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Toward a Global Movement for a Culture of Peace

by David Adams

(abstract)

The culture of peace concept has been developing for ten years at UNESCO and the United Nations since it was first described at Yamoussoukro in 1989. It calls for a transformation and development of alternatives to the values, attitudes and behaviours that are necessary and sufficient for the preparation and elaboration of the culture of war and violence: the concept of power as force; the image of an enemy that does not have the same rights as you; authoritarian social structure, secrecy and armaments. The United Nations, in its recent Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace has called for a global movement for a culture of peace. This commentary describes unique aspects of this movement, as well as actions designed to launch and promote its development.

Towards a Global Movement for a Culture of Peace

by David Adams

Having been involved with the culture of peace concept at UNESCO and the United Nations since the 1989 event at Yamoussoukro mentioned by Elise Boulding, I should like to begin by describing the road taken to develop this concept at the governmental and inter-governmental level. In doing so, I do not wish to underestimate the important role of the non-governmental organizations and of individuals which, as Elise describes, are also essential. In fact, the culture of peace, like those of human rights and of sustainable development (both, in fact, component, of the culture of peace) is a concept that enables these four levels of social organization to unite their energies in a common “global movement for a culture of peace” as we enter a new century and millennium.

Resolutions adopted on four dates stand out as signposts along this road:

- October 1992, the 58 Member States of the UNESCO Executive Board welcomed the concept of a culture of peace and called for his further development and expression in concrete activities(140 EX/Decision 5.4.2);
- November 1995, the 186 Member States of the 28th General Conference of UNESCO stated that the major challenge at the close of the twentieth century is “the transition from a culture of war and violence to a culture of peace” (Resolution on the Medium-Term Strategy for 1996-2001).
- November 1997, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution for the culture of peace (A/52/13) and another declaring the Year 2000 the International Year for the Culture of Peace (A/52/15);
- September 1999, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace (A/53/243).

These decisions were the result of personal efforts by the Director-General of UNESCO during that period, Dr Federico Mayor, and by the leadership at the United Nations General Assembly exerted by the Ambassador of Bangladesh, Mr Awarul Chowdhury. It is my great privilege to have worked on this initiative with them as well as with many others

who have played important roles.

The development of the concept along this road has not always been smooth and unanimous as it might seem from the surface. In fact, the conflicts concerned can be illustrated by examining the difference between the final version of A/53/243 as adopted and the draft that was submitted to the General Assembly one year before (A/53/370). The final version was the result of nine months of intensive informal discussions at the UN General Assembly in which the differences among the Member States gradually became evident.

The states of the European Union took the position that there is no culture of war and violence in the world, and they succeeded in imposing their way so that all references to this had to be taken out of the final document. Ironically, this was during the war in Kosovo where the actions of NATO were guided especially by these same states. Why is there such objection by the most powerful states to the idea that there is a culture of war in the world today? My personal belief is that the opposition to the concept of a culture of war reflects a refusal to admit that powerful states today - just as they have been from the beginning of recorded history - depend upon the culture of war to retain their power. A few years ago, I published an article in the *Journal of Peace Research* entitled, "The History of Internal Military Intervention in the United States." For the past 120 years in that country, there have been an average of 18 internal military interventions employing 12,000 troops per year. One of the conclusions that one may draw from the article is that the function of maintaining a military force is as important for maintaining of internal power as defending against foreign invasion and defending foreign economic and political interests. Furthermore, those who oppose the power of the state from within can be suppressed on the basis of branding them as agents of an enemy from outside.

Although, as a result of the Europeans insistence, the final declaration for a culture of peace was substantially changed from that which had been suggested in A/53/370, at the same time, the framework of the programme of action continued to reflect the basic concept that had been worked out within the framework of an analysis of the culture of war and violence.

Areas of Action for a Culture of Peace

There are eight areas of action that form the framework of the Programme of Action. Each of these eight is necessary for the transition from a culture of war and violence to a culture of peace and non-violence. Each addresses a cultural aspect that is at the same time the result of war and violence and a condition that makes war and violence possible. In fact, the development of a culture of peace in the future would make it impossible for wars to be started. The eight areas of actions are listed here in detail - first the wording in the adopted document (A/53/243) and then the background statement as it is worded in the submitted document (A/53/370).

1. ***Culture of peace through education.*** “The very concept of power needs to be transformed - from the logic of force and fear to the force of reason and love.”
2. ***Sustainable economic and social development.*** “This represents a major in the concept of economic growth which, in the past, could be considered as benefiting from military supremacy and structural violence and achieved at the expense of the vanquished and the weak.”
3. ***Respect for all human rights.*** “The elaboration and international acceptance of universal human rights...calls for a transformation of values, attitudes and behaviours from those which would benefit exclusively the clan, the tribe or the nation towards those which benefit the entire human family.”
4. ***Equality between women and men.*** “Only [the] linkage of equality, development and peace can replace the historical inequality between men and women that has always characterized the culture of war and violence.”
5. ***Democratic participation.*** “This is the only way to replace the authoritarian structures of power which were created by and which have, in the past, sustained the culture of war and violence.”
6. ***Understanding, tolerance and solidarity.*** “There has never been a war without an ‘enemy’, and to abolish war, we must transcend and supersede enemy images with understanding, tolerance and solidarity among all peoples and cultures.”
7. ***Participatory communication and the free flow of information and knowledge.***

“...needed to replace the secrecy and manipulation of information which characterize the culture of war.”

8. ***International peace and security.*** “.....peace diplomacy, peacekeeping, disarmament and military conversion....”

Although the United Nations Charter called in 1945 for the abolition of war, it has taken until now to formulate and call for the abolition of those values, attitudes and behaviours of societies that all together are necessary and sufficient for the ***preparation*** for war: the concept of power as force; the image of an enemy that does not have the same rights as you; authoritarian social structure, secrecy and armaments.

The transformation from a culture of war and violence to a culture of peace and non-violence is perhaps more radical and far-reaching than any previous change in human history. Every aspect of social relations - having been shaped for millennia by the dominant culture of war, is open to change - from the relations among nations and between nations and their citizens to those between women and men. Everyone, from the centres of power to the most remote village, may be engaged in the process. In her article, Elise Boulding reveals many important aspects and consequences of this transformation.

Call for a Global Movement for a Culture of Peace

How can the transformation be accomplished? Paragraph 6 of the Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace recently adopted by the UN General Assembly calls for a “global movement for a culture of peace”, based upon partnerships among states, international organizations and the various actors of the civil society.

Like the great social movements of the past, such a movement should be based largely on the non-governmental actors of the civil society whose role is correctly stressed by Dr. Boulding.. This is appropriate because most non-governmental organizations, unlike the state, are not dependent for their power upon the culture of war. Instead of maintaining power through force of arms, most of them gain their adherents and results by the force of

their argument and gather strength through the mobilization of the righteous indignation of their members.

The formulation of the culture of peace is deliberately broad, in order to include the goals of the full range of non-governmental organizations working for peace and justice. These include human rights, sustainable development, democratic participation and equality of women, as well as disarmament and non-violent means for social change. In other words, we may see that people everywhere are already working for a culture of peace; they just don't call it by that name. The purpose of the culture of peace movement is to link together and hence strengthen the many movements that already exist. To quote Ambassador Chowdhury, it is a "grand alliance of existing movements".

Because of its fundamental principles this must be different from most of the great social movements of the past in at least one very important aspect. It must not create enemy images and must be essentially non-partisan and open to working with everyone. It must be global in scope, based itself on the universality of values - the inalienable right of every human being to a life of peace and non-violence. It must not oppose the state and its institutions, but transform them through democratic means. Even military institutions should not be seen as the enemy, but efforts should be made to transform their practices from force to peacekeeping by non-violent means.

The dynamics of the global movement for a culture of peace should, therefore, be different from the peace movements and social justice movements of the past. Rather than coming to an end through short-term victory, it should gather strength from each success leading towards a total social transformation. This is different from the past, when movements dedicated to the overthrow of a government came to an end with the formation of a new government or, if they were oriented against a particular war, they stopped with the end of the war. As a result of this pattern of rise and fall, as I found in my study of the great American Peace Movements, each peace movement in the past was unable to benefit from the leadership of its predecessors but had to develop totally new leadership. Movements were successful in ending particular wars and particular oppressive regimes, but the culture of war itself remained unchallenged and unchanged.

As in all successful movements, the basic principles and goals need to be simple and universal. For this purpose, the Nobel Peace Laureates have written the Manifesto 2000 (called Commitment 2000 in the article of Elise Boulding) by which each individual in the world is invited to make a commitment to follow the principles of a culture of peace in everyday life. In taking up the Manifesto 2000 the NGO Education International (representing 23 million teachers) remarked that these principles - presented here in abbreviated form - correspond to the basic rules of the school classroom:

- * Respect all life
- * Reject violence
- * Share with others
- * Listen to understand
- * Preserve the planet
- * Rediscover solidarity

As a fundamental act for the emerging movement, people are being asked to sign the Manifesto 2000. The full text of the Manifesto, along with a signature form, may be found on the Internet at <http://www.unesco.org/manifesto2000>. The Manifesto 2000 is not an appeal to higher authorities, but is a commitment by each individual to take action. It provides for the global movement for a culture of peace a simple, positive vision that can inspire and motivate people to take action. Although such a positive vision for the future has not been sufficiently prominent in many peace and justice movements of the past, as I have documented in my studies of consciousness development of peace activists, it is essential for this new type of movement.

Some will argue that the transition to a culture of peace and non-violence is not possible because they believe that human beings are intrinsically violent. In fact, this attitude can be a “self-fulfilling prophecy,” since studies have shown that if young people believe this, they are less likely to take action for peace. However, there is no scientific basis to believe that war is in our genes or in our human nature. The leading scientists in the relevant fields of psychology, sociology, anthropology, genetics and brain research have come to the conclusion, in the words of the Seville Statement of 1986, that “the same species that

invented war is capable of inventing peace". In this regard it is important to distinguish violence from righteous indignation. In fact, there is a very strong tendency in most people to become angry and take action in the face of injustice. The great peace activists such as Gandhi, King and Mandela have shown that this anger and action is essential for social movements, but the anger, is most effectively expressed through non-violent methods rather than violence. The training of people how to distinguish violence from anger and how to take non-violent action against injustice is a very important basic task of the movement for a culture of peace and non-violence.

Launching of the Movement

To conclude, I will outline here the actions that UNESCO is undertaking in order to launch this global movement for a culture of peace. There are five stages to the process: 1) national endorsements; 2) media campaign; 3) partnerships for the Manifesto 2000 campaign; 4) development of a global network of local projects; and 5) global communication systems for the movement.

National endorsements have been received now from over 50 heads of state, either for the culture of peace in general or for the Manifesto 2000 in particular and over 100 national delegations to the recent General Conference of UNESCO pledged their support to the culture of peace and the International Year for the Culture of Peace. Declarations that endorse the culture of peace have been made by international organizations and meetings throughout the world, including the Organization of African Unity and ASEAN.

A global media campaign was launched in conjunction with the opening day of the International Year for the Culture of Peace on 14 September, the International Day of Peace. A television spot featuring Nobel Peace Laureates and the principles of the Manifesto 2000 was distributed throughout the world and seen by millions of people. Events were held in over 100 countries, most of them carried by national media. A synopsis of these events is now available on Internet (www.unesco.org/iycp). The television spots and radio spots will be continued throughout the next year in order to sensitize public opinion that the movement is underway and are available to any organization that agrees to be a partner for the Year. In the USA requests for partnership should be addressed to the Office of UNESCO at the United

Nations in New York.

A global campaign is underway to gather signatures on the Manifesto2000 with a goal of presenting 100 million signatures to the summit conference of heads of state that will take place at the Millennium Assembly of the United Nations in the fall of 2000. This is being done by developing a wide range of partnerships at both international and national levels. At the international level, a partnership agreement has been sent to the 341 NGOs associated with UNESCO (organizations such as Education International mentioned above, the World Organization of Scout Movements, etc.). At the national level, a manual has been sent to all 180 UNESCO National Commissions, 60 field offices and 150 United Nations national coordinators asking them to serve as focal points and to engage national organizations in the campaign. Mailings have been sent as well to 6,000 universities and over 1,000 cities. Just to give some idea of the scope of the campaign, 6 million leaflets have been distributed in Algeria and 800,000 in Barcelona and the Paris suburb of Saint Denis alone. Pledges of 5 million signatures have been received from the UNESCO Club movement of Africa, 1 million from the United Nations Association of the UK, the national focal point in that country, and 1 million from Japan. Organizations are invited to link their Internet Websites with that of Manifesto (www.unesco.org/Manifesto2000) so that people can sign directly on the Internet.

On a national level partnership agreements are being established with NGOs, schools, universities, cities, parliaments, media organizations and enterprises. In addition to the signature campaign for the Manifesto, each partner is asked to dedicate at least one major event to the International Year - hence developing a global calendar of events. They are also requested to provide information on local projects that promote one or another aspect of the culture of peace which will be posted on the Internet.

A social movement, above all, is a process of collective consciousness development. It gains strength and achieves its goals to the extent that this consciousness development is shared and reinforced by communication at a mass level. Unfortunately, because of its close ties to the culture of war and violence, the mass media cannot be relied upon to provide this communication, but the movement must develop its own independent and alternative

communication systems. This is a lesson we have learned in mass movements of the past, for example, the civil rights and anti-war movements of the 1960's and the revolutions in the Philippines, South Africa and Eastern Europe in more recent years.

We are developing two such communication systems for the movement, both relying heavily on the Internet.

The first was already mentioned above (www.unesco.org/iycp). The accumulation and exchange of information on local projects for a culture of peace should develop throughout the next decade. In our system, each local project will be asked to provide information on what it is doing, what it needs, and what it can provide to others. This methodology has been worked out over the past few years for environmental groups belonging to the Internet network called Planet Society.

The second system is more ambitious - to develop a global network of Internet sites in various languages that will provide up-to-date information from around the world on news events and media productions that promote the various aspects of a culture of peace and non-violence. This is called the Culture of Peace News Network. It relies on the visitor to write reports and provides for the training of large numbers of volunteer "Culture of Peace Moderators" who work with the visitor to make their reports correspond to the "rules of the game" at which point they are put on line. Each partner Website agrees to send one moderated report a week to a central pool and to take one from that pool to put on their own Website - translating them in and out of the language of their site. This will enable a global, multi-lingual system that is constantly updated. The National Retired Teachers Association (part of the American Association of Retired Persons) is establishing the first partner Website based in the US.

The momentum developed during the International Year for the Culture of Peace (2000) will be continued into the Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World (2001-2010); in fact partners for the Year are invited to participate in the preparation of the programme of action for the Decade.

