

Declaration of Panama

Meeting of Latin American Radio and Television
Station Owners and Directors for a Culture of Peace

Panama City, Panama, 22 March 1999

We, the participants in the Meeting of Latin American Radio and Television Station Owners and Directors for a Culture of Peace, convened in Panama City at the invitation of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Government of the Republic of Panama,

Declare:

That peace is a prerequisite for sustainable human development;

That freedom of expression is crucially important to democracy, justice and the building and consolidation of a culture of peace and non-violence;

That the culture of war, governed by the law of force and oppression, has failed utterly in the century and millennium now drawing to a close, and has cost millions of human lives;

That the promotion of a culture of peace calls for awareness - within the family, school and the media - of the risks inherent in situations, government actions and news or entertainment programmes that undermine human dignity and foster attitudes of violence and coercion;

That the roots of violence and aggression are to be found, inter alia, in social injustice, inequality of opportunity, intolerance, impunity, lack of respect for freedom of expression, and the violation of human rights;

Our resolve to pursue a policy of promoting, disseminating and consolidating imaginative ways of avoiding violence and furthering the peaceful settlement of conflicts.

We reaffirm our will to:

Work actively and cooperate in promoting a culture of peace and non-violence, rejecting all forms of infringement by governments or any other authority of the freedom of expression either of the media or of citizens;

Denounce persistently any threats, national or international, to the principles laid down in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which is the foundation of a culture of peace;

Support, within the ambit of our professional activities, the consolidation of democracy, recognizing that journalists and audiovisual communication personnel are prime movers in achieving a culture of peace;

Uphold, through our action, the values underpinning freedom and justice, and likewise foster attitudes of dialogue, tolerance and reconciliation;

Recognize the importance of disseminating information on the impact for the establishment of a culture of peace of responsibly resolving the problem of financial violence represented by the external debt burdening the developing countries;

Promote increased investment in education and in basic social policies and also foster international cooperation and environmental protection, along with reduced arms spending;

Recognize the multicultural character of our societies and foster intercultural coexistence, rejecting any form of discrimination on grounds of sex, race, language or religion;

Guarantee full access to the media for peoples, communities and persons belonging to indigenous cultures, which includes the transfer of technology, protection of the individual and collective rights of peoples, the right to diversity and to be different, and preservation of the indigenous cultural heritage, strengthening the values of peace.

We undertake to:

Join in celebration of the year 2000 proclaimed by the United Nations the International Year for a Culture of Peace, in particular by facilitating the distribution and signing of the Manifesto 2000 and making it known to the public;

Foster commitment by the populations of Latin America and the Caribbean to the Manifesto 2000 for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence;

Endeavour to produce programmes and broadcasts intended for children and young people in order to construct the defences of peace in their minds;

Reaffirm that a legal framework is the only means of ensuring fair access to radio and television frequencies and, in order to guarantee such access and regularize de facto situations, recommend that, wherever necessary, current laws and regulations on telecommunications be reviewed and updated;

Encourage the establishment of audiovisual networks and links that promote the shared objective of working towards a culture of peace, expanding the Network of Latin American Newspapers for a Culture of Peace (REDIPAZ) initiative;

Appeal to the States and the social, cultural, political and scientific organizations of the region to redouble their efforts to achieve the definitive integration of the continent;

Thank the Government of the Republic of Panama and UNESCO for convening this democratic forum allowing a free exchange of views, and take up the Brazilian communicators' proposal to meet again during the International Year for a Culture of Peace.

Panama City, 22 March 1999