



Today we begin the 100-day countdown to the observance of the [International Day of Peace](#), when the United Nations calls on all combatants around the world to lay down their arms and to give peace a real chance.

The International Day of Peace, marked on 21 September each year, offers an opportunity for the world to pause, reflect and consider how best to break the vicious cycle of violence that conflict creates.

The theme for the Day this year is "Education for Peace". The United Nations will examine the role education can play in fostering global citizenship. It is not enough to teach children how to read, write and count. Education has to cultivate mutual respect for others and the world in which we live, and help people forge more just, inclusive and peaceful societies.

This kind of education is a central focus of my Global Education First Initiative, which calls on governments to place education at the top of their agenda.

I call on everyone – whether governments, parties to conflicts, religious institutions, community leaders, the media, academics, or civil society groups – to play their part. We must support peace education programmes, protect students and teachers from conflict, help rebuild schools destroyed by war, and ensure all girls and boys have access to a quality education that includes learning about resolving and preventing conflicts.

Over the next 100 days, let us resolve to learn together how to create a universal culture of peace.