Day of Peace this year, we thought it would be appropriate to also remember the victims of the Westgate attack one year ago.

Following the attack, the United Nations stood firmly in solidarity with the Government and people of Kenya, and with the loved ones of the victims of all nationalities.

The despicable attack against innocent civilians shocked us all, and the United Nations community was also affected. Terrorist attacks, wherever they happen, have never deterred the commitment of the United Nations and its dedicated staff members. They have only strengthened our resolve to advance the work and values of the Organisation.

Never before has the work of the United Nations been so crucial, as part of our collective efforts to address the pressing challenges facing our world – from peace and security to climate change, and from development to human rights.

The past few months have been particularly troubling, with multiple crises taking place almost simultaneously in different parts of the world – from terrorist insurgencies, to renewed geo-political tensions, to the Ebola outbreak, which the Security Council has unanimously declared a threat to international peace and security. These crises have underscored the increasingly complex and inter-connected nature of our world.

I would like at this juncture to quote from the message of the Director-General of UNESCO on the International Peace Day, which I found particularly relevant to this occasion: “The right to peace is of the utmost importance in view of the violence that is tearing the world apart. To build peace, we must understand the new realities of war today, and the way in which both human lives and identities are under attack….in violence that aims to strike at the cultural and religious values of peoples.” End of quote.

In this region of Africa, the past year has also been tumultuous. From South Sudan to the Central African Republic, the ghosts of past conflicts and unresolved disputes have thrown civilians into more chaos and violence, displacing millions of people.

Somalia’s stability remains fragile as demonstrated by attacks causing the suffering of local people.

Elsewhere in the region, violent extremists have continued to target innocent civilians, causing grief to families and communities.

The United Nations will continue its efforts to promote security, good governance and resilience – including through the work of the UN Country Teams and our peace-keeping and special political missions. Our organization is working together with regional and sub-regional entities to help advance the right to peace for people in the region.

As we carry out our daily work in our respective areas of expertise, I appeal to all of us to always keep in mind who we are working for – and by that I mean the victims of conflict and instability, the marginalized and the oppressed, and the families caught in the bitter cycle of poverty. It is our duty to take into account the perspectives of the suffering people and to promote their well-being above all.

As East Africa continues to make progress towards regional integration, we should not forget that peace is the footing for any sustainable economic development. Peace and development must indeed go hand-in-hand.

The call for peace is more relevant than ever as people in this continent continue to suffer from decade-long conflicts, as well as renewed violence.

I now have the pleasure of delivering the message of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, on the International Day of Peace, which reads of follows:

“Today is the International Day of Peace.

Each year, on this day, the United Nations calls for a global ceasefire.

We ask combatants to put down their arms so all can breathe the air of peace.

Armed conflict causes untold grief to families, communities and entire countries.

Too many are suffering today at the brutal hands of warmongers and terrorists.

Let us stand with them in solidarity.

Peace and security are essential foundations for social progress and sustainable development.

That is why, three decades ago, the United Nations affirmed the right of peoples to peace.

Throughout the coming year, we will commemorate the 70th anniversary of the United Nations.

Our organisation is founded on the pledge to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war.

We have made much progress.

But much remains to be done.

We must douse the fires of extremism and tackle the root causes of conflict.

Peace is a long road that we must travel together – step by step, beginning today.

Let us all observe a minute of silence, at noon.

Let us all reflect on peace – and what it means for our human family.

Let us hold it in our hearts and minds and tenderly nurture it so it may grow and blossom.”

End of quote.

Thank you for your kind attention.