

# International Day of Peace recognised at Holyrood

Members of the Scottish Parliament yesterday debated the importance of peace and official recognition of the UN's International Day of Peace, following a motion raised by Bill Kidd MSP.

The day, observed annually on 21<sup>st</sup> September, was established in 1981 to strengthen the ideals of peace, both within and among all nations and peoples, however the day is not officially recognised in the UK.

Ten MSPs gave speeches, including Ben Macpherson MSP, Minister for Europe, Migration & International Development, in support of the motion, acknowledging the UN understanding of peace to be structural, rather than just the absence of violence, and that this aligns with the UN Sustainable Development Goals agenda, specifically Goal 16 of Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions.

“A more peaceful world is possible,” Ben Macpherson MSP said, “By spreading awareness through debates such as this and through the activism that has been described by Members across the Chamber, we can promote a more peaceful world. Peace day gives us the chance to reflect and act on that sense of common purpose.”

The motion also called upon the members to highlight the work of the International Voluntary Service in promoting Peace Day in the UK, through campaigning on social media and distributing ‘Peace Pins’ designed to be worn as a symbol of commitment to world peace, understanding and cooperation. During the debate, several MSPs were wearing Peace Pins in the Chamber, and within their speeches noted the International Voluntary Service’s commitment to promoting Peace Day and

SDG16, and the positive impact of their campaigning and global 'volunteering for peace' projects.

Staff and volunteers from the International Voluntary Service were also present and observing the debate from the Chamber Gallery, to whom Bill Kidd MSP said in his opening speech, "I welcome to the Chamber members of the International Voluntary Service, who are working to raise the profile of this day in Scotland. Such promotion contributed to the debate taking place."

The primary objectives of the International Voluntary Service's work are to strengthen civil society at home and abroad and foster peace and understanding to achieve lasting change. Offering volunteering opportunities across the globe that linked to the SDGs by identifying a local community need for sustainable development are one ways to achieve this. In the UK, the International Voluntary Service are campaigning for official recognition of Peace Day by the UK Government and hope for members of the public and politicians to wear a Peace Pin to show their commitment to Peace Day and to lasting peace between communities world-wide.

On 21<sup>st</sup> September, the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres will celebrate the day in the Peace Garden at the UN Headquarters by ringing the Peace Bell and observing a minute of silence at 12 noon. Many people in the UK will be observing this minutes' silence to demonstrate commitment to world peace, as well joining many other events taking place in local communities across the globe. For ideas on what you can do on Peace Day, visit <https://peaceday.eu/> and share your experiences on social media using #PeaceDay