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## In Memoriam: Dr. Robert Muller

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The Global Security Institute was honored to host a [Memorial Service](#) for one of the finest servants of peace of our time, Dr. Robert Muller. It took place on March 11, 2011 at the UN Church Center. His family and friends delivered inspiring remarks about a man whose inner wisdom and active leadership in world affairs was towering.

We urge your reading the statement by the [Secretary-General](#) of the United Nations Ban Ki-moon delivered at the Service along with MPI founder Hon. [Doug Roche's](#) remembrances.

Please visit the [official website of Dr. Muller](#), truly one of the world's most passionate and dynamic advocates for peace.

### Remarks at Memorial Service for Robert Muller by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon *delivered by Mr. Kiyo Akasaka, Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information*

I offer sincere condolences to all the family members, friends, former colleagues and others who have gathered to mourn the loss and commemorate the life of Dr. Robert Muller. I thank the Global Security Institute for hosting this service.

I did not know Dr. Muller personally, but I am well aware of the very high regard in which he is held throughout the United Nations community. And I do know this: when death claims a staff member who brought such tremendous passion and commitment to our work, and who devoted so many decades to this Organization, it is a loss for the living United Nations family as a whole.

Robert Muller was a justifiably renowned figure. His creativity and influence were instrumental in the conception of scores of multilateral bodies, including the UN Development Programme, the World Food Programme, the UN Population Fund, and the World Youth Assembly -- some of the key endeavours that define the United Nations and our global work. He knew that these could not be impersonal institutional structures but, rather, had to be alive with vision, compassion and a powerful sense of human unity.

Dr. Muller brought precisely that spirit to whatever task he undertook. For him, the entire human family was his family. He also helped orchestrate the first-ever UN Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm in 1972, and was deeply involved in many other global gatherings. His career spanned the decades, the issues, and even almost all the professional ranks of the Secretariat -- starting from the P1 level and rising steadily to Assistant-Secretary-General, directly serving three of my predecessors. He also had a tremendous imprint on global education, including through the University of Peace, and richly earned the UNESCO Prize for Peace Education in 1989.

We will miss our "optimist-in-residence", as some called him. But he remains a source of inspiration, and his example and his teachings will continue to guide us in our global mission of peace, development and human rights. On this day that would have been his 88th birthday, let us celebrate just the same -- the life of a remarkable man who brought hope and good works to the world.



*Mr. Kiyo Akasaka, Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information*



## Tribute to Dr. Robert Muller by Hon. Douglas Roche, O.C.

When I was a young parliamentarian visiting the United Nations in the early 1970s, I heard about Robert Muller. I went to see him and my life has never been the same.

The word "big" is not big enough to describe the largeness of his mind and indeed his spirit. As a global citizen, he embraced the world, and his enthusiasm for life was infectious. He was, in short, a tower of hope.

Of course, with his vision crashing through the traditional barriers and obstacles in UN decision-making, he was too much for what might be called the normal bureaucratic process. I remember urging a prospective Prime Minister of Canada to visit Robert Muller to get a deep understanding of the interlocking nature of the world's crises. He did visit Robert, much to the chagrin of an official in the Canadian mission, who said that Robert Muller was not on the list of "normal contacts." My response to this snub was to give an autographed copy of Robert's book, *New Genesis: Shaping a Global Spirituality*, to each of my children for Christmas with the admonition that here is how the world ought to proceed.

When Robert was in charge of the commemoration of the 40th anniversary of the UN in 1985, I interviewed him. Robert said: "What we need in the United Nations is to look to the future, to focus on our beautiful planet and the very precious human species. We ought to put our hearts and minds into everything possible in order to enter the 21st century with more hope, security and development for all." Life went on -- I suppose what we call "normal life," with all its missed opportunities for building a world with true human security -- and soon it was time to prepare for the 50th anniversary of the UN.

By this time, in 1995, Robert was living in Costa Rica, beside his beloved University for Peace. I went to Costa Rica and stayed with him for a week while we conducted a dialogue for a book, *Safe Passage into the Twenty-First Century*, which explored the four themes set out for the 50th anniversary: the UN's quest for peace, equality, justice and development. Robert was in his element, plunging into the intellectual stratosphere with idea after idea for a global system to abolish war, a democratic United Nations, a global justice system, a global human development system, and, most of all, new global education priorities. Ideas sprang from Robert like a gushing fountain. I felt I was in the presence of man in communion with the universe. I truly believe there has never been a more dedicated believer and supporter of the United Nations than Robert Muller.

Robert's books, poems and lists of ideas for a better world all revealed his deep spirituality. His background, going to Mass as a child, gave him some of this, but he said he became a spiritual being "because of all the knowledge I received from the United Nations -- from the infinitely large to the infinitely small, the total knowledge of our planet, the total knowledge of humanity, the total knowledge of our journey from the infinite past to the future."

He said that when he joined the United Nations he couldn't believe that he had found "a Dag Hammarskjold who, from an economist, had been transformed into a mystic...Then I had even a greater privilege in working with U Thant, the Burmese Buddhist, who always said to me, 'Robert, why do you separate spirituality from life? Life is spirituality from morning to evening. You Westerners make a mistake by putting it in the church on Sunday'."

Devoted as he was to making the earth a better place, the earth occupied only a part of Robert's thinking. The universe was his true home, and his eyes shone when he would wax into the ineffable mysteries of the galaxies. The universe, he said, was "a miracle." He was in his glory when discussing the unfathomable interconnections of all beings and all matter through endless time and space in the universe, for he knew that the centrality of all reality is love. Love was the driving force of his spirituality. With Teilhard de Chardin, he would say:

*Some day, when we have mastered  
the winds, the tides, and gravity,  
we will harness the energies of love.  
Then, for the second time in the  
history of the world, [the human  
being] will have discovered fire.*

When Robert called for "a spiritual renaissance on this planet," he often cloaked his aspirations as dreams. Yes, he was a "dreamer," but not in the sense of impracticality. He was a "dreamer" in the sense of Gandhi and Martin Luther King whose dreams were encased in the blood, sweat and tears of the continuing political struggle to inch the world closer to social justice and dignity for all humans. Far from being detached from reality, his dreams were rooted in the human condition and the unceasing affirmation that here on earth we must take up God's plan for development of the universe.

For many who step into the cauldrons of world reform, daily life is a grim business. But not for Robert. Joy was his leitmotif and, as we all know, playing Ode to Joy on his traveling harmonica became his signature statement. When he played Ode to Joy, he would lift audiences out of their seats.

In the church I belong to, we canonize heroic figures. That doesn't mean they're without blemish. Many of the saints were irascible. A touch of obstreperousness was not unknown. But through the human failings, in truly great people a call to a higher life has always persisted. Robert Muller called us to a higher life.

One of his best known books was Most of All They Taught Me Happiness. So it is in happiness that I pay this tribute to Robert, for, most of all he taught me life.

May God keep you, Robert, in the palm of His hand.

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