

Presentation of Cora Weiss, President, Hague Appeal for Peace
To the 55th Annual DPI/NGO Conference
11 September 2002

“Human history becomes more and more a race between education and catastrophe,” said H G Wells (The Outline of History 1921)

Today is not an ordinary day.

One year ago we watched the cloud of death filled smoke rise like a mushroom in the clear blue sky. We were witness to a horrendous crime, not to an act of war. We were all outside hugging each other. There was no sense of revenge in the air. People remembered Gandhi’s warning, *An eye for an eye makes the whole world blind.* This morning I wept as we passed a flower filled memorial to the missing.

What happened to us? What was tolerance has become intolerance. What was legitimate patriotism has become almost extreme nationalism.

We have witnessed the rise of the arrogance of power to such a level that we have jeopardized our own long held great reputation as the model for nations embracing international law, human rights and democracy. What has become of the vision of the Perfect Union.?

We have seen hard won negotiated multilateral agreements on nuclear, chemical, biological weapons, and the environment rejected or disavowed, as former President Jimmy Carter reminds us.

We can not talk about demobilizing the war machine and ignore the drums beating to start another war. The campaign to **sell** an invasion while war and violence persist in Israel, Gaza, the West Bank, Afghanistan - just two of more than 20 current solvable violent conflicts, represents an enormous failure of leadership, failure of diplomacy, and erosion of democracy.

Where is the debate today, the open debate which is the hallmark of democracy and which precludes secrecy and includes dissent.

We have mourned the loss of life on September 11th. We have committed ourselves against terrorism. *“But the international unity against terrorism risks being splintered today,”* warns New Zealand’s foreign minister. He is joined by so many, including Nelson Mandela and Tony Blair’s once cabinet minister Mo Mowlam (1997-2001) who says ...*“there is no threat from Iraq, the rush to war has nothing to do with terrorism or morality,”* it’s all about oil she says. Of course Saddam Hussein is not defensible. Military preemption, my friends, is not a form of prevention.

Making peace last will be made all the more difficult as we analyze the intended and unintended consequences of the buildup for a war against Iraq in the name of the war against terrorism.

The social, political and human costs and reverberations are astronomic. While the UN Human Development report says we need only \$40 Billion for adequate access to health care or less than 4% of the combined wealth of the 225 richest people in the world, my country alone will spend \$400 billion on the military in 2003 and in over 5 years the bill for preparing for war will be \$2.1 trillion. How much will your countries spend?

Everyone at the recent Johannesburg summit asked for funds to provide clean water to the 1.5 billion people without safe water. "Wars", says Nobel laureate and UNDP Goodwill Ambassador, Nadine Gordimer, "send those who flee proliferating cities of shelter without resources." Clean water needs money. There is money in military budgets.

The very best way to make peace last is to prevent war. We call on the General Assembly to endorse and implement the Secretary General's report on conflict prevention.

Women, to make peace last

The recipe for a lasting peace requires many ingredients. I will urge us to consider just two. No women, no peace is easy to say, why has it been so hard to achieve? Women are over half the population. We are the first teachers of our children and through stories hand down our experiences and values.

A coalition of international organizations has nurtured and seen the unanimous adoption of SC resolution 1325 on women, peace and security. We have a copy for every one of you. It calls for women at every table where the fate of humanity is at stake. It calls for women, not a woman, for one woman does not women make, to be protected in armed conflict, to have their rights respected, to have States put an end to impunity for war crimes especially those relating to sexual violence against women and girls. It calls for recognizing the special needs of women former combatants and the needs of their children and for women to be represented at all decision making levels. Including peace processes and in conflict resolution.

We should never forget Mary Robinson's special tribute to the role of women's groups in peace building. Her Irish poet's verse, should be on every man's desk...women need to be written back into history, " finding a voice where they found a vision."

I am delighted to be sharing this platform with the Under Secretary General for Peace Keeping, the very place that desperately needs a gender unit, and gender sensitivity training through the ranks of all peacekeepers and their leaders.

We especially call on you, Mr. Under -Secretary General Guehenno, to create a gender unit in the DPKO, and gender units in every peace keeping operation. Why can't that be done now, what is there to wait for? The woman responsible for the gender unit in Kosovo recently

resigned because of lack of support from headquarters.

When women are respected, when women are part of the solution they become part of the glue that makes the peace agreement stick. No women, no peace. We are simply asking to share the responsibilities and the opportunities. It's never happened in history. And the present ways are failing. We saw what a difference two women made at the Good Friday Agreement table in Ireland. We can not afford to ignore the abilities and rights of women. All of us here can take 1325 home to promote, and to monitor its implementation.

Education- peace education

The second ingredient for making peace last is education - peace education. You heard Shashi Tharoor call for peace education at the opening session. You heard Mary Robinson speak of human rights education. You heard Adina Shapiro call for peace education needing to be written into peace agreements.

Peace Education is a participatory method of preparing people to be active participants in democracy. Peace must be learned, it does not come with your DNA. Peace Education, which embraces values of democracy, and human rights, disarmament, gender equality, non violence, and conservation of the environment, can be integrated or infused into everything we learn and does not have to be an extra burden to teachers as an extra course. It also can be effective in the community, the non formal sector, where former combatants are helped in social reintegration and rehabilitation and skills development. In Colombia, last summer, our team worked with students, teachers, and police and military in a training that brought out everyone's needs for respect, dignity, and fair treatment. The Hague Appeal for Peace has a Global Campaign for Peace Education ably coordinated by Meg Gardinier. She has produced and we have published *Learning to Abolish War: Teaching Toward a Culture of Peace*. See Meg and check our web site. <www.haguepeace.org> You can buy it in the UN bookstore.

UN DDA/HAP Partnership

From the opening moments of this fine conference we have heard the word partnership. The UN prides itself on creating partnerships with civil society. The Hague Appeal for Peace is honored and flattered to have been asked by the UN Department for Disarmament Affairs, led by the remarkable Under Secretary General Jayantha Dhanapala, to be a partner in a unique experiment in Peru, Niger, Albania and Cambodia, where the UN or the EU have removed small arms, and we sustain their removal with the introduction of participatory peace education, culturally relevant and appropriate. It is an outgrowth of the Plan of Action of the conference on small arms and light weapons.

If this works it can be replicated around the world. Post conflict situations have one thing in common...the communities are awash in weapons and domestic violence goes up and the potential for resumption of the armed violence remains. Until now, you could get some money or a book or a job in exchange for giving up your gun. But once you've spent the money, finished

the book or completed the job, what is there to prevent you from buying another gun.

Enter the Hague Appeal for Peace and our pedagogical coordinator, Betty Burkes, our local educational experts and our vast resources of talent and materials. The partnership is extended when the UN Foundation provides a small grant, matched by the government of Germany and then Andorra, Japan and The Ford Foundation. A local civil society organization is identified, a talented person tapped and a teacher training school located. In Cambodia the teacher training school is in the compound with a large secondary and primary school, making a marvelous experimental laboratory. Local and national government offices provide support, and UN agencies play a role. The whole community finds a role, and indeed, we hope to find that the number of arrests due to armed activity will be reduced, the level of violence in the classroom, reduced, and if it works, we may even see a rise in academic achievement, because we know it requires more cognitive effort to resolve a problem if you do not resort to violence. Ultimately we see this as an investment in helping people become rational effective citizens in democracies. We cannot lose the race between education and catastrophe.

So, give us women in decision making, integrate peace education into all curricula and community, remove and destroy the guns, and I'll bet you can make peace last.

E. B. White, in *Here is New York*, writes in 1949 of the "*men carving out the permanent headquarters of the United Nations- the greatest housing project of them all. In its stride, New York takes on one more interior city, to shelter, this time, all governments, and to clear the slum called war.*"

The United Nations is the greatest invention of this past century. It meets this week. Let us not let them forget their mission to prevent succeeding generations from the scourge of war.

In the words of Dr Martin Luther King, "*Wars are not good chisels to carve out peaceful tomorrows.*"