The Culture of Peace: A Programme of Action

A. A CULTURE OF PEACE - PROJECT FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

The United Nations General Assembly, on the final day of its 53rd session, 13 September 1999, adopted a remarkable document, a Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace, Resolution A/53/243. This document can serve as a blueprint for the 21st Century to accomplish what has only been a dream in previous centuries, to make the transition from the culture of war and violence to a culture of peace and non-violence

This was the dream of the League of Nations, and later of the United Nations, founded to "save succeeding generations from the scourge of war".

It was the dream of UNESCO, whose Constitution begins with the statement that "since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed." It goes on to point out that "a peace based exclusively upon the political and economic arrangements of governments would not be a peace which could secure the unanimous, lasting and sincere support of the peoples of the world." "Peace must therefore be founded, if it is not to fail, upon the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind."

If we take these words to heart, we realize that in order to achieve peace, we must go deeper than we thought in the past. We must address the cultural roots of war and violence and transform our values, attitudes and everyday behaviours into those of a new culture, a culture in which power is based on reason and dialogue, not upon violence, whether overt or structural. This is a transformation that requires the involvement of every person, every family, every teacher, every institution in the world. It is without precedent in human history.

Radical, yes. Even revolutionary. And yet, we have no choice. Looking back at the 20th Century, we see that war has become an overwhelming and unacceptable risk to life itself on the planet Earth. It is not without reason that Einstein was considered the most influential person of the era. It was the atomic bomb, for which he provided a scientific foundation, that led the transformation of war. War is no longer a matter of contending armies on a battlefield. It has become a matter of remote-controlled missiles even traversing outer space, of victims who are primarily the most helpless, children, women, the elderly, and, ultimately, the potential destruction of the planet.

In presenting the resolution on a culture of peace to the General Assembly, Ambassador Anwarul Karim Chowdhury of Bangladesh spoke of it as a "legacy that will endure for generations". He described it as a document that is "unique in more than one way. It is a universal document in the real sense, transcending boundaries, cultures, societies and nations." It is action-oriented. It brings together actors at all levels, "states, international organizations, civil society, community leaders, parents, teachers, artists, professors, journalists, humanitarian workers - in a way, all people from all walks of life and all sorts of

backgrounds can contribute to its implementation."

I consider it as a great journey on which we have embarked, and which can lead us to civilization that is much more humane, just, democratic and sustainable.

B.   A PROGRAMME OF ACTION

The Programme of Action adopted by the General Assembly provides a roadmap for our journey with frequent milestones along the way. It contains the following 16 points.

> *1. The Programme of Action should serve as the basis for the International Year for the Culture of Peace and the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World.*

Every journey begins with a single step. The first such step was taken by the UN General Assembly in November 1997 when it declared the Year 2000 as the International Year for the Culture of Peace and requested UNESCO to serve as the focal point for its mobilization. As described in the document proposing the International Year for the Culture of Peace, its purpose is to "mobilize public opinion at the national and international levels for the purpose of establishing and promoting a culture of peace". A second step was taken one year later when the years 2001-2010 were declared as International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World, an initiative that was proposed by all of the Nobel Peace laureates acting in concert.

To mobilize public opinion, a number of the Nobel Peace laureates have developed a short document called the Manifesto 2000 (see box). Unlike petitions, the Manifesto 2000 does not appeal to a higher power, but commits the individual to practice a culture of peace in everyday life.) During the International year it is being distributed and signed by individuals throughout the world, with a goal to present 100 million signatures to the Millennium Assembly of the United Nations. This would, in effect, say to the gathered Heads of State: "we the peoples of the world are committed to a culture of peace in our everyday lives; we call upon you to follow these principles in the relations among states as well." It returns us to the origins of the United Nations itself, which begins, "We the peoples of the United Nations….".

In fact, more than 50 heads of state have already signed or stated their adherence to the Manifesto. One country already has surpassed one million signatures on the Manifesto 2000. Most appropriately it is Algeria, where the people have taken it up as a statement of hope for a future of peace.

Manifesto 2000
For a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence

Recognising my share of responsibility for the future of humanity, especially for today's children and those of future generations, I pledge in my daily life, in my family, my work, my community, my country and my region - to:

Respect all life.
Respect the life and dignity of every person without discrimination or prejudice;

Reject violence.
Practise active non-violence, rejecting violence in all its forms: physical, sexual, psychological, economical and social, in particular towards the most deprived and vulnerable such as children and adolescents;

Share with others.
Share my time and material resources in a spirit of generosity to put an end to exclusion, injustice and political and economic oppression;

Listen to understand.
Defend freedom of expression and cultural diversity giving preference always to dialogue and listening rather than fanaticism, defamation and the rejection of others;

Preserve the planet.
Promote consumer behaviour that is responsible and development practices that respect all forms of life and preserve the balance of nature on the planet;

Rediscover solidarity.
Contribute to the development of my community, with the full participation of women and respect for democratic principles, in order to create together new forms of solidarity.

[To sign the Manifesto by Internet or to obtain more information about it, use the address http://www.unesco.org/manifesto2000.]

2. Member States are encouraged to take actions for promoting a culture of peace at the national level as well as at the regional and international levels.

The Member States are already deeply involved with the culture of peace. In the general debate at the recent General Conference of UNESCO over 100 countries expressed their commitment. And at the launching of the International Year for the Culture of Peace on 14 September, 1999, over 100 countries held events to mark the day (details are available at the website www.unesco.org/iycp). The National Commissions for UNESCO in each country and Field Offices of UNESCO in each region are being involved as National Focal Points for the International Year to mobilize the full society in their countries and regions. Many countries have instituted national programmes for a culture of peace, the largest being that of the Russian Federation.

3. Civil society should be involved at the local, regional and national levels to widen the scope of activities on a culture of peace.

As mentioned by Ambassador Chowdhury to the General Assembly, the strength of the culture of peace is that it brings together actors at all levels from all walks of life and all sorts of backgrounds. As he said, when describing this process to a meeting at UNESCO, it can be a "grand alliance" of everybody working in different but related fields related to a culture of peace.

The mobilization for the International Year is already putting this into practice. On an international level, the non-governmental organizations associated with UNESCO (341 at last count) are signing agreements to diffuse the Manifesto 2000 and to hold flagship events during the International Year. Over 6,000 university rectors and over 1,000 cities have been contacted to undertake the same activities and many are already engaged. The greatest mobilization is on a national level, where non-governmental organizations, schools, universities, enterprises, cities and national parliaments are working with the National Focal Point in each country to involve their members and citizens in the actions of the year. It is expected that these partnerships will be enlarged and strengthened during the course of the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World.

4. The United Nations system should strengthen its ongoing efforts promoting a culture of peace.

The Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace was developed with input from many of the United Nations programmes and specialized agencies, and it is expected that a results-based management system will be adopted by their coordinating organ, the Administrative Committee of Coordination, for the various actions to be undertaken in support of this Programme. As will be seen below, each agency has much to contribute to its implementation..

Already, in terms of the International Year for the Culture of Peace, there is a commitment at the level of the ACC for the mobilization of the various agencies. And at a country level, all of the Resident Coordinators of the United Nations system have received copies of the Manual for National Focal Points, inviting them to take part in the process of national mobilization for the Year.

5. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization should continue to play its important role in and make major contributions to the promotion of a culture of peace.

It is to the credit of UNESCO, and it is firmly within its mandate, that the Organization has taken a leadership role in the UN system towards a culture of peace. This was initiated at the 28th UNESCO General Conference in 1995, which declared that "the major challenge at the close of the twentieth century is to begin the transition from a culture of war to a culture of peace" and which placed the culture of peace at the centre of its 6 year Medium Term Strategy.

The concept of a culture of peace had been developed since 1992 at UNESCO in terms of the Organization's response to "An Agenda for Peace" of the United Nations

Security Council. The concept had first been proposed in the Declaration of Yamoussoukro (Cote D'Ivoire) in 1989. Reasoning that peacekeeping operations alone could assure the absence of war but not bring a positive, dynamic peace, UNESCO argued that this could be done best by engaging those who had been in conflict in common ventures of human development. Acting primarily in the fields of education, science, culture and communication, UNESCO offered its services in such "post-conflict peace-building". Projects were undertaken in a number of countries of Central America, Africa, as well as in collaboration with the government of the Philippines, with the most extensive in El Salvador. A comprehensive overview of the culture of peace at this early stage is contained in the monograph, "UNESCO and A Culture of Peace: Promoting a Global Movement (1995)."

> **6. Partnerships between and among the various actors as set out in the Declaration should be encouraged and strengthened for a global movement for a culture of peace.**

This point of action is perhaps the most important in the document. For the first time, the United Nations calls for a "global movement" and it indicates clearly that this should be accomplished through a process of partnerships.

Whereas peace is primarily the business of states and international organizations, the culture of peace can only be achieved by a "movement" involving people at all levels and in all corners of the world, including the non-governmental actors of the civil society - a "grand alliance" as described above.

The formulation of the culture of peace is deliberately broad, in order to include the goals of the full range of organizations working for peace and justice. The goals 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. This is especially true for most non-governmental organizations that are unlike the state that can resort to the force of arms; instead, they can only gain adherents by the force of their argument, i.e. through the principles of a culture of peace.

Because of its fundamental principle that it must not seek or accept the image of an enemy, this must be different from most of the great social movements of the past. It must create no scapegoats, single out no individuals or peoples to be destroyed, glorify no partisan group. Being global in scope, it must base 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 peace-keeping by non-violent means.

The key to a global movement is its universality. The fact that the culture of peace has been adopted by consensus by the Member States of the United Nations is essential. So, too, is the universality of the Manifesto 2000 that provides a shared set of values to which individuals everywhere in the world can make a personal commitment.

Each engaged individual is invited to take action within the framework of existing initiatives that are linked together in a growing number of partnerships for the International Year for the Culture of Peace. This is the beginning of a long journey that will be carried

further by the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World.

>   ***7. A culture of peace could be promoted through sharing of information among actors on their initiatives in this regard.***

Essentially, a social movement is a process of consciousness development at a collective level. It is above all a psychological phenomenon, an attitude, a feeling. It comes about through the sharing of information so that you realize that you are not alone, but part of a large number of people taking the same journey.

Of course, it is important to use all the means of information exchange that are available to provide news of the movement. The mass media is mobilizing and passing the message of the International Year for the Culture of Peace in many regions of the world. A dramatic 45-second television spot featuring Nobel Peace Laureates is especially effective and is being seen by millions of people. Radio spots, newspaper ads and articles, magazine articles, and Internet sites are carrying news of the movement for a culture of peace.

But a movement requires more than information; it needs active participation, or, to quote the Programme of Action (see below), it requires "participatory communication".

Fortunately, at this moment of history, we have a new and remarkably effective means for participatory communication thanks to the development of the Internet. In this regard, two interactive systems are being developed on the Internet within the framework of the International Year for the Culture of Peace. The first, based on UNESCO's experience with the Planet Society network, will provide a global "market place" for the thousands of grass-roots projects working on all aspects of a culture of peace. It will provide not only basic information on what they are doing, but also what they have to offer to others and what they need from others. The second, called the Culture of Peace News Network, is a developing network of independent Internet sites that provide a global and multi-lingual news service of events and media productions that promote a culture of peace. Each visitor to CPNN will be invited to provide the news report, and it will be edited by trained "Culture of Peace Moderators" who volunteer a few hours a week to edit the reports so that they conform to simple "culture of peace" rules.

>   ***8. Effective implementation of the Programme of Action requires mobilization of resources, including financial resources, by interested Governments, organizations and individuals.***

Obviously, the development of a movement requires resources. Considerable resources have been devoted to the culture of peace by UNESCO and its Member States. The various non-governmental organizations that have undertaken partnerships for the International Year for the Culture of Peace are committing their own resources to this effort. Foundations are taking up the cause. Resources are committed on a basis of equal partnership, rather than in a paradigm of donor and dependent, and this, of course, is fitting for the development of a social movement. At the same time, the resources are still far from adequate. As I have often said, we must learn to pay the price of peace, even as we have, in the past, paid the price of war.

9. Actions fostering a culture of peace through education.

It is fitting that the first type of action to be singled out in the Programme of Action is that of education, for education, in the deepest sense of the term, is the key to a culture of peace. Not just technical education, but, in the words of the Delors Commission on Education for the 21st Century, the learning of how to live together. People need to be empowered at all levels, in schools, in adult education, in non-formal education, with the skills of dialogue, mediation, conflict transformation, consensus-building, co-operation and non-violent social change.

As expressed by the resolution, this process must begin on the basis of a reinvigoration of national efforts and international cooperation to promote the goals of education for all. The success of the Conference on Education for All to take place in Dakar in April convened by the World Bank, UNDP, UNICEF and UNFPA as well as UNESCO, is therefore crucial to progress towards a culture of peace.

Teachers are key, and therefore, I am especially pleased to see the leadership being assumed by Education International. They are sending out a kit for the International Year for the Culture of Peace to all of their affiliated teachers unions representing 23 million members throughout the world. As they told UNESCO, the Manifesto 2000, in their view, was simply a restatement of the rules of every good classroom in the world: respect others, reject violence, share, listen to understand, etc.

Higher education is also essential. Here, reference is made in the Programme of Action to the United Nations University, the University for Peace in Costa Rica, and the UNITWIN chairs programme of UNESCO. In this regard, the agreement reached among these organizations last year in order to rejuvenate the University for Peace places as its highest priority the promotion of a culture of peace.

10. Actions to promote sustainable economic and social development.

The Programme of Action provides concrete proposals for sustainable economic and social development. As the world has become increasingly inter-dependent, we have come to learn that we can only gain from the development of others and suffer from their impoverishment. This is a major change in the concept of economic growth which, in the past, could be considered to profit from military supremacy and structural violence and benefit at the expense of those who were vanquished and weak. As declared by the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen, social development, social justice and the eradication of poverty are indispensable for peace.

The movement for sustainable development has become a great force in the world, and it is important that the movement for a culture of peace is linked to it. There is a lesson for us here, because I remember less than a decade ago when it was a concept no better known than the culture of peace. Thanks to the Rio Conference on Environment and Development in 1992 and the follow-up since then, it has been recognized and has stimulated actions throughout the world. This can be a model for the development of an even broader movement for the culture of peace, of which sustainable development is one component.

11. Actions to promote respect for all human rights.

The General Assembly has very correctly included this as a key point of the Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace. The development of respect for all human rights, since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was first formulated by UNESCO in 1948, is another milestone and precedent for the development of the movement for a culture of peace. Rights have been recognized since the beginning of human history, but it is only now that we recognize their universality. It is not only the clan or the rich or the European or the educated or the males or the adults who have rights. It is everyone, rich and poor, educated or non-educated, men and women, adults and children. We are all part of one global family. And it must be clear that this applies to all human rights, including not only political rights but also economic and social as well.

Despite the opposition of certain countries and regions, I continue to believe that we should struggle to assure the basic human rights to development and to peace. After a very strong debate in the United Nations, the first was retained in the Programme of Action and the second was omitted.

12. *Actions to ensure equality between women and men.*

From the very beginning of recorded history, the culture of war has been associated with male domination. It has always been the men who make the decisions of war and peace and who gain power from their careers as warriors. And in prehistory the precursors of education can be found in the rites of passage from boyhood into warrior. By making the equality of women and men one of the key actions of its Programme on a culture of peace, the General Assembly makes a linkage of great importance. On the one hand, it is only through the replacement of a culture of war that women can be freed from its dominating effects. As recognized by the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, there is an inextricable linkage of equality, development and peace. And on the other hand, by enlisting the women of the world in the struggle for a culture of peace, one mobilizes what can be perhaps the most powerful force in the world for social change.

Here, too, it is important to make the linkage between peace, equality, education and development. As the Programme of Action points out in its section on education, it is necessary to "ensure equality of access for women, especially girls, to education". And, as it points out in its section on development, "integrating a gender perspective and empowering women and girls should be an integral part of the development process".

13. *Actions to foster democratic participation.*

The General Assembly resolution correctly places the emphasis here on participation, and in the following text, it underlines the importance of "democratic principles and practices". This is important, for we must not fall into the trap of seeing democracy as no more than a set of procedures and forms such as secret-ballot elections and multi-party systems. Democratic participation, to be effective, must engage everyone at all levels of society, involve all types of decision-making, and be an everyday practice, not just a once-a-year event.

In fact, democratic participation is essential for a culture of peace. It is the only alternative to the authoritarian aspect of a culture of war, an aspect that has been created by and, at the same time, sustained the culture of war. As has been said, "what if they called for a war and no one responded?"

14. *Actions to advance understanding, tolerance and solidarity.*

There has never been a war without an 'enemy'. To abolish war, we must preclude the development of enemy images through the consistent and universal practice of understanding, tolerance and solidarity.   In this sense, the culture of peace may be said to be a "subversive" enterprise: it undermines the capacity of nations to go to war by depriving them of the argument that they must defend against an enemy.   One is reminded of the words of Mikhail Gorbachev who, at the end of the Cold War, warned Western leaders that he was going to deprive them of an enemy by making peace with them.

There are many actions recommended in the General Assembly resolution. One of the most effective is contained in the section on education and concerns textbook revision that is carried out on a regional basis, so that those who have been enemies in the past can arrive an common approaches for the teaching of history. A recent and highly successful conference on this matter was appropriately called "disarming history".

15. *Actions to support participatory communication and the free flow of information and knowledge.*

We are convinced that the technological revolution that has brought us global systems of communication and increasingly interactive capabilities is one of the reasons that we can now take seriously, for the first time in history, the abolition of war and the establishment of a culture of peace. Communication is a source of power, and increasingly it is in the hands of the many rather than in the hands of the few.

We are not convinced, however, that this is an inevitable process. There are forces that seek to control communication and restrict its universal access and its contents.

Hence, the General Assembly is quite correct to place an emphasis on the free flow of information and knowledge and on full participation of people in the communication process as a key element of the culture of peace. We must assure that the new technologies are accessible to all. For example, every school in the world can be hooked up to the Internet via cheap, "disposable" computers that are solar-powered and connected by satellite rather than telephone. This is no longer a technological question; it is simply a political one. It is not only the students who will gain from access to the world's knowledge and access to the world's peoples, but the teachers, too, will be given powerful new tools, and the entire education process will become more relevant to society as a whole.

Of course, it is not only access to the information superhighway that is important, but also the contents of that highway. And here we come back to the importance of initiatives such as those mentioned in the beginning, by which people are enabled to participate in the generation and sharing of information on the development of a culture of peace.

16. *Actions to promote international peace and security.*

It is fitting that the last item on the list of actions includes disarmament, military conversion, confidence-building, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants and concern with the impact of sanctions, issues that are normally the first ones to be considered

as the concern of the United Nations and the Member States. Of course, these are important and continue to be the goals of the system. However, in this context it is recognized that they come not as a prerequisite step, but as the culminating step of a process that privileges education, development, democracy, culture and communication. In other words, the way to peace is through a culture of peace.

In conclusion, I believe that Ambassador Chowdhury was correct when he said that the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace represents a "legacy that will endure for generations." It charts a way for us as we seek a new way of living together in the 21st Century.