



THE **Zambakari** ADVISORY

Waging Peace in a Changing World

Dr. Christopher Zambakari
CEO of The Zambakari Advisory
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Distinguished guests, Rotarians, Peoria Police Department, Peoria Unified School District, thank you for having me. I think we can all agree that we live in challenging times. You cannot turn on the television without hearing about a country or region consumed by the problems of violence and conflict.

More and more, civil wars, localized violence within states, and ecological disasters are displacing millions of people from their homes. The United Nations reports that more than 65.6 million people were displaced by conflict in 2016.¹ The forced displacement was driven mainly by conflicts in Syria, Iraq, Yemen, as well as in sub-Saharan Africa, including Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan, and Sudan. Conflicts are not the only forces driving people away from their homes. Around the world, population growth, urbanization, poverty, food insecurity and water scarcity, all account for the 24.2 million new disaster displacements recorded in 2016.² These disasters are further exacerbated by climate change.

Though it may seem like the world is filled with nothing but problems there are grounds to be grateful. One reason is what we are celebrating here today at Centennial High School.

¹ UNHCR, "Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2015," (Geneva, Switzerland. Accessible from <<http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/statistics/unhcrstats/576408cd7/unhcr-global-trends-2015.html>> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Accessible from <<http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/statistics/unhcrstats/576408cd7/unhcr-global-trends-2015.html>>, 2016).

² IDMC, "Disasters and Climate Change," The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), <http://www.internal-displacement.org/internal-displacement/context-of-displacement/disasters-and-climate-change/>.

The Rotary sponsored peace initiative (currently endorsed by the Peoria Unified School District), which includes the incorporation of peace studies into the curriculum, is a major step in the right direction. As more youth receive training in peacebuilding, we can rest assured that such investment in our youth will yield peace dividends that benefit entire societies across the globe. On a modest note, I came to the United States as a refugee; I fled Sudan from a civil war that cost the lives of 2.5 million people³, and I have spent the last 15 years working on peace and conflict resolution. In 2013, I was awarded the Rotary Peace Fellowship and off to Australia I went. I split my fellowship time between The University of Queensland and the Berghof Foundation in Berlin where I was working on mediation and peace support in the Middle East and North Africa.

I returned from Australia and formed The Zambakari Advisory in 2015 with a mission to provide cutting edge consulting and advisory services to individuals, businesses, and organizations in the United States, Africa and the Middle East. This mission has served as my contribution to the larger effort to work towards peace. I love the words engraved on this newly inaugurated space by *Robert Fulghum*: "Peace is not something you wish for. Peace is something you make, something you are, something you do, and something you give away."⁴ Rotary has been working for over 100 years on peace by supporting, funding, and working with volunteers to make the world a better place.

Over the last few years, Rotary has spent over \$194 million on disease prevention, water and sanitation, economic development, education, maternal health, and peace and conflict resolution. It is not sufficient to simply wish for peace in the world; we must work around the clock to make the world a better place. It is that same faith in the potential of young people that bring us here today.

Franklin D. Roosevelt who led in difficult times said, "**our doubts of today will be the only limitation on our achievements of tomorrow.**"⁵ Though it may be dark and gloomy outside, the potential for resolving conflicts and our collective human spirit to rise above our collective challenges shines brightest. I will conclude with a short story recounted by Christopher McDougall:

³ United Nations Missions in Sudan (UNMIS), "The Background to Sudan's Comprehensive Peace Agreement," United Nations Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS).
<http://unmis.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?tabid=515>.

⁴ Words engraved on the Peace Monument at Centennial High School in Peoria, Arizona.

⁵ Thomas W. Benson, "Inaugurating Peace: Franklin D. Roosevelt's Last Speech," *Speech Monographs* 36, no. 2 (1969).

Every day in Africa a gazelle wakes up. It knows it must run faster than the fastest lion or it will be killed. Every morning a lion wakes up. It knows that it must outrun the slowest gazelle or it will starve to death. It doesn't matter whether you are a lion or a gazelle. When the sun comes up, you better be running.⁶

If we want to see a more stable and peaceful world we must take the cues from this story; every day the sun rises, we had better be working for peace. In the end, if we can dare to see and nurture the invisible potential in each of us to contribute to peace, we can do the impossible and wage peace in an increasingly changing world.

⁶ C. McDougall, *Born to Run: The Hidden Tribe, the Ultra-Runners, and the Greatest Race the World Has Never Seen* (Profile Books, 2010).