Association of Space Explorers

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Executive Director
Andy Turnagee

September 19, 2026

Dear Children and Young People of the Children's Meeting Place,

Twenty-five years ago, just eight days after the world was shaken by tragedy, the gates of the United Nations in Nairobi opened — for you. Children from twelve nations gathered beneath an acacia tree, and Dr. Klaus Töpfer told you: "This is your place. You are the owners now." The Association of Space Explorers has been with you from that very day, and we write to congratulate you on this remarkable anniversary.

Our members are men and women who have traveled to space and looked back at our home planet from orbit. That view changes a person. It dissolves the lines drawn on maps and reveals what is always true: that we live together on one small, luminous world, and we share a responsibility for its future. This is exactly what the Children's Meeting Place has always understood. You have known it from the roots of the Mother Tree.

We are deeply moved by the vision of the Circle of Hope — one stone from every United Nations member nation, embracing the place where children and the world have met for a quarter century. Stones are patient. They carry memory. They come from the very foundation of our planet, formed over billions of years in the same cosmic processes that shaped every world in our solar system.

When astronaut Loren Acton chooses a stone near his home in Montana, when Helen Sharman finds one among the ancient stone circles of England's Lake District, when Dorin Prunariu selects one from the Bucegi Mountains of Romania, and when Paolo Nespoli brings a stone from the region of Carrara — where Galileo studied the heavens and Michelangelo found his marble — they are placing a piece of the Earth itself in your care.

From space, our astronaut members have seen storms, forests, rivers, and cities — but no borders. They have seen what Earth looks like when you step far enough back to take it all in. Alexei Leonov, the first human to walk in space, once told us that his spacewalk was dramatic — and so was what came after, when he and his crewmate spent two cold nights in the Ural Mountains waiting for rescue teams to arrive. Even heroes face difficulties. What matters is how we face them together. This is something you, the children of the CMP, already know.

The 25th anniversary falls on the United Nations International Day of Peace. What a fitting day for a circle of stones, a circle of hope, and a gathering of children from around the world. The Circle may not be complete yet — stones, like peace, take time to form. But the intention is planted, as surely as the Child Tree is planted beside the Mother Tree, ready to carry this place, and you, forward into the future.

The Association of Space Explorers has been honored to stand beside the Children's Meeting Place since your very first day. We have seen from orbit what you have always known from the roots of the Mother Tree: that this planet is our common home, and that its future belongs to you. Congratulations on 25 extraordinary years. We look forward to the next 25-year anniversary celebration, and beyond.

With warmest wishes and enduring admiration,



Andy Turnage
Executive Director
Association of Space Explorers

Loren & Evelyn Acton
Sparks, Nevada, U.S.A.
August 31, 2026

Dear Children, Friends at Globetree, and Honourable Guests,

My wife, Evelyn, and I are happy to join you, if only by letter, on this special day – the 25th anniversary of the Children's Meeting Place at the United Nations in Nairobi.

Our journey with Globetree began in the planning of the *Future Vessel* event in Stockholm in 1998, 13 years after I flew as an astronaut on the Spacelab 2 mission. When Globetree first reached out to me, Evelyn and I were so intrigued by their vision and work that we invited Globetree's Kajsa to our home in Montana to learn more. Inspired by the mission, I presented the idea of the *Future Vessel* to my fellow astronauts and cosmonauts at the Association of Space Explorers (ASE) Congress in Costa Rica. As a result, ten flyers joined the Future Vessel event in Stockholm in 1998. I brought water that had been created from pure hydrogen and oxygen in space (on the space shuttle) to join with other waters from all over the world in the children's *Our Uniting Water Ceremony*.

Since then, it has been an honour to walk alongside Globetree. I participated in the *Future Vessel* at the World Water Forum in The Hague in 2000, and later, celebrating the 10th anniversary of the Children's Meeting Place right here, by the Mother Tree, where you are now celebrating 25 years!

As a scientist-astronaut who has looked down on our planet and as a father of 2, I have discovered that space explorers and children share a common perspective: we both see the Earth without borders; as a unique, precious, and beautiful home that we must protect.

At the 2024 ASE Congress in The Netherlands Globetree presented the vision of the CIRCLE OF HOPE – with one stone from each UN member state, embracing the Children's Meeting Place. These stones will embody children's dreams and ideas of the World Home – how all life on Earth can live well together.

Very close to where I live I have found a black and white gneiss stone that, for me, represents the unity of Space and Home Planet Earth as well as the beautiful diversity of the Earth's people. The stone is ready to travel to Nairobi!

For 25 years, the beautiful Acacia tree in Nairobi - The Mother Tree - has been a special place where the world's future meets the world's decision-makers. It is my strong desire that the CIRCLE OF HOPE will be realized because it will powerfully symbolize, once again, the role of the UN in a peaceful, cooperative, future for all.

To the UN Leadership and Ambassadors: thank you for listening to the most important voices of our global community, our children. To Globetree: thank you for tirelessly building bridges between children and leaders of the world. To you, the children: Your dreams are the navigation system for our planet's future. Keep reminding us adults, what is most important in life!

Evelyn and I wish you all a wonderful 25 Year Anniversary!

Loren W. Acton Evelyn Acton

Loren W. Acton Evelyn Acton

DUMITRU-DORIN PRUNARIU
First Cosmonaut of Romania | Soyuz 40 – Salyut-6 Space Mission

21 September 2026

Dear Children and Young People, Excellencies, distinguished representatives of the United Nations, educators, supporters, and friends of Globetree,

It gives me great pleasure to extend my warmest congratulations to the Children's Meeting Place (CMP) on its 25th Anniversary, celebrated on the United Nations International Day of Peace. For a quarter of a century, CMP has brought generations together and given children and young people a meaningful voice in the pursuit of peace, human dignity, and global responsibility.

My bond with Globetree began in 1998, when I joined the Future Vessel event at the Stockholm Globe Arena together with nine fellow space explorers. During that gathering, my colleague, cosmonaut Alexei Leonov, presented the prestigious Leonov Medal to Kajsa Dahlström, the founder and president of Globetree, affectionately known today as Mama Kajsa. This rare distinction recognised both her vision and her perseverance.

Alexei Leonov understood the power of building bridges between very different nations. In 1975, he and American astronaut Thomas Stafford joined in the historic Apollo-Soyuz handshake in space. At the height of the Cold War, that gesture showed that trust and cooperation remain possible even when divisions on Earth seem profound. The world needs that spirit more than ever. Peace is not a passive aspiration; it requires courage, persistence, and the willingness to reach across borders. For 25 years, CMP has embodied that effort.

Throughout my career as a cosmonaut, as former Chair of the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UN COPUOS), and as a participant in United Nations space sessions since 1992, I have sought to advance peaceful international cooperation. My experience has taught me that genuine progress begins by building bridges across cultures and generations, and by ensuring that institutions and procedures serve, rather than obstruct, children's call for peace, dignity, and human rights.

I recall with special warmth Mama Kajsa presenting the Circle of Hope at the Association of Space Explorers Planetary Congress in Noordwijk, the Netherlands, in 2024. Space explorers immediately embraced the vision, and four of us began considering which stone from each of our countries could best express the children's vision of the World Home. It is disappointing that procedural obstacles have since delayed the initiative. Yet a delay need not become an ending. We remain united in our conviction:

The Circle of Hope will become a reality.

To the Ambassadors and United Nations officials gathered today, I respectfully appeal: lend your support, influence, and diplomatic experience to help overcome the remaining obstacles. Your engagement can turn this pause into renewed momentum and give life to a lasting bridge between the United Nations and the young people of the world - a true Global Circle of Unity.

To the educators, leaders, and supporters, thank you for every extra effort you make to nurture peace. To the children and young people, I say: never stop reaching for the stars, and never believe that your voices are too small to be heard. From space, Earth appears as one fragile, beautiful home, without visible borders. The Circle of Hope gives form to that truth. When children, nature, and institutions act together, we can build a more harmonious future for our entire planet.

May the next 25 years bring the Children's Meeting Place even greater inspiration, stronger global unity, and achievements that reach far beyond our planet.

With profound respect and cosmic warmth,

Dumitru-Dorin Prunariu
First Cosmonaut of Romania
Former Chair of the UN Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UN COPUOS)
Honorary Member of the Romanian Academy

Dear Friends at the Children's Meeting Place,

Congratulations on the 25 years celebration of the Children's Meeting Place!

My thoughts first go to all children coming together today by the acacia tree on United Nations Peace Day. Why children first? Because when I launched into space in May 1991, my perspective on our world changed forever.

During the spaceflight, I shared my special experience with children, talking together directly via amateur radio. Hearing children's voices that had travelled up into space, filled with curiosity, hope, and uninhibited ideas are still today very special moments of my mission.

I appreciate your way of seeing possibilities – without first thinking of barriers that most adults construct. You ask questions that truly matter and with that, you hold keys to our shared future.

From 350 kilometres above, looking down at the Earth, my senses were heightened by the beauty and vibrancy of the planet, where everything is obviously interconnected. I saw the globe as a single entity that we all share.

It is exactly that feeling of energy, unity, and global vision that you share at the Children's Meeting Place.

My personal connection to the wonderful Children's Meeting Place came to me in the autumn of 2024, when I attended the Association of Space Explorers Planetary Congress in Noordwijk, Holland. It was there I met again with Globetree telling me about the Circle of Hope initiative, envisioning a stone circle composed of different stones, one stone from each UN member state. All stones can be 'opened' with a QR code, and we can see and experience children's vision of a World Home – a home where all life lives well together.

Inspired by this vision, I looked for a stone that can represent the United Kingdom. I chose a piece of rock from the Lake District in North West England. This region is not only famously beautiful, but it is also home to one of the oldest stone circles in the UK, stones that have stood for thousands of years, meeting places for ancient people, deeply rooted in our history.

There is a beautiful symmetry in this. As an astronaut, I have seen our planet in the vastness of space. Yet being in space teaches us to appreciate the tangible ground beneath our feet when we return to Earth. A stone represents the material foundation of our planet; a piece of the cosmic dust that formed the world we walk upon. By bringing together stones from every country into a single circle, you are physically reconstructing the unified world that astronauts see from orbit.

To all the distinguished guests, coming together celebrating 25 Years of the Children's Meeting Place, I wish you the very best and let us continue listening to children and supporting them in building bridges between now and the future!
And to all of you – children and adults alike – stay curious and keep looking up at the stars!

With warm regards,



Helen Sharman
Astronaut

Ciao to you all—the children gathered here today, your guests, and Globetree.

Hear my call from Italy: ***Happy 25th Anniversary to Children's Meeting Place!*** *My heart is with you beneath the Mother Tree at the United Nations in Nairobi.*

First, I want to congratulate you, children. Whenever I meet with young people to speak about space, I am filled with joy. I love listening to your questions because you see the world with open, clear, and honest eyes. You observe, you dream, and you share those dreams—how beautifully the world transforms through your vision. The world needs your dreams to move in the right direction.

When I looked down at Earth from space, I saw no borders between nations. I saw a beautiful, shining blue pearl. The Earth appeared as a small, fragile spacecraft, and I realized that every human being is part of its crew.

*You understand this perfectly. Through Globetree, you have seen the UN Charter not merely as adult rules, but as a blueprint for our "**World Home**"—a space where all life can flourish together.*
*To the **United Nations**, I offer my profound gratitude. Thank you for giving the children this sacred, permanent space on your grounds in Nairobi. It is vital that world leaders stop, listen, and truly learn from our youngest citizens.*

*To **Globetree**, thank you for embracing children's dreams and envisioning the Circle of Hope. What a brilliant way to ensure that every visitor to the United Nations remembers the children's experience of our World Home, woven together from stones representing every UN nation.*

May this dream come true.

As my personal gift for this milestone anniversary, I offer a small white stone from Carrara, in the heart of Tuscany, for the Circle of Hope on this United Nations Peace Day. This stone carries Italy's wishes for your vision.

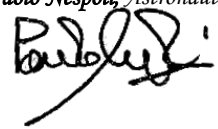
Italy is the birthplace of Galileo, who first taught us to gaze at the stars with wonder, and Carrara is the source of the white marble that Michelangelo transformed into eternal beauty. But most importantly, white reminds us all: Peace is the absolute foundation of the UN Charter. Peace is the solid ground upon which we must build everything.

With this stone of peace, I use my voice as an astronaut and space explorer to send a message to the world:
I urge all leaders to listen to the children.
If we are to steer our global spacecraft toward a bright future, we must follow the clear vision and open hearts of our children.

May this white stone be a bridge between the grand perspective of the cosmos and the everyday work of building peace on Earth.

*To all of you—children and adults, distinguished guests and friends—**Happy 25th Anniversary!***

Paolo Nespoli, *Astronaut* *Seregno, 25 August, 2026*



Gro Harlem Brundtland
Member of The Elders

To the Children, Organizers, and Global Leaders
Gathered for the 25th Anniversary of the Children's Meeting Place
United Nations, Nairobi (UNON), Kenya

September 21, 2026

Dear friends,

How beautiful it is that you gather today, on the United Nations International Day of Peace. Your celebration will unite with many in the world when you ring your peace bells and stand together in a silent minute by your acacia tree - the Mother Tree.

I remember when I first met children of Globetree. It was 1990 in the city of Bergen in Norway where many nations came together for *Action for a Common Future*. The children participated with Our Uniting Water Ceremony, the same ceremony you have today by your Mother Tree.

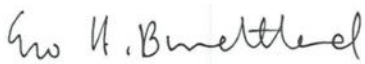
I received the children uniting water and a handmade book telling me WATER IS MOST IMPORTANT! WITHOUT WATER WE HAVE NO LIFE ON EARTH! I was deeply touched by the children's ceremony and their Water Book.

I'm told my dear friend Kofi Annan took part in the Uniting Water 1998, when he was United Nations Secretary-General. He took water from the fountain at the United Nations in New York that was brought to the children's Future Vessel Event in Stockholm.
Three years later Kofi Annan welcomed you, his young ambassadors, to your own place at the United Nations, Nairobi, the beautiful acacia tree. And here you are now, 25 years later, celebrating Children's Meeting Place 25 years!
Reading your program I see you will also remember Dr. Klaus Töpfer. 25 years ago, he was the Executive Director of UNEP, asking Globetree to establish and run the Children's Meeting Place on United Nations ground. That was a visionary and wise suggestion. To give you, the children, your own place at the United Nations.

Your program shows me you will honour Nelson Mandela today. That touches my heart because Mandela brought us, The Elders, together to share life-long perspective to today's conflicts. I hope to be invited to your Mother Tree, listen to your ideas and learn more about your dream of The World Home – how all life on Earth can live well together. Young and old – joining hands – move together - to make dreams come true!

Happy 25 Years Anniversary to all of you, children, youth, colleagues and friends of Globetree,

With my warmest regards,



Gro Harlem Brundtland
Former Prime Minister of Norway
Former Director-General of the World Health Organization
Member of The Elders

Message to the 25th Anniversary of Children's Meeting Place

In my role as Ambassador of Sweden to Kenya and Chair of the Committee of Permanent Representatives of UNEP, I attended the inauguration of the Children's Meeting Place in Nairobi on September 19, 2001. Since then, I have closely followed the use of the meeting place, which has given children the opportunity to express their views on their life and their hopes for a peaceful and sustainable future world.

As Deputy Executive Director at UN Habitat from 2006 to 2011, I attended several gatherings under the acacia tree, which was given as a gift to the children at the inauguration held by Dr Klaus Töpfer. In his capacity as Director General of UNON and Executive Director of UNEP, Dr Töpfer stated in his inauguration speech that this place should be continuously used to allow children to share their views.

In his message to the inauguration, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan stated that "this tree, on the grounds of the United Nations, is now a place where you children can voice your dreams, concerns, and suggestions for the future".

This strong support by Dr. Töpfer and Secretary General Kofi Annan has given the Children's Meeting Place a strong legitimacy, and a unique opportunity for children to express their hopes and dreams for a peaceful world.

The use of the Children's Meeting Place is also in line with the UN Convention for the Rights of the Child, article 12, which refers to the need to respect children's views, with those views given appropriate weight, as one of the core principles.

I would like to express my sincere wishes for a successful 25th anniversary, and continuous active use of the Children's Meeting Place!

Inga B-Klevby

Inga Björk Klevby
Former Ambassador of Sweden to Kenya and Deputy Executive Director of UN Habitat

Children Meeting Place 25 Years Anniversary

United Nations International Peace Day

Stockholm, in September 2026

Dear Friends, Children, and Guests,

It is with joy and shared history I send my warmest greetings to the Children Meeting Place on your 25th Anniversary. I wish I could be with you, celebrating this milestone on the United Nations International Peace Day, by the Mother Tree at the United Nations, Nairobi. The Mother Tree is a beautiful reminder of what truly matters for our shared future.

My own Journey with the Globetree started forty years ago, in 1986, during the very first Future Meeting at the Stockholm Concert Hall. I do recall the energy of more than 600 children from 12 countries expressing what was important to them through drama, music, dancing, poetry, and improvisations.

When these children needed a safe place to sleep during the three days of the Future Meeting, I did what any responsible adult should do:
I bypassed standard routines, stepped outside the comfort zone of bureaucracy, and helped secure the tents and accommodations they needed. For this, the Globetree Foundation gave me one of the finest honours I ever received—the title of a **Globe Root.** That experience taught me that true leadership means listening to the roots of our world: our children.

The "Future Tree" (an ash tree) that we planted together at the main market, Hötorget in Stockholm - right after the Future Meeting performance - still stands today as a living memory of the creative wisdom the children shared.

Today, in my role as the Honorary President of **The Club of Rome**, my focus remains the same. The Club of Rome is dedicated to addressing the

complex, interconnected crises facing humanity and our planet. Our conviction is strong that we humans must live in harmony both with each other and with Nature.

There is a natural bond between what you are doing at your Children's Meeting Place in Nairobi and what we are striving for in The Club of Rome. *Your Uniting Water* ceremony - where children bring water from places they love and care for to be united in a calabash by the Mother Tree—is a symbol of what the world needs right now. Water knows no borders; it connects all living things. It is the very essence of life and peace.

In your Ceremony, when you ring the Peace Bells and stand in a Minute of Silence, you are honouring the legacy of leaders who walked before you –

Klaus Töpfer, Kofi Annan and Wangari Mathai. You are also reminded of another Children Meeting Place in Soweto, honouring Nelson Mandela

To all of you children expressing your messages to the ambassadors, mayors, and UN leaders today: for me you are not just the leaders of tomorrow - you are the truth-tellers of today.

To the leaders and dignitaries present at Gigiri: I urge you to look at the children's footprints, read the world's longest folded book made by the youngest, and truly *listen* to the dreams coming out of the Peace Tent and give our young ambassadors the support they rightfully deserve.

Happy 25th Anniversary, Children's Meeting Place!
May your roots grow deeper, and may your branches continue to protect the dreams of a peaceful and a sustainable world.

With my deepest respect and lifelong solidarity,

Anders Wijkman
Honorary Chairperson, The Club of Rome
Globe Root of the Globetree

Royal Djurgården 10th of September, 2026

To the Children, Organizers and Global Leaders
Gathered for the 25th Anniversary of the Children's Meeting Place
United Nations, Nairobi Kenya

Message to the 25th Anniversary of the Children's Meeting Place

The Royal Park of Djurgården in the middle of Stockholm, and a part of the World's first National City Park, has always been a place loved by children. Therefore, it was a great pleasure to create space for the Stone Circle ONLY ONE EARTH. It happened in 2022 and was a part of the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the first UN Environmental Conference, held in Stockholm 1972 – with the theme ONLY ONE EARTH.

The Stone Circle contains stones from each of Sweden's 21 regions and is a place to enter to talk, reflect and fantasize about the billions of years of history held by the stones – and the billions of years that lie ahead for mankind.

The Stone Circle in the Royal Park of Djurgården is also situated close to the Folke Bernadotte Bridge and to the Dag Hammarskjöld Memorial.
Two Swedes that have meant so much to the UN and to global solidarity.

The other day I picked up a stone from the shore close to the Stone Circle and the bridge. A stone that will be brought to Nairobi – as a gift for the 25th Anniversary of the Children's Meeting Place.

A gift sent with best wishes from the Royal Swedish Court to all people taking part in the Anniversary – especially to the Children. Let's never stop believing in the power that comes from working together towards common goals!

With my warmest regards,

Magnus Andersson
Palace Bayliff
Royal Djurgården Administration

KUNGL. DJURGÅRDENS FÖRVALTNING
BOX 27138
SE-102 52 STOCKHOLM

ORGANISATIONSNUMMER
802000-6808

Children's Meeting Place – 25 Years Anniversary/United Nations, Nairobi – 21 September 2026

Dear children, dear friends, dear colleagues,

I am happy to send this message to you on behalf of the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR).

I am sorry I cannot be with you today. I know you are coming together at a special place where the Mother Tree, the big, beautiful acacia tree, proudly spread her branches.

For more than fifty years, Globetree has worked closely with Swedish municipalities. Together we have created Children's Meeting Places across Sweden and around the world, built twinning partnerships with East African municipalities, and welcomed thousands of children into dialogues about their future.

Across Sweden, municipalities and regions work every day to create good conditions for children and young people to grow, learn, stay healthy and influence the communities where they live. Listening to children's experiences, ideas and perspectives is not only important for children themselves, it helps us make better decisions and build stronger, more sustainable communities. Initiatives such as Children's Meeting Place remind us that meaningful dialogue with children is an essential part of local democracy and community development.

To all of you children coming together here today:

Your voices matter. Your ideas guide us. Your dreams help us understand the world we must build together.

The challenges facing our societies, from inclusion and education to climate change and public health, cannot be solved without the involvement of young people. Your perspectives help leaders make better choices, today and in the future.

You are not only guiding us towards the future – you are here and now, and you inspire leaders in Sweden, in East Africa, and around the world.

As you celebrate the 25th Anniversary of Children's Meeting Place on United Nations Peace Day, you remind us that peace, trust and understanding grow when people listen to one another and work together across generations and cultures.

Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions
info@skr.se, www.skr.se
Address: 118 82 Stockholm *Visiting:* Hornsgatan 20
Phone: 08-452 70 00 *Org.no:* 222000-0315

The world needs peace. The world needs to listen and learn from you children.
The world needs many Children's Meeting Places!

I thank the United Nations for your vision and courage to give children their own place, where adults are invited to see and feel the future
in the eyes and hearts of children.

Imagine, these dialogues have taken place here, by the Mother Tree for twenty-five years! May the 41 Children's Meeting Places in the world multiply by hundreds and thousands in the coming 25 years!

So, I greet you all children and all your special guests, coming together on this special day,



Palle Lundberg

Director of the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR)