

Media Update

18 June 2022

UNITED NATIONS

SECRETARY-GENERAL MESSAGE

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL MESSAGE ON THE INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR COUNTERING HATE SPEECH New York, 18 June 2022

Hate speech incites violence, undermines diversity and social cohesion, and threatens the common values and principles that bind us together.

It promotes racism, xenophobia and misogyny; it dehumanizes individuals and communities; and it has a serious impact on our efforts to promote peace and security, human rights, and sustainable development.

Words can be weaponized and cause physical harm. The escalation from hate speech to violence has played a significant role in the most horrific and tragic crimes of the modern age, from the antisemitism driving the Holocaust, to the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda.

The internet and social media have turbocharged hate speech, enabling it to spread like wildfire across borders. The spread of hate speech against minorities during the COVID-19 pandemic provides further evidence that many societies are highly vulnerable to the stigma, discrimination and conspiracies it promotes.

In response to this growing threat, three years ago, I launched the United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech. This provides a

framework for our support to Member States to counter this scourge while respecting freedom of expression and opinion, in collaboration with civil society, the media, technology companies and social media platforms.

Last year, the General Assembly came together to pass a resolution calling for inter-cultural and inter-religious dialogue to counter hate speech – and proclaimed the International Day we mark today for the first time.

Hate speech is a danger to everyone and fighting it is a job for everyone. This first International Day to Counter Hate Speech is a call to action. Let us recommit to doing everything in our power to prevent and end hate speech by promoting respect for diversity and inclusivity.