

Commemorative Speech

[Provisional Translation]

Benki Piyāko

The 43rd Niwano Peace Prize Presentation Ceremony

May 12, 2026

First of all, I would like to give thanks to the Great Creator who created the entire universe. I also wish to express my gratitude to everyone affiliated with the Niwano Peace Prize, to the Ashaninka people, and to my ancestors, who guided me to this point and made it possible for me to stand before you today. Thanks to all of you, I am able to share my thoughts with great love and to walk together with you in the pursuit of world peace.

I would also like to express my sincere appreciation to the staff and supporters of the Yorenka Tasorensi Institute, to all those gathered here today, and to the representatives of the Government of Japan. This country has continued to demonstrate its commitment to peace and has shown the world paths to overcome the many forms of destruction and hardship that we face today. It has opened for us the doors to dialogue, awareness, and love for life.

Since I was a child, I have devoted myself to this work, persevering through many struggles while passing on the wisdom inherited from my ancestors. My mission has been to foster respect not only for human life, but also for the earth, the waters, the animals, and all the beings that make up this planet.

The earth nourishes us and sustains all forms of life that live upon it. I have come to understand this world through the spiritual path that our people have followed for thousands of years. This spiritual path is the very root of our existence. It is the reason we have continued to live on this earth to this day and have protected the biodiversity of nature by recognizing that all things are connected as one living existence.

For us, the Ashaninka people, water is a sacred spiritual presence from which all life is born. Light warms our hearts and opens the door to our true essence. It gives seeds the power to sprout, to grow, and to bear fruit upon the earth. The power of these spirits is connected not only to the earth, but also to all the stars throughout the universe. Through this connection, human life is sustained, and we are given our identity, our bond with our origins, and the wisdom that links us to the world of the stars.

Since childhood, I have continued to share this message. One reason I work closely with children is because I hope to leave them the essence of this wisdom and awaken in them a new awareness and perspective. Everything we eat is a gift from the beings I have just spoken about. That is why we must honor them as part of our own lives.

Those who love their own lives also love the earth, love the waters, and love all the beings that give us the strength to live. This is why we have held fast to this path and this hope, bringing this message to the world as messengers of peace. Since I was a child, I too have continued to pass on the message entrusted to us by our ancestors. I carry the mission of serving as a messenger of the earth and as a guardian of its wisdom. At the same time, I hold deep respect for the wisdom that lives within the many religions of this world.

We always say that in the world of the spirits there is no language; there are only connections. Those who understand and honor these connections are united with the great sages of the earth. I hope to continue sharing this message and to bring together all the wise people of the world. Through dialogue, I wish for us to envision together the future of this world and of our planet.

The future of the earth is in the hands not only of us, but of everyone who lives on this planet. That is why we must become conscious of this responsibility and honor the earth as an irreplaceable home for all people. I have carried this mission as a representative of the Ashaninka people and, at the same time, as a representative of all Indigenous leaders in my country.

I would also like to express my gratitude to President Lula and to all the Indigenous leaders who have faced many challenges in order to make our voices heard. This wisdom is a precious treasure from which the world has much to learn. If it is shared and embraced with wisdom, it can illuminate the path that this planet must follow.

Today, our planet stands at the edge of a precipice because of environmental destruction. That is why we must paint a vision of the future together.

I carry with me the wisdom of our traditional medicine and the knowledge handed down by our ancestors as living proof that we have never lost these traditions and continue to preserve them. We have inherited traditional medicines and wisdom from generation to generation. The forest is our great home, our mother, and the earth is also our great Mother Earth. For millions of years, since the beginning of creation, she has given life to all living beings. She has nurtured every form of life without asking who should receive food and who should receive water.

With these convictions in our hearts, we seek to bring a message of hope to the world. By planting trees, we show that we ourselves are sustained by the earth, while also reminding others that we must protect the earth in order to ensure our own survival. Guided by this conviction, I have planted millions of trees together with my parents since I was a child.

I give thanks to the wisdom of my father and mother, my grandparents, and my great-grandparents who have already departed from this world. They left us a precious legacy: to continue onward as messengers to the world, striving to restore what is being lost and to overcome the many challenges

before us.

Today, the Amazon is facing an extremely serious crisis. Yet this is not a problem for Indigenous peoples alone. It is also a question of how national development plans and various development projects are pursued. Too often, they move forward without a sufficient understanding of, or respect for, the traditions and cultures of the people who live there.

Today, we are witnessing how this ongoing decline serves as a warning to the entire world. We must seriously consider what kind of future we wish to create. Climate change is not a problem confined to this region or to Brazil; it affects every continent. That is why we must reflect together on where we are heading and how we can restore what is being lost on this earth.

Inspired by this mission, we seek to bring this message to the world. This is also what we put into practice through the Ayahuasca Conference. We hope to bring together the Indigenous sages of every continent—to engage in dialogue, to share our thoughts, and to reflect together. We also wish to explore how this knowledge and wisdom can be connected with, and coexist alongside, the many religions that are already practiced and widely embraced throughout the world. We hope that our own way of understanding this earth and human life will also be respected and welcomed within society.

I believe that our traditional medicines and ancestral knowledge can contribute to the well-being and survival of many people, because they are traditions that have been faithfully passed down by our ancestors. For us, the forest is not merely a source of natural resources. It is the place where our medicines are found, a living treasury that contains everything we need to sustain life.

This Niwano Peace Prize is not an honor for me alone. It is a tribute to my parents, my uncles, and my ancestors. It is also a tribute to the great leaders who gave their lives in the struggle to protect the earth. I accept this award on their behalf.

I hope this award will serve as an example and awaken people's consciousness. I hope that the light of the universe will plant a small seed, allowing that light to unfold within the heart of every person. And through that awakening, I hope that our knowledge and wisdom will be more deeply respected and preserved as part of the shared heritage of all humanity.

Here, I would like to leave a message for all the leaders of this country and for Indigenous peoples throughout the world. I am ready to join hands with you, to work together, to advocate, and to stand united in protecting the earth and finding a path toward its future.

Today, in many parts of the world, water sources are disappearing, leaving countless people to suffer from thirst, while others are losing their lives to hunger. This is happening even though humanity possesses the knowledge, the resources, and the opportunities needed for everyone to live with dignity.

We witness wars. We see bombs being used. Science and technology, too, are sometimes used in ways

that destroy human life.

But this is not the path we should choose for future generations. We must show that it is still possible to restore this world. To do so, we must begin with ourselves. Peace, like change, must begin within each one of us. It cannot come from someone else; it must arise from our own hearts.

I wish to share this message with all those who hold influence, with leaders, and with women and men who guide others, so that together we may renew our hearts and begin walking the path toward world peace.

Now is not the time for despair. It is the time for hope. That is why we can begin to change from this very moment. We still have time to act.

Once again, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to all of you. I hope that, as companions sharing this world, we can walk this path together and extend to many parts of the world the work we have been doing in our homeland.

I have planted more than three million trees to restore the forest, but I have not done so for myself. I have done it to show that protecting biodiversity, building a sustainable society, and living in harmony with the earth all begin beneath our own feet. Everything begins with what we do in our own homes and communities.

Carrying this mission in my heart, I have traveled to other continents as well. I have visited France, Italy, the United Kingdom, the United States, Mexico, Peru, and many other places, reconnecting cultures, planting trees, and sharing seeds of hope and human warmth. I hope those seeds will take root in people's hearts, and that they, in turn, will sow new seeds throughout the world.

My wish is to leave behind the traditions and wisdom that I have inherited for future generations. I also wish to leave this message: that hope is our own responsibility. It is our responsibility to show who we are and what we can do for future generations and for the future itself. And so, let us begin here.

I hope that the hearts of those who lead and govern their countries will awaken. I also hope that government leaders will listen to us, Indigenous peoples. I did not come here lightly.

We understand the challenges facing our planet. We also understand that, if we are to overcome them, our own consciousness must first be transformed. We must seriously reflect on the kind of development we pursue, the quality of life we seek, food sovereignty, and the ways we can protect the rich biodiversity of our planet.

With this message, I once again offer my heartfelt gratitude to all of you. I will treasure the Niwano Peace Prize for the rest of my life, and one day I hope to pass on its meaning to my children and

grandchildren. Thank you very much.

Finally, I would like to offer a song of peace dedicated to the spirits of my ancestors.

Benki Piyāko
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