



The role of Scouting and the coming generation in the historic transformation from the culture of war to a culture of peace

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For 5,000 years, human history has been dominated by the culture of war. Periods between wars have been only temporary peace as nations arm themselves and prepare for future wars. Hence, when the United Nations General Assembly, in its resolution A/52/13 in 1998 called for a “transformation from a culture of war and violence to a culture of peace and non-violence”, it was an important historic moment. The Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace, adopted in 1999 by the General Assembly went into detail on how this can be brought about, calling for a global movement for a culture of peace involving the UN, the Member States and the Civil Society.

During the International Year for the Culture of Peace in 2000, 75 million people pledged to cultivate a culture of peace in their daily lives. The Scouts of the world, including the Girl Guides, played a major role in this campaign. The following statistics do not do justice to the myriad conversations and actions they undertook during the campaign. Just to cite one such example, at a time when Algeria was torn by violence, the Scouts took the Manifesto door-to-door while it was being sung from the minarets of the mosques and, by that means, Algeria became the first country to collect over a million signatures. In fact, there was so much violence and confusion in the country that many of the signatures were not counted, as we received a phone call in Paris from the UNESCO National Commission in Algiers that there were many boxes of signatures they were not able to record.

Here are some of the greatest contributions to the Manifesto 2000 by Scouting organizations in addition to those mentioned from Algeria and many other Scouting signatures that were submitted by UNESCO National Commissions without indicating their origin. I will make no distinctions here between Scouts and Girl Scouts and Guides (members of the World Organization of the Scout Movement (WOSM) and the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS) respectively):

Korea. 588,000 signatures collected by the 17 branches of the Korea Boy Scouts and submitted to the Korean National Commission for UNESCO.

Argentina. 100,000 signatures collected by the Scouts of Argentina in activities organized throughout the country.

Philippines. 39,000 signatures, including 28,000 collected by the Girl Scouts of the Philippines, 10 districts of Davao Chapter as well as Malabog and Tugbok, and 11,000 collected by Scouts, Scouters, staff and officials of the 4th National Junior Leaders Encampment at Camp Adovis in Sorsogon.

Cyprus. 38,543 signatures collected by the Girl Guides Association of Cyprus.

During the present International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World (2001-2010), the leadership of the movement has been taken up by thousands of civil society organizations, although there has been very little coverage by the mass media. Many Scout organizations have taken part in the Decade, and here are reports of some of them that were included in the Midterm Report of the Civil Society for the Decade, submitted to the United Nations in 2005:

Scouts de Argentina - Equipo Nacional, XII Jamboree Scout Panamericano

Grupo Scouts N° 057 "Martín Guemes" (Scouts de Argentina)

Federação de Bandeirantes do Brasil

World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS): Among their activities are:

The World Organization of the Scout Movement and WAGGGS are working together with a joint team to promote peace and also to collect all the peace projects done over the years.

WAGGGS' 144 Member Organizations run many different peace projects which empower girls and young women to become peace makers and also help to create cultural understanding and friendship. WAGGGS and WOSM are currently working with young men and women in Iraq to train them in the Guiding and Scouting method, thereby spreading the message of peace and goodwill.

The 2005 Civil Society report called for allocation of resources for those working toward a culture of peace, and in 2006 a report from 475 youth organizations around the world proposed a Global Youth Solidarity Fund that would provide these resources.

Among the contributors to the 2006 Youth Report were, the World Organization of the Scout Movement (Geneva), Asociación de Scouts de Bolivia, Egyptian General Federation of Scouts, The League of Scouts of Mozambique, Grupo Scouts No 057 Martín Miguel Güemes, Scouts de Argentina, Asociación Nacional de Muchachas Guías de Honduras, Scouts Australia, Italian Catholic Association of Girl Guides and Boy Scouts, and the Polish Scouting and Guiding Association.

The work of Scouting touches the essential aspects of a culture of peace, as pointed out in the Youth Report by the Asociación de Scouts de Bolivia. “There should be more interaction between youth from different social classes and different races or ethnic and religious groups. This way they would get to know each other and only based on that, on increased equality, would they be able to build consensus, coordinate collective action and truly build a culture of peace.”

Quantitative assessment of Scouting achievements for a culture of peace are difficult to obtain. This is pointed out in the Youth Report by the Unit Manager for External Relations of the World Organization of the Scout Movement. “It has been difficult to measure the results of their work using indicators developed by economic or development approaches.

Their non-formal education work involves working with children and young people, from 7 to 21, so it is a long-term educational process.”

There is no doubt that Scouting in particular, and the young generation in general, has an essential role to play in the transition from the culture of war to a culture of peace. A good start has been made, and we can expect much more in the decades to come.

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