



**THE CONTRIBUTION BY RELIGIONS TO THE CULTURE OF PEACE
LA CONTRIBUTION DES RELIGIONS À LA CULTURE DE LA PAIX**

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The Contribution of Religions to the Culture of Peace

Words of Welcome

FEDERICO MAYOR

The seminar on "The contribution of religions to the culture of peace" is very important in helping to lay the foundations for peaceful coexistence, in freedom and in justice. It is supremely necessary and urgent that spiritual forces should be mobilized. All religions are based on love, fellowship and tolerance. On occasion, however, religions can become sources of conflict and confrontation. Today, when we witness so many violent events, religious faiths can serve -both now and in the future- to foster dialogue between cultures and races, and to promote understanding and a meeting of minds conducive to peace initiatives.

The transition from a culture of war to a culture of peace is a responsibility without precedent. Religions have, at the present time, a crucial role to play in making this transition possible.

I would like, then, to thank you all for being present on this occasion. My special thanks go to the Generalitat de Catalunya for its generous sponsorship, and to the Centre UNESCO de Catalunya for demonstrating once more its exemplary capacity to initiate and organize.

With warm regards and greetings to all of you.

Recommendations

A. To the UNESCO (in cooperation with NGOs)

1. The future role of UNESCO and other international intergovernmental organizations for the service to Peace utilizing the resources available with Religions.

Within the framework of cooperation among the representatives of different value systems, UNESCO could offer the following:

(i) For the dialogue between the religions, UNESCO could exercise the role of a referee monitoring that the terms of reference of the dialogue are strictly adhered to respecting the other, without proselytism etc.

(ii) Intergovernmental organizations (UNESCO) provide a framework for cooperation among representatives of different value systems.

The framework should free local leaders from local constraints. Hence they are able to apply critical judgement to their own behaviour. Hence they are able to understand the reasons from the point of view of others.

2. Proposals

a) Within the framework of peaceful resolution of inter-religious conflicts, the creation of a centre for diagnosis of conflicts that will carry out studies on resolution of inter-religious conflicts and to publish a report of the same, similar to the ones like the Brandt Report.

b) To engage in and to stimulate an intensive process of dialogue between a wide variety of religions, educational, scientific and cultural bodies in the world towards the formulation of a universal declaration of global ethic as a minimal standard for humankind to live up to.

c) To fund and to support, a travelling exhibition on "Peace and the world's Religions", illustrating that peace and reconciliation work worldwide by various religious traditions. Different religious traditions would support (and display) the exhibition as it travels around, coinciding with local interfaith events. Together with the display of

the exhibition, there could be several copies of exhibitions in different languages.

d) A UNESCO DAY or WEEK to celebrate (not just tolerate) religious diversity where participating religions celebrate at the local level the religious diversity in their geographic region. UNESCO would make available materials, suggestions, etc. and coordinate publicity, TV, press, radio etc. on a worldwide basis.

e) Promoting peace education through *new media* for instance peace games.

f) To encourage *value education* at all levels drawing resources from all religious traditions on a worldwide basis.

g) Exhibits of art by children in different countries-internationally or regionally, in areas of conflict and crisis,

-on their visions of "What Peace would mean to me?"
-to show in pictures the common effects of war and common visions of peace.

h) It would be useful for the UNESCO to formulate the guidelines for a formation towards a Culture of Peace in schools at different levels.

What are the mechanisms available for UNESCO to realize that these guidelines are utilized by the member-states in the publication of textbooks by their respective Ministries of Education?

B. To the participants as multipliers

(i) To establish a subgroup of this seminar to work together by mail/post on a set of printed educational materials to illustrate peace work of as many religions as possible. This would include one page leaflets in various languages, readily available for distribution at holy places frequented by people; and a teacher's book for use by "teachers" within religious traditions.

(ii) To constitute within each country monitoring systems

on arms trade and defence production by the State and by private enterprises, as a measure towards controlling arms trade.

(iii) To create a movement called "Civilisation de l'Amour" with the objective of constructing a "Civilisation de Dieu et des Hommes" based on religious values on a worldwide basis.

(iv) The necessity of teaching Human Rights within the curriculum in schools etc.

(v) Spreading the message of inter-religious dialogues at the level of tertiary education, using their own journals.

(vi) Research (by conference participants) leading to an *Exhibit* in the form of a mandala, illustrating principles of unity and diversity in the different religions and cultures of the world.

C. Follow-up meetings:

(i) Localisation: Interdisciplinary meeting, including religious representatives, sociologists, social scientists, secular peace movements, political authorities in a place where there is no immediate conflict but where social/ethnic tensions may degenerate in the future ("Round Table" of different social actors), conflict prevention/case study.

(ii) Scientists, decisions-makers etc. to frame ethical guidelines for science and technology.

(iii) Localizing UNESCO initiatives (local UNESCO centres, clubs etc.)

(iv) To create an ad-hoc committee as an inter-religious watch on Middle East Peace Conference with the assistance of the UNESCO Centre of Catalonia.

Objective: monitoring the peace process in the Middle East with analysis and assessment from the viewpoint of different religions and providing suggestions and initiatives.

Method of work:

- on the spot monitoring
- gathering the reactions of the representatives from the different religions
- calling upon the participants to the conference for interaction leading towards concretization of their presentations in confronting reality.

D. Special Events

(i) 1993: Parliament of World Religions at Chicago
Centenary of World Parliament at Bangalore, 19-22 August 1993

(ii) 1994: International Peace Research Association (IPRA) Conference (first weekend november in Malta). One of the commissions which will meet regularly for 3 or 4 days is Religion and Peace. The papers from this Barcelona

seminar will provide one input into the meeting. If any of the participants from this Barcelona seminar can come to Malta, they would be very welcome. If anyone wants to sent materials for consideration, please do. If anyone would like the printed conclusions from the Malta deliberations, please let me know. Contact Mr. Paul Smoker, Secretary-General IPRA.

WCRP World Assembly in Northern Italy, end 1994
Year of the Family (Vienna) - to include Peace Culture;
Family- Nursery of Peace Culture.

(iii) 1995: Year of Tolerance, UNESCO

Diffusion of documentation on the UN Declaration concerning elimination of all forms of religious intolerance
Documentation on Religions and world order.

That this group cooperates with the Religion Council of Project Global 2000 in the development of documents by members of the world diverse faith communities on Religion and world order, to be produced by 1995, the 50th anniversary of the UN. The documents would reflect on the types of global institutions and systems the world needs to advance greater peace, human rights, economic wellbeing, ecological balance, and cultural integrity as the human community moves into 21st century, given the new types of problems the world faces now, 50 years after the founding of the UN. The documents will reflect on global systems from the context of the insights and experiences, contributions and values of the faith and spirituality of each religion.

The question is not *whether* there will be a new world order; that is inevitable.

The question is what kind of world order, based on what values? Who will lead? Who will benefit? Will it be a more truly democratic global order?

The contributions of religions, each speaking from the *essence* of their respective spirituality, could be a profound contribution to increasing global dialogue on a new world order for the next century. Once each faith community has developed their own document from the depths of their own spirituality, there could be developed an ecumenical document for interfaith dialogue on global institutions for the next century. Contact Mr. Gerald Mische, Global Associates.

E. To the organizers of the seminar

(i) When the papers submitted for this meeting are published in a book form (paperbacks are cheaper) as promised in the letter of invitation, they should be widely distributed all over the world.

(ii) Video and/or audiotapes of the seminar duly edited and reduced to the very essentials, also be so distributed.

Final Thoughts

I. Religions and international problems

1. Religions believe that the origin of many of the existing conflicts is the problem of justice. Religions want to contribute to peace by working for justice. Solutions should be found to the real causes of conflicts which are of non religious nature but derive from economic, national, cultural, and social injustices.
2. Though religions in the past have often legitimated violence, they have decidedly chosen non violence. The success of violence is only apparent. True peace only comes through active non violence.
3. Religions support the processes of the liberation of individuals and peoples. In this perspective, they want to contribute to the defense of Human Rights and the defense of Minorities.
4. Religions want to contribute to the consolidation of necessary international structures and, specially support the mission of the United Nations and its specialised agencies. They propose that the United Nations should establish a permanent consulting system with the major traditional religions. On the other hand, religions are to join into the celebration of the International Year of Tolerance taking place in 1995.
5. Religions are in favour of an increased action in the field of education. They will promote or collaborate in educational programmes concerned with the respect of Human Rights, plurality, diversity and peace. There will be a revision of the language used in respective texts referring to other religions and cultures, in order to eliminate discriminatory and aggressive expressions.
6. Religions wish to contribute to a new culture which goes beyond science and technology. The culture of peace must be at the service of human beings. Religious traditions want to bring values and orientations for the shapening of the new cultural paradigms.
7. Religions want to increase the initiatives of universal interreligious cooperation. Within this perspective, they

support the II Parliament of Religions (Chicago, 1993), round table reconciliation and the declaration of peace zones in places of special religious significance.

II Religions and their internal organization

1. Religions reject orientations proposed by radical or extremist groups because they are not compatible with the nature of their original messages. They also believe that the word fundamentalism is used for varied groups and that some of the grievances often of these groups are genuine.
2. Religions do not want to be indifferent to contemporary cultural sensibility and want to study the way in which democratic processes, the respect of Human Rights, the non discrimination of women and religious freedom could be applied within each religion. Religions do not want to foment neither authoritarianism, sectarian behaviours, nor repressive practices.
3. Religions want to contribute to the new culture of peace by means of religious values not exclusively reduced to ethical values. In this perspective, each tradition insists on specific dimensions of spiritual experience, as for example internal peace, harmony, prayer, compassion, forgiveness and spiritual courage.