

UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL,
SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

Address
by
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"Towards a Culture of Peace"

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Peace! by the Nobel Peace Prize Laureates

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salvar-vos els mots..."

Salvador Espriu.

Mr Director,
Members of the Institute,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The year 1989 clearly marked a historic turning-point. The fall of the Berlin Wall signified the end of an era of ideological confrontation. Some too readily concluded that the millennium had arrived early, that little stood between us and a world of justice, freedom and peace. Nowhere was this euphoria stronger than in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, where it was linked to the prospect of rejoining an affluent Europe to the west.

Subsequent events have shown affluence to be no guarantee of enlightenment. Decades of economic development have put an end to Western Europe's political dissensions but have weakened its capacity to respond to the new profile and tempo of post-Cold-War challenges. The United Nations too is geared to dealing with other questions, at a different pace. We have moved rapidly from being spectators to being actors. We have had to come to terms with a disconcerting reality: "they" are "us". We must recover our dreams of equality, which must not be confused with oppression in any form, just as we must recover dreams of liberty that are not to be confused with consumerism.

Six years after the "revolution" of 1989, many illusions have been dispelled, not least the promise of a "new world order". We are now living - it would seem - in an age of transition, in which many things have changed irrevocably but in which we await the new ideas, institutions and individuals that will determine the shape of things to come.

This climate of uncertain expectation, of "waiting for Godot", was apparent in the recent celebration of the 50th anniversary of the United Nations. The press has been quick to note the absence - with a few notable exceptions - of any bold new ideas or breakthroughs in the texts adopted on this occasion. In contrast, the founding texts of the United Nations have all the force of conviction of those who had experienced the traumas of the Second

World War, whose minds were full of the horrors of violence and genocide. They are written in a state of revolt by men and women determined to "save succeeding generations from the scourge of war".

Never has there been so much talk of reform, at both national and international level. Yet we find it difficult to look beyond existing institutions, to be guided by something more than the "laws of the market" or "public opinion polls", to recognize that the only valid source of inspiration lies within ourselves. There is a need today for a radical change of direction and priorities for a new and urgent commitment to sharing. To achieve this without the compulsion of a calamity, will require a great deal of imagination and courage.

If Martin Luther King continues to inspire humanity, it is because he dreamed, because he dared to share his dream, and because that dream had the force of a primordial idea - civil peace through equality and justice. If Alfred Nobel still lives among us it is because his enduring testament was the expression and enactment of a dream of fraternity among nations and among generations past, present and future. Is this not the moment then when a new world seems in the process of gestation, for us to dream with open eyes how life could be lived with greater dignity, in peace, justice and liberty ?

UNESCO, like other international institutions, urgently need to adapt. But, as the agency of the United Nations created to construct the defences of peace in the minds of men, it is better placed than most to further the realization of Alfred Nobel's dream. I was interested to hear echoes of this dream in the words of Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel of Germany at the United Nations 50th anniversary ceremony last month:

"... Réglons pacifiquement nos conflits! La paix doit enfin régner dans l'ancienne Yougoslavie. Détruisons les moyens de destruction massive et les armes, telles que les mines antipersonnel qui, tous les jours, tuent ou mutilent cruellement des civils innocents dont beaucoup de femmes et d'enfants! N'admettons pas les massacres, la torture, les viols, n'admettons pas que des hommes et des femmes soient persécutés et déplacés en raison de leur race, de leur religion ou de leurs

opinions politiques. Rassemblons nos forces pour le progrès économique et social des peuples dans un nouveau partenariat de développement! Partout dans le monde, les enfants doivent avoir le droit d'être vaccinés contre les maladies et d'aller à l'école!"

We are coming to realize that each and every human being is more precious than the world's monuments, that all children are our children, that children have no nationality, that we can no longer allow them to suffer the ordeals of war, to be victims of the terrible "unacknowledged war" that causes thousands of them to die daily for lack of medicines available elsewhere, to be left to live on the streets inhaling substances that damage their brains irreparably. With such thoughts in mind, UNESCO's General Conference this month adopted a very wide-ranging and inspiring resolution that places the promotion of a culture of peace at the heart of the Organization's future activities. Its 184 Member States have declared themselves united in the furtherance, through UNESCO, of "a culture of social interaction and sharing, based on the principles of freedom, justice and tolerance; a culture that rejects violence, endeavours to prevent conflicts by tackling their roots and to solve problems through dialogue and negotiations; a culture which guarantees everyone the full exercise of all rights and the means to participate fully in the endogenous development of their society".

The end of the Cold War - alas - has not put an end to violent conflict. Indeed, the recent resurgence of conflict within Europe has encouraged some to think that the situation was preferable when the region was "controlled" by the two superpowers. Unbridled and aggressive nationalism - exploiting cultural, ethnic and religious difference for its own purposes - has tended to take the place of an imposed co-existence. Torn between the interests of States and the irrational sympathies of peoples, the international community has too often found itself paralysed in the face of these "atypical" local conflicts.

As a Catalan who loves his country, his language and his culture, I know just how fragile and potent these cultural mosaics are, what creative as well as emotional force they embody - provided their citizens accept the principles of democracy and non-violence, understand that cultures are enriched through open-mindedness and interaction, and recognize the scope for self-

expression offered to minorities within the "new territories" of culture. I remember how in 1988 Gorbachev showed interest in my "Catalan experience" because he already anticipated that the new framework of public freedoms he was promoting would give rise to conflict among those who had lived out their differences in enforced silence.

Recent experience has underlined the "cultural" roots of conflict and the need to forestall conflict before it becomes complex and unmanageable. The problem with **prevention** is that it is largely invisible. Peace, health, happiness do not appear on the monitoring screen and do not generally engage the attention of the media. It has been said that "Only those able to see the invisible are able to do the impossible". I believe that the art of politics will increasingly depend on the capacity to make **visible** the **invisible**, on knowing and acting in order to prevent.

For example, we might have avoided many tragedies in Yugoslavia if we had remembered that history is never innocent and continues to kill centuries after events such as the fourteenth-century battle of Kosovo. We have come to understand that the **disarmament of history** is a necessary complement to those modes of settling disputes listed in Article 33 of the United Nations Charter. UNESCO has a key role to play in addressing this cultural dimension of conflicts in order to arrive, through a kind of **pedagogy of history**, at a lasting peace rather than a mere psychological armistice. The "pacification" of history - of the kind that has taken place in Western Europe over the last thirty or so years - is an essential element in the promotion of a **culture of peace**, which is the only "radical" solution to conflict rooted in cultural difference.

The culture of peace transcends the negative conception of peace as the mere absence of war. It is a "positive" peace rooted in mutual understanding, tolerance, economic and social development, democracy and freedom. In an increasingly interconnected world, such a peace becomes simultaneously more necessary and more difficult to achieve. The potential sources of conflict are legion when one takes into account all their economic, environmental and other ramifications. Moreover, dissent - as the reflection of diversity - is not only a possibility but (as I have written in **Tomorrow is Always Too Late**) an ethical imperative. The core problem is violence. Rather than imposing by force, we must

learn to accept dialogue, to convince rather than conquer. Violence must be rejected. The crucial transition at the present time is from the logic of force to the force of reason - that is to say, from the culture of war to the culture of peace.

A culture of peace is necessarily the concern of everyone - a responsibility each of us has towards our fellow human beings and to future generations since the consequences of war can persist over centuries. Moreover, just as we have a duty to work for peace so we have a right to enjoy peace. It is possible, then, to talk of a "human right to peace", which can be asserted vis-à-vis any authority, governmental or otherwise, and which is achievable only through the concerted efforts of all social actors - governments, individuals, public and private bodies. It is for this reason that I wished to include at the end of the work whose publication brings us together today a definition of the human right to peace. In the same spirit, we have tried to spell out in detail the promise made to future generations in the second line of the Charter of the United Nations by drafting a Declaration on the Responsibilities of the Present Generations towards Future Generations, which has just been discussed by UNESCO's General Conference.

Peace conceived as a human right is ultimately sustainable only within a context of democracy. Here we come up against a major paradox: the Charter of the United Nations makes peace its overriding concern without ever mentioning the word democracy. The only Constitution within the United Nations system to do so is that of UNESCO, whose Preamble affirms that "the great and terrible war which has now ended was made possible by the denial of the **democratic principles** of the dignity, equality and mutual respect of men, and by the propagation, in their place, through ignorance and prejudice, of the doctrine of the inequality of men and races". The prospects for action opened up by this passage - particularly in view of the circumstances in which UNESCO's Constitution was drafted and adopted - were in practice largely negated by forty years of Cold War. A new chapter was initiated by UNESCO in late February 1990 with the organization of a series of meetings of journalists - in Paris, then Windhoek, Almaty and Santiago de Chile. Meanwhile freedom of expression, reaffirmed as an essential pillar of democracy by UNESCO's General Conference in November 1989, continued to make headway internationally. At the same time, a series of conferences (Montevideo in 1990 on Democratic Culture and Development; Prague in 1991 on Culture and

Democracy; Tunis in 1992 on Education for Democracy; Montreal in 1993 on Education for Human Rights and Democracy) served to highlight and reinforce the vital and mutually supporting links in the triangle peace-development-democracy. In the United Nations, democracy was almost completely sidelined during the Cold War. Recently - much to the credit of Mr Boutros Ghali - democracy is today featuring permanently in policy documents such as the Secretary-General's **Agenda for Peace** and **Agenda for Development**.

Now is the moment to take advantage of this new climate of democracy: to enable citizens to participate, to express themselves, to **count!** In this respect, education must be seen as fundamental to democracy, since it is the key to giving every individual the capacity to assume full citizenship. As for UNESCO, it is still the only international organization to possess an administrative unit concerned simultaneously with questions of peace, human rights and - more recently, reflecting the requirements of a "positive" peace - democracy.

In the aftermath of the Cold War, one of the major problems confronting the international community is how to address armed conflicts **within** States. An overwhelming majority of present-day conflicts are of the intra-State type and the Geneva Conventions of 1949 offer very limited scope for action in these cases. The international community has little legal means of intervention to protect civilian populations except through recourse to a rudimentary humanitarian law, which usually adds up to "too little, too late". There is near universal agreement that international law is out of step with the times, and solutions are currently being sought either through a dynamic interpretation of the UN Charter or else through measures that will allow the Security Council to intervene when human rights are massively and flagrantly violated.

The situation on the ground is often so tragic that we ought to be in a position to act at the first signs of a humanitarian crisis, before death, suffering and fleeing populations oblige us to do so. Currently, we act in the name of **charity** - the motto of the Red Cross is "Inter arma caritas." Should we not also be able to act in the name of a **right to justice** ? The existence of such a right would - for example - have prevented the former Ethiopian Government from legally vetoing the supply of food aid to certain groups of famine victims. I would add that early warning mechanisms will be essential if the Security Council is to be alerted

ufficiently early in situations where a government is clearly failing to uphold basic human rights or has virtually ceased to exist.

With all these questions in mind, UNESCO organized an international consultation of specialists at the beginning of this year. Thinking on these matters is still in its early stages, but I intend to send to the Secretary-General - who has encouraged these reflections - a summary of the criteria proposed during this meeting to ensure timely action by the Security Council to prevent the kind of the tragic events we have recently witnessed. While UNESCO, as the intellectual arm of the United Nations, has a duty to reflect on all issues, the adoption of international normative instruments is obviously outside its sphere of competence. However, we clearly have a common responsibility to avoid the collective shame of further Rwandas.

It remains true that the best way of avoiding human suffering is to resolve the disagreements underlying conflict. Article 33 of the United Nations Charter lists the habitual modes of settlement - negotiation, enquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlement, resort to regional agencies or arrangements, or "other peaceful means". In his *Agenda for Peace*, the Secretary-General identified the four main kinds of action open to the United Nations in order to re-establish peace: preventive diplomacy, peace-making, peace-keeping and post-conflict peace-building. However, experience both during and after the Cold War has shown that the settlement of conflicts - whether between or within States - requires a **minimum of agreement** between the parties concerned. The search for agreement between disputing parties presupposes that they accept each other sufficiently to enter into a dialogue, direct or indirect.

In this connection, it will be recalled that discreet contacts were at the origin of the "unexpected" events that led to peace in El Salvador, Mozambique and the Middle East. Under its Culture of Peace Programme, UNESCO has also promoted a peace-conducive dialogue as a preliminary to other forms of conflict settlement by inviting all the parties concerned to participate in encounters and peace forums of various kinds. Because UNESCO is essentially a multidisciplinary organization, we know that dialogue is a complex phenomenon - simultaneously individual and collective, but **above all cultural**. Dialogue can range from a palaver in a baobab to the

intervention of a messenger credible in the eyes of both parties.

We have convened Culture of Peace Forums in Congo and the Sudan, where the conflicts were so ancient and complex that the very idea of dialogue could initially have been seen as treasonable by both parties. On the basis of UNESCO's and other experience, there would perhaps be a case for analysing the components of a peace-conducive dialogue as the first step on the path to peace. In this connection, I would underline that transnational problems must have transnational solutions, and that transfrontier problems - such as the very important issue of cultures belonging to two or three countries - call for transfrontier solutions.

For UNESCO, such a dialogue is meaningful only if it encompasses peace in all its aspects. This means taking into account culture, seen as a radical determinant of everyday behaviour but also as a dynamic process of creation and interaction. It was in 1989, at the Yamoussoukro Conference on Peace in the Minds of Men, that the idea of the culture of peace received its international consecration. The Conference agreed that UNESCO should "help construct a new vision of peace by developing a peace culture based on the universal values of respect for life, liberty, justice, solidarity, tolerance, human rights and equality between men and women". The establishment of such a culture of peace, understood as the antithesis of the culture of war, was seen as the prime mission of our Organization.

Since 1994, the promotion of a culture of peace has become a major element in UNESCO's programme. Its main components are: (1) national culture of peace programmes aimed at reconciliation in countries where violent conflict has a long history (such as El Salvador, Mozambique and Burundi) (2) the training of "peace promoters" through the adaptation of curricula or specialized courses, (3) co-operation with national and international organization, both governmental and non-governmental, to give a peace-building focus to their activities. These activities are currently being integrated into a new transdisciplinary project - **Towards a Culture of Peace** - which will also include education for peace, human rights and democracy and the promotion of tolerance, gender equality and cultural pluralism.

UNESCO's culture of peace programme has rapidly attracted strong support. The Heads of State and Government of Central Africa

meeting in Brazzaville in December 1994
peace as a "dynamic process of concertation and dialogue for the
peaceful settlement of conflicts". A Declaration on the Role of
Religion in the Promotion of a Culture of Peace was adopted by a
meeting in Barcelona on 18 December 1994. A symposium on "The
Culture of Peace in Somalia" was held in Sana'a in April 1995. The
Group of 77 plus China - representing 133 countries in all -
declared at its meeting in Paris in October of this year that "we
attach high priority to promoting a culture of peace...". The
participants in the International Forum "For Solidarity against
Intolerance, for a Dialogue of Cultures" held in Tbilisi in July
1995 appealed for measures to "exclude war and violence from human
community life and replace a culture of war by a culture of peace".
Finally, UNESCO's General Conference, in unanimously adopting the
Organization's Medium-Term Strategy just a few days ago, affirmed
that the major challenge facing the international community on the
eve of a new century was to initiate the transition from a culture
of war to a culture of peace.

Clearly, we are only at the very start of a process that is
now being extended from a number of war-torn states to other
countries where peace is a vital and tangible need. "Peace" - said
Bernard Shaw - "is not only better than war, but infinitely more
arduous". The recent assassination of Yitzhak Rabin is the latest
tragic example of just how arduous the pursuit of peace can be. The
price of peace includes human courage and even self-sacrifice. It
also includes effective measures to end poverty, exclusion and the
unequal sharing of resources, which constantly increase while the
affluent societies continue to spend billions on superfluous
things, including arming themselves against past threats. We are used to
paying the price of war, but we are not yet accustomed to paying
the price of peace. This is a task for all social orders - civil,
religious, military. All must co-operate, because everyone needs
everyone.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I believe that the concept of the culture of peace - at this
historic moment of transition - can open the way to a brighter
future for all the world's people. In this respect, the work we are
inaugurating today offers a constant source of inspiration since it
embodies the thought and wisdom of the greatest artisans of peace
over the last hundred years. We owe an inestimable debt of
gratitude to Alfred Nobel for having forged such a key instrument
for the building of a world of peace, justice and freedom.