

DECLARATION FOR THE TRANSITION TO A CULTURE OF PEACE IN THE XXI CENTURY

In 1997, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed the year 2000 as the International Year for the Culture of Peace. In 1999 it adopted the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace, and in the years since then the General Assembly has continued to call for its implementation. Twenty years later, we recognize that the transition from the culture of war and violence to a Culture of Peace is a possible utopia.

We recognize that the Culture of Peace is increasingly consolidated in people's consciousness and has been expressed in numerous actions throughout the world. These include actions : to establish education based on mutual understanding and solidarity; to promote equality between women and men in spaces with diversity of thoughts, opinions and sexual orientation; to further the participation of citizens in the democratic life of their nations; to defend freedom of expression and the free flow of information concerning lifestyles and political decisions; to establish forms of production that respect the biodiversity of the species and the environments in which we live; to use non-violent alternatives in the solution of interpersonal, local, regional and international conflicts based on dialogue and respect for the autonomy of individuals and peoples.

We recognize, however, that during these past 20 years, we have continued the old culture with its wars, the creation of enemies, the industry and sale of arms, drug trafficking, corruption and electoral manipulations, exploitation of people, control of information, male domination, femicides and obstacles to women to achieve equality in all areas, the extermination of indigenous peoples who live in many regions of the world, attacks on journalists and communicators, migration and forced displacement due to poverty and inequality, and deterioration of the environment with negative consequences for humans and other species...

We recognize that the widespread belief in the inevitable violent nature of human beings has brought us to a turning point in our history and that we must urgently create and act on new forms of coexistence to accelerate the transition to a Culture of Peace.

We recognize that this is a fearful moment of human history and that for this very reason all humanity needs the courage to question the values and beliefs that until now have shaped our understanding and position in the world.

We also recognize that in recent decades, human beings have been able to express themselves freely, and we hope that, now, "we the peoples" will be able to participate in the consolidation of democratic multilateralism. As never before, humanity is aware that "change" is the essence of life and that, as living beings capable of reflection and change, we can and must change the course of history and that of all humanity.

We recognize that changes emanating from individuals can guide us in the search for that which links us with other humans and with all of life. But, we also recognize that individual change is not enough and that the transition to a Culture of Peace requires profound changes and reforms of institutions and policies to make possible a collective transformation.

We recognize that the United Nations system has the capacity to promote the Culture of Peace. An example of this was the period between 1992 and 2000, during which UNESCO's Culture of Peace Program was able to develop effective plans for peace in El Salvador and Guatemala, and managed to get some countries to incorporate the concept into their constitutions. During the International Year

for the Culture of Peace 75 million people were mobilized to sign the Manifesto 2000 pledging to promote a culture of peace in their communities.

We recognize that it is necessary and urgent to invent a future based on equal dignity and brotherhood.

FOR THESE REASONS WE RECALL...

We recall the *Charter of the United Nations* signed in 1945 at the end of the Second World War and whose preamble states:

We the peoples [...]

determined [...]

to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small,

to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom,

and for these ends

to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours, and

to unite our strength to maintain international peace and security, and

to ensure, by the acceptance of principles and the institution of methods, that armed force shall not be used, save in the common interest, and

to employ international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples.

We recall the *Constitution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization*, adopted in 1945, which states:

That since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed; [...]

That the wide diffusion of culture, and the education of humanity for justice and liberty and peace are indispensable to the dignity of man and constitute a sacred duty which all the nations must fulfil in a spirit of mutual assistance and concern;

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, and that the peace must therefore be founded, if it is not to fail, upon the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind.

We recall the *Declaration on the use of scientific and technological progress in the interests of peace and for the benefit of mankind* proclaimed by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1975 and which states that:

All States shall promote international co-operation to ensure that the results of scientific and technological developments are used in the interests of strengthening international peace and security, freedom and independence, and also for the purpose of the economic and social development of peoples and the realization of human rights and freedoms [...]

All States shall take measures to ensure that scientific and technological achievements satisfy the material and spiritual needs for all sectors of the population.

All States shall co-operate in the establishment, strengthening and development of the scientific and technological capacity of developing countries with a view to accelerating the realization of the social and economic rights of the peoples of those countries.

All States shall take measures to extend the benefits of science and technology to all strata of the population and to protect them, both socially and materially, from possible harmful effects of the misuse of scientific and technological developments [...].

We recall the *Resolution on Science and Peace* of the United Nations General Assembly which since 1988 affirms that:

...] it is necessary to promote greater awareness among scientists world-wide of the usefulness of science to increase international peace, security and co-operation, the social and economic development of mankind, the promotion of human rights and the protection of the environment,

[...] the need for scientists to establish a free and open dialogue between one another, and with political leaders and the public in general, with regard to scientific developments and their present and potential implications for our civilization,

We recall the *Seville Statement on Violence* adopted by decision of the General Conference of UNESCO in 1989 and which concludes that:

[...] Biology does not condemn humanity to war [...] Just as 'wars begin in the minds of men', peace also begins in our minds. The same species who invented war is capable of inventing peace. The responsibility lies with each of us.

We recall the *Declaration of Yamoussoukro* prepared at the International Congress on Peace in the Mind of Men in 1989 and which states that:

Humans cannot work for a future they cannot imagine [...] Humanity can only secure its future through a form of co-operation that: respects the rule of law, takes account of pluralism, ensures greater justice in international economic exchanges and is based on the participation of all civil society in the construction of peace [...] the right of individuals and societies to a quality environment is a factor essential to peace [...] new technologies are now available to serve humankind. But their efficient use is dependent on peace -- both in their being used for peaceful purposes and in the need for a peaceful world to maximize their beneficial results.

We recall the *Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace* adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1999 and which sets forth the Culture of Peace as:

[...] a set of values, attitudes, traditions and modes of behaviour and ways of life based on:

[...] Respect for life, ending of violence and promotion and practice of non-violence through education, dialogue and cooperation [...]

and that calls for actions to:

1) Foster a culture of peace through education; 2) Promote sustainable economic and social development; 3) Promote respect for all human rights; 4) Ensure equality between women and men; 5) Foster democratic participation; 6) Advance understanding, tolerance and solidarity; 7) Support participatory communication and the free flow of information and knowledge; 8) Promote international peace and security.

We recall the *2000 Manifesto for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence*, signed by 75 million people around the world to commit to:

respect the life and dignity of each human being without discrimination or prejudice;

practice active non-violence, rejecting violence in all its forms [...];

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

defend freedom of expression and cultural diversity, giving preference to dialogue and listening, without engaging in fanaticism, defamation and the ejection of others;

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

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.

We recall the United Nations Secretary General's *Education First Initiative in 2012*, which raises as a priority: *To promote a profound understanding that we are tied together as citizens of the global community.*

THIS IS WHAT WE UNDERSTAND ...

We understand that the aspiration to global citizenship requires education that is not only focused on tolerance, but also on the acceptance of diversity with social inclusion, mutual understanding and cooperation.

We understand that as human beings we are not biologically determined to violence, that our brain is formed by social experiences and that our social and biological natures make peace possible through empathy, cooperation and the ability to learn and adopt non-violent ways to resolve conflicts through dialogue, patient listening and the responsibility of each and every person.

We understand that human beings are a social species that live together in local communities, but also that we can expand our communities by creating and sharing languages and symbols.

We understand that to ensure peace in the human mind we need to understand in depth the conditions of our biology, our communities and our relationships with the environment and other species on the planet.

We understand that each culture has its own ways to survive and interpret the world, therefore, the transition to a Culture of Peace must take into account the various ways in which cultures can construct Cultures of Peace.

We understand that Cultures of Peace can be generated from our local communities when we recognize the effects of our actions on others and that, given that our communities form the cities we inhabit, it is in the cities that a sense of multicultural community can be developed and strengthened, both locally and globally.

We understand that we can create and promote responsible ways to use the resources of the environment and that these ways can be guided by scientific thinking not only focused on progress, but also on a deep understanding of the world, of well-being and of joy for life.

We understand that the sciences should contribute to policies and economies of peace, by building bridges of learning and empathy with the diversity of beliefs and traditional knowledge by which our diverse and complex humanity understands our place in the world.

We understand that the sciences should not only focus on scientific progress, but also contribute to social progress, by leading us to a less fragmented and more complex knowledge of the world and our human condition: recognizing diversity as wealth; promoting a unity based on the universality of respect and freedom; and helping us to solve the serious cultural conflicts concerning gender, poverty, inequality, security, discrimination and the use of psychoactive substances.

We understand that the expression of Cultures of Peace can be facilitated in small groups and communities, and that these expressions can generate changes in the identity of the groups, consensus for global decisions, faster and fairer ways to resolve conflicts, and strategies of local autonomy and polycentric governance that avoid coercion and authoritarianism.

We understand that the phrase “We the peoples...” implies listening to the voices of those who inhabit the world's communities and not only to the representatives of the Nation-States, so that it is the citizens and their experiences who save succeeding generations from the scourge of war.

We understand that by listening to the voices of "We the peoples ..." we commit ourselves to know and actively defend human rights, freedom, dignity and equality, preserving and respecting our diversity.

We understand that by listening to "We the peoples ..." we take responsibility to seek and create economies and social progress that are based not only on the acquisition of material goods, but also on our well-being, the exercise of our rights and harmony with the resources of our planet, keeping in mind its own rhythm and renewal.

We understand that by listening to “We the peoples...” we commit to strengthen our unity as human beings and to ensure our security based on a common good without the use of armed forces that threaten our free expression and development.

We understand that the progress towards a Culture of Peace is not reflected at the level of the Nation-States, which continue to consider military preparation as a priority and which continue to make decisions that continue the culture of war; in particular, it is not reflected in the states that control the United Nations Security Council, which continue to maintain nuclear weapons that threaten the existence of humanity.

We understand that our cities can be the nodes for the generation of Cultures of Peace, because during the course of history they have given away their own culture of war, granting it to the national authorities, and because their policies are more aligned with the culture of peace than their national equivalents. For example, the cities and towns of the Mayors for Peace movement, currently bring together 7,000 mayors working for the culture of peace at a local level with a global vision.

IN VIEW OF THE ABOVE WE PROPOSE LOCALLY. . .

A global Culture of Peace that can be cultivated locally with various expressions . . . promoted and favored by the authorities of our cities, enabling citizens around the world to organize peace education and to propose public policies that:

- Guarantee budgetary investment to improve and enrich the physical and social environments of cities, so that our brains are nourished from an early age with experiences of well-being and awareness of the conditions that need to be transformed in our communities.
- Promote and support peace education programs in public institutions and in non-formal settings through community initiatives that go beyond schools and universities that operate as a business.
- Share broad and transdisciplinary scientific knowledge with communities and neighborhoods: so that people can question and think about the relevance of our beliefs and values; so that we become aware of our position in the world and our relationship with other species; so that we understand that biology and previous history does not determine our destiny; and so that we can learn conflict resolution based on non-violence.
- Share with communities and neighborhoods the history of world cultures and their actions in favor of peace: recognizing our unity with other peoples; knowing their symbols; and creating new shared symbols that promote the acceptance of others, solidarity, respect and cooperation.

- Promote transparency and the free flow of information: avoiding the secrecy of the State; promoting, supporting and giving freedom to the imagination and the creation of new vocabularies, languages and narratives about peace; and transforming the negative and violent portrayal of conflict in the mass media.
- Publicize the knowledge and actions of organized civil society: enabling participatory democracy; training citizens, teachers, journalists, activists, social and religious leaders, policemen, students, professionals, politicians and scientists to participate in the exercise of their human rights, monitoring guarantees of all human rights including housing, health, sanitation, education and public safety; and thus evaluating the progress of the culture of peace in their communities.
- Establish spaces for reflection, listening and dialogue between people of different ages, different physical, affective, cognitive and socioeconomic needs, and different ethnic, linguistic and gender identities.
- Promote democratic participation through equitable representation mechanisms for ethnic and gender diversities, free from the influence of military industry, financial monopoly corporations, and institutions that influence national politics.
- Prioritize local and sustainable agriculture, manufacturing and consumption that depend less on oil and corporate monopolies, that respect the diversity of regional species to help combat climate change and environmental problems, and that promote the creation of cooperatives that work for a social and solidarity economy focused on fair trade and the well-being of the families and groups that comprise them.

... AND WE PROPOSE GLOBALLY

- The creation of a "Mayors Security Council" made up of representatives of the principal cities from all regions of the world. This Council can increase awareness that another world is possible. It can be created immediately since its formation does not require agreements or approval from the United Nations Member States. It can meet virtually through modern forms of communication and display in the press and mass media its own agreements on global security issues on the agenda of the actual Security Council, including issues that the current Security Council has failed to address, for example, the abolition of nuclear weapons.
- The creation of a Council for Socioeconomic Affairs and a Council for Environmental Affairs in the United Nations, whose decisions represent the global balance of powers and favor the adoption of agreements on these matters by the Member States.
- The prompt re-founding of the United Nations System, with a General Assembly composed of 50% representatives of the Member States and another 50% of institutions, academies and civil society organizations from around the world that represent "We, the peoples..."; this will allow the redirection of present policies by means of democratic multilateralism.

"The peoples" already have their own voice.

We hold that history is in our hands and that another world is possible.

A global culture of peace is possible. Let's not mourn, but organize!

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SIGNATORIES

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