

**“SAVE FAMILIES, COMMUNITIES AND  
NATIONS FROM HIV & AIDS” CAMPAIGN**

*Called to Be Ambassadors of Life & Peace*

**Commemorative Address at the Presentation &  
Acceptance Ceremony of the 26<sup>th</sup> NIWANO  
PEACEAWARD & PRIZE (2009)  
*To the Rev Canon Gideon B. Byamugisha***

**7<sup>th</sup> May 2009  
(Tokyo, Japan)**

The President and Teams – Rissho Kosei- kai & Niwano Peace Foundation (NPF),  
The Chairman and Team – Niwano Peace Foundation  
The Executive Director and Team,  
The Secretary General  
The Chairman and Members, Niwano Peace Prize Committee;  
All Diplomats and other Dignitaries in your respective and distinguished capacities;  
My dear wife Pamela, My great brother Paddy and all the Family and Friends of  
Canon Gideon Worldwide;  
All the Leaders and People of this Great Nation, Japan;  
Fellow Countrymen and women, Global citizens, Religious Leaders and  
Communities of Faith,  
Ladies and Gentlemen.

Peace, Health and More Blessings to You All!

I do acknowledge, accept and receive (*with great joy and humility*) the 26<sup>th</sup> Niwano Peace Award and Prize (2009), on behalf of all those HIV positive ‘Ambassadors of Life and Peace’ dedicated to and involved in the struggle to bring about a safer, healthier, more productive, more fulfilling and more peace-filled world for all of us-irrespective of our age, gender, colour, creed or geographical local location.

At first, I did not believe the E-mail letter I received from the Niwano Peace Foundation Secretary General informing me of the Award and Prize.

My first reaction to the letter was thinking that am being enticed by internet con-men and fraudsters who tell you; you have won lots of money from a lottery or from a rich dead donor, then trick you into sending them your personal contacts and bank details and finally succeed in taking even the very little Savings one has made. I began knowing it was for real when Mr. Tadashi Takatani visited us in October 2008 and brought with him a signed letter from the Chairman, NPF!

As Professor Hans Kung acknowledged in his own acceptance speech in 2005.

*“There are dreams that never come true and (on the other hand) one can experience realities in life which one would never have dreamt of”<sup>1</sup>*

Since then, I have tried to read and learn a lot about Niwano Peace Foundation. I am particularly pleased and encouraged to learn (both from my readings and from interactions with the NPF General Secretary) that NPF puts great energy in encouraging, supporting and complimenting Inter-Religious Co-operation in the cause of world peace.

From the part of the world where I live and work; overcoming

- i. Socio-economic, cultural, educational, technological, spiritual and political poverty;
- ii. Preventable and controllable infections, illnesses and deaths;

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<sup>1</sup> Professor Hans Kung: “*Commemorative Address*” Niwano Peace prize , Tokyo, 11.05.2005, page 1

- iii. Socio- economic, cultural, educational, technological, religious and political injustices, discriminations, marginalization and conflicts;
- iv. Extreme vulnerability to life- threatening, life-reducing, life-taking, and life-wasting behaviors, decisions, practices, policies, programmes, partnerships, resource-allocation regimes and occurrences at individual, family, local community, national, regional and global level do form part of our daily spiritual struggle, devotion, co-operation and reflection in search for holistic peace, health and wellbeing.

The HIV&AIDS pandemic (*largely preventable, manageable and controllable with good science, good self-governance and good International Relations*) continues to wreak havoc on individuals; families, local communities, nations and regions most vulnerable to the lack of:

- i. Accurate information for self protection and care;
- ii. Appropriate attitudes for appreciating various contexts of risk and vulnerability;
- iii. Appropriate skills and services for increased HIV&AIDS prevention, care, treatment and impact mitigation;
- iv. Supportive socio-economic, cultural, educational, technological, medical, spiritual, and political environments that make safe behaviours, practices and happenings known, easy to adopt, popular and routine (*while making unsafe ones known, difficult to adopt, unpopular and rare.*)

Indeed, the HIV&AIDS pandemic is one of today's leading humanitarian, cultural, religious, economic, educational, development, human rights, health, security, technological and self-governance challenges that will continue to test the strength of our attitudes, science, spirituality, religiosity and morality as individuals, families, communities, nations and as the global community. It will also test the strength of the economic, social, cultural, educational, medical, technological, spiritual and political strategies, policies and partnerships we have in place in the face of all the life-threatening, life- reducing, life-taking and life- wasting infections, illnesses and occurrences we are facing as global citizens.

The Good News is that we have what it takes( *as global citizens and global leaders*) to halt, reverse and eventually defeat HIV&AIDS in terms of knowledge, science, technology, values and structures for international co-operation and action.

What is needed is to expand and multiply our ‘Citizens Diplomacy’<sup>2</sup> for what His Royal Highness, Prince El Hassan Bin Talal calls “*Mutually Assured Survival*”<sup>3</sup> We should never doubt that the action of thoughtful, dedicated and committed individuals, groups, associations and foundations like Niwano Peace Foundation can make this world safer, healthier and more peaceful. In fact, according to the American cultural anthropologist – Margaret Mead; “*it is the only thing that ever does*”<sup>4</sup>

“Mutually Assured Survival” in the context of HIV& AIDS means that State, Non- State and Inter-State Ambassadors of Life and Peace work to put in place policies, plans, programs, personnel, partnerships, funding mechanisms, messages and prayer patterns that:

- a) Accelerate the defeat of HIV& AIDS related stigma, shame, denial, discrimination, inaction and mis-action ( SSDDIM);
- b) Promote and multiplying “SAVE” i.e.
  - i. Safe Practices (A + B + C + PMTCT + Safe blood + Safe injections, Safe circumcision ,Safe microbicides& vaccines development etc)
  - ii. Access to treatment (OI's, STI's, PEP & ARVs) & to Nutrition;
  - iii. Voluntary, routine and stigma-free HIV Counseling and testing;
  - iv. Empowerment of children, youths, women, men, families, communities and nations living with or vulnerable to HIV and AIDS (*economically, socially, culturally, spiritually, educationally, technologically and politically*).

As HIV & AIDS related infections, illnesses and deaths continue to soar unacceptably in many countries and regions of Africa and beyond (*even in the face of so many efforts, programs and initiatives*); some of us in the most vulnerable communities and

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<sup>2</sup> “*Citizens’ Diplomacy*” is the concept that in a vibrant democracy the individual citizen (or groups of citizens) have the right – even the responsibility – to shape International Relations and Co-operation and Outcomes on a given issue of critical importance. In the context of HIV&AIDS; The “Ambassadors of Life and Peace” are all those people committed to building a safer, healthier, more fulfilling and more- peaceful world for all irrespective of age, gender, creed or geographical location.

They are committed to mobilizing state, non- state and inter-state actions, policies, programmes, funding regimes, messages and prayers that can

- a) Accelerate the defeat of HIV&AIDS related SSDDIM;
- b) Promote and multiply “SAVE”;
- c) Bring about a world free from HIV, AIDS and other life – reducing, life-threatening, life-taking and life- wasting infections, illnesses and occurrences.

<sup>3</sup> His Royal Highness Prince El Hassan Bin Talal  
“*Acceptance Speech*”, Niwano Peace Prize, 8<sup>th</sup> May 2008 Tokyo, Japan Page 2.

<sup>4</sup> Margaret Mead, Quoted from the Coalition for citizen Diplomacy Website < <<http://www.coalitionforcitizendiplomacy.org/about.html>>

nations of the world have come to realize that half –measures do not effectively work against this deadly epidemic.

Limited, inaccurate and stigmatizing approaches and messages that focus on the “*individual alone*” without evoking equal responsibility and accountability at family, local community, national, regional and global level are failing to SAVE our children, youths, women, men, families, communities and nations from the epidemic.

What is most urgently needed are creative partnerships (*public and private, global and local*) that are dedicated and committed to the defeat of HIV&AIDS related SSDDIM and the multiplication of “S.A.V.E” at all levels and in all sectors of life .

The leadership and support of us the faith leaders and faith communities in this two forked ministry will continue to be greatly needed given our reach, our presence, our unique tradition of compassion, care and ‘*love for neighbor*’ and given our potential for sustainability over the long haul.

I thank you once again, dear friends, for the great honor, encouragement, fellowship and hospitality that I and my team have experienced and will continue to treasure even beyond this great ceremony.

Together in partnership with other ‘Ambassadors of Life and Peace’;<sup>5</sup> We Will Win the war Against HIV & AIDS sooner than most of us anticipate especially if we perfect our collective art, science and will of

*“Blaming Each Other Less and Supporting Each Other More” as individuals, families, communities, nations, regions and continents of the global community.*

**“I OWE YOU”**

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<sup>5</sup> A more detailed writing on “Ambassadors of Life and Peace” in the context of our ministry against HIV&AIDS related infections, illnesses and deaths is provided in the appendix.