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A CELEBRATION OF



# Towards a culture of peace

The Culture of Peace has come a long way in the ten years since the concept was launched by UNESCO at an international congress held in Yamoussoukro (Côte d'Ivoire). It is no longer seen as the absence of conflict nor an affair of and between states. A culture of peace is above all "a question of values, attitudes, individual and collective behaviour that give rise to and incarnate the spirit of peace," says Françoise Rivière, who heads UNESCO's Culture of Peace Unit.

UNESCO's efforts to build and strengthen this idea have been so fruitful that the culture of peace has become a guiding beacon for the entire United Nations system, attested by the General Assembly's proclamation of the Year 2000 as "International Year for the Culture of Peace" (launched this September 14th) and of the Decade 2000-2010 as "International decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World".

How has this come about? According to René Zapata from the culture of peace sector, "the concept provides a framework which has allowed us to mobilize a range of actors from all walks of life – from philosophers to politicians, from jurists to religious groups. It breaks down walls, provides a matrix and raises problems that the whole of society can relate to. Because even if democracy is still only spoken of by politicians and journalists, or tolerance only raised by jurists, human rights NGOs and religious groups, and security by the police, these problems, in fact, concern everybody."

This explains the success of the Manifesto 2000, drawn up by several Nobel prize winners (see box) and which, according to one of its promoters, "should become a tool for all those who defend the diverse aspects of a culture of peace against a culture of violence and war," creating a "vast alliance" of movements, groups, institutions and individuals striving together.

UNESCO's strategy in this domain for the coming two years is three-pronged: first comes educating for a culture of peace. The objective is to develop a complete system of education and training for peace, human rights and democracy, tolerance, non-violence and international understanding, for all population groups and all levels of education - with priority being given to primary and secondary grades. Development and distribution of materials is one aspect, but there is also a big emphasis on

## 100 MILLION SIGNATURES

... is the target set for the Manifesto 2000, launched by UNESCO as part of its preparations for the International Year for a Culture of Peace. The Manifesto seeks the personal commitment of individuals from all over the world to subscribe to and translate into their daily actions, the values of peace, tolerance, sharing and solidarity which underpin the culture of peace.

In six points the Manifesto upholds the values of respect for life and dignity of every person; practising active non-violence; sharing time and material resources in a spirit of generosity to put an end to exclusion, injustice and political and economic oppression; defending freedom of expression and cultural diversity; promoting responsible consumer behaviour; contributing to community development with the full participation of women and respect for democratic principles, in order to create together new forms of solidarity. The Manifesto can be signed on the internet at [www.unesco.org/manifesto2000](http://www.unesco.org/manifesto2000) or sent to:

International Year for a Culture of Peace,  
UNESCO  
7, Place de Fontenoy  
F-75352 Paris 07 SP  
France  
Fax: 33 1 45 68 56 38

sensitizing and training teachers, the real channels for transmitting information and ideas.

Secondly, the organization will increase its emphasis on the promotion of cultural pluralism and intercultural dialogue. Further encouragement will be given to research on cultural interactions in regions which have been a cross-roads or melting pot for different civilizations. The results will be used to promote acceptance of plurality and develop a will to live together – particularly in our increasingly multicultural cities – through such projects as Culture in the Neighbourhood (encouraging social integration of young people in multicultural environments) and Intercultural Dialogue in Everyday Life (encouraging cooperation between NGOs and associations of young people of various nationalities and ethnic backgrounds). Efforts will be made to revise history teaching, to highlight convergence between cultures, in areas such as the Balkans, the Baltic countries, the Middle East, Latin America and the Caribbean and Africa.

## HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY

Last but not least, the organization will further consolidate the conceptual and normative foundations of a culture of peace (such as conflict prevention, human rights, action to combat discrimination, gender equality, tolerance and democracy) by: encouraging transdisciplinary studies on the sources and forms of violence and promoting the means and mechanisms available to prevent violence and conflict at source; placing cultural pluralism at the heart of the debate on human rights and democracy; and looking at how gender roles can influence the development of a culture of peace.

These objectives have been grouped together under the project Towards a Culture of Peace in which all of UNESCO's various sectors participate. The proposed budget for activities carried out under this project is \$8.1million, of which more than 50% has been earmarked for education, considered the key for success. However, the culture of peace now underpins all of UNESCO activities. Whatever the sector, whatever the project, the ultimate goal is to nurture a spirit of peace in populations everywhere so as to create the conditions whereby they can live harmoniously and prosperously together.

Sue Williams  
and Cristina L'Homme