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*Human Security and Dignity:  
Fulfilling the Promise of the United Nations*

Panel II : Educating for a Secure Future

Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> September  
Morning Plenary Session  
10 am – 12:30 pm

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***Peace Education in Action: Practices and Agents***

I feel humbled and honoured to speak at this panel and wish to thank and congratulate the organisers of this year's UN DPI conference for having successfully coordinated this important initiative. In the spirit of the New Diplomatic Diplomacy, this is a forum that gives civil society agents a true voice to dialogue and seek collaborative approaches with policy makers and other agents involved in the vital task of the creation of a sustainable culture of peace and justice for all.

Based on my personal experience internationally, and more concretely in Aotearoa-New Zealand and Brazil in recent months, I will aim to give an overview on some of the broad components of peace education and especially of its practice, touching on some of the current gaps and proposing some strategies and model examples for an effective collaborative approach in the key area which occupies us this morning: why and how to educate for a secure future.

I will highlight in my presentation the role of three agents who play a key role in the task of educating for a secure future and who are all too often overlooked: youth, indigenous peoples and women. The former will constitute the overarching theme of my contribution, based on my experiences with the *Hague Appeal for Peace Youth Programme* and the coordination of the *Youth Strand of the Global Campaign for Peace Education* over the past three years, as well as with my current position with the *Global Youth Action Network* office in Brazil.

Allow me to begin with a short story:

*"A Being from another world parked his space ship in an isolated spot. The next morning he passed a military camp, where he saw men sticking knives fastened to odd-looking poles into bags of straw. "What is this?" he asked a uniformed youth. "Bayonet practice," answered the youth. "We're practicing on dummies. We have to learn to use*

*the bayonet a certain way to kill a man. Of course, we don't kill many men with bayonets. We kill most of them with bombs."*

*"But, why should you want to learn to kill men?" exclaimed the Being, aghast. "We don't" said the youth bitterly. "We are sent here against our will and we don't know what to do about it".*

*That afternoon, the being passed through a large city. He noticed a crowd gathered in a public square to see a uniformed youth being decorated with a medal. "Why is he being decorated with a medal?" inquired the Being. "Because he killed a hundred men in battle", said the man beside him. The Being looked with horror upon the youth who had killed a hundred men and walked away.*

*In another part of the city, the Being heard a radio announcing loudly that a certain man was soon to be executed. "Why is he to be put to death?" asked the Being. "Because he killed two men", said the man beside him. The Being walked away, bewildered.*

*That evening, after the Being had thought the matter over, he opened his notebook and wrote: "It seems that all youths are forced to learn how to kill men efficiently. Those who succeed in killing a large number of men are rewarded with medals. Those who turn out to be poor killers and succeed in killing only a few men are punished by being put to death."*

(Excerpt from Peace Pilgrim)

#### Peace Education – an overview of content and practice

Imagine this short story being used in a classroom with young people to stimulate debate and reflection on the seemingly unquestioned irrationality of violence and war. Now imagine a classroom where children grow up learning that history is not just an assembly of war dates and glorification of military commanders; that wars and their victors do not dictate who was right, but rather, who was left; that true heroes are those who dedicate their lives to serving mankind, to alleviating suffering and to the world's positive transformation.

One of the first awareness we need to bring to children when educating for a secure future is that while conflict is a natural and healthy occurrence in our lives, violence is not. And that while our DNA dictates neither tendency, both approaches to resolving conflict – the violent and the non-violent one – can be learned. Peace education should hence include conflict resolution and non-violent communication techniques, stretching from the win/win versus the win/lose approach to resolving conflict, non-violent communication techniques such as I-statements and active listening skills, and negotiation and mediation techniques.

I had the opportunity to put into practice some of these during my recent experience in conducting peace education sample lessons in primary and secondary schools in Aotearoa: New Zealand, a country that has integrated peace education into its school curriculum. This is taught in a range of fun and interactive ways such as through role-plays, simulation and cooperative games. Using role-plays, for example, on sample conflicts from their lives, students develop positive attitudes and practice skills which, when applied, can transform a potentially violent situation into a healthy and amicable growing experience. These paradigms and skills can be applied in conflicts ranging

from the personal and home setting to international diplomatic processes. Young people have the capability to not only solve their own conflicts, but also to act as mediators and help others solve their conflicts. Student mediators are now active in solving disputes in most primary and secondary schools thanks to the *Cool Schools peer mediation programme*, led by the Peace Foundation ([www.peace.net.nz](http://www.peace.net.nz)).

Peace Education, however, is more than just teaching conflict resolution. It involves a package of knowledge, skills and attitudes relevant to a broader and more holistic vision of peace and security. The Human Security Network of Norway resolved in its 1999 meeting that “Human security is advanced by protecting and promoting human rights, the rule of law, democratic governance and democratic structures, the peaceful resolution of conflicts as well as by the promotion of sustainable human development, the alleviation of poverty and pursuing the goals of people-centred development.” And so it logically follows that an educational approach that seeks to educate for a true form of human security should follow the same objectives.

It is also important to remember that peace education is not a new subject to be squeezed into an already overcrowded curriculum. It is rather an approach to learning that is participatory and interactive in nature and that is used to infuse a range of knowledge, attitudes and skills into relevant existing subject matters. A mathematics class for example can become a lesson on the meaning of security, foreign policy and structural violence when statistics on the availability of education and health care in different countries is used in relation to military expenditures.

With peace education the traditional roles of teachers and students are at times reversed, as the former becomes more of a facilitator and allows students to engage in an empowering active learning experience. Graphics and statistics can for instance be used to reflect the disproportionate drain of funding away from human security into building up military might. When seeking to hold governments accountable for attaining the Millennium Development Goals in education, young people should for instance learn that the cost of a single new nuclear submarine is the equivalent of the total education spending in 23 low-income countries with 160 million school-age children<sup>1</sup>. Current research situates the current global military budget around 800 billion US\$. Students should also learn that a study based on recent UN reports, indicates that a reduction in military spending of 10% (i.e. 80 billion) over a 10-year period would erase poverty in the world<sup>2</sup>.

The UNESCO’s Global Study of Media Violence found that 88% of the children [that took part of the study] be they from India, Brazil or Japan, knew and looked-up to Terminator. This is a worrying phenomenon. The multiplicity and appeal of this kind of movie “heroes” transmit the message to children and youth that aggression is a good means to solve conflicts, while it offers status and can be fun.

It is time for history and social studies curricula to glorify peacemakers, not warriors, and to encourage young people to emulate the lives of people like Gandhi and Mother Teresa rather than Rambo and Terminator. Efforts are being made in Brazil to elevate peace heroes in order to provide Brazilian youth with national role models beyond the usual sport heroes of Ayrton Senna and Pelé. The Parliamentary Council for a Culture

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<sup>1</sup> Housmans Peace Diary 1985

<sup>2</sup> Bascar Menon, Disarmament Times, 2001.

of Peace of the state of Sao Paulo, of which I am a guest advisor to, decided to give the Council the name of SergioVieira de Mello, in honour of the United Nations special representative in Iraq who was so tragically killed a few weeks ago. [You can find copies of the original resolution of the Culture of Peace Parliamentary Council at the back].

Peace Education also recognises that our global reality is becoming increasingly complex, and the universal issues that compose it stretch over the political, economic, social, cultural, technological and environmental arenas in an interconnected web. Peace Education thus includes the promotion of documents and international efforts which reflect this, including the *United Nations Charter*, the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, *Agenda 21*, the *Seville Statement on Violence* and the *Hague Agenda for Peace and Justice for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*.

As HH Queen Noor [speaking at the Hague Appeal for Peace conference] said : “If we approach peace education with the same level of commitment and expertise that previous generations devoted to military academies we will be on our way to achieving a more lasting security than war ever did provide”. This vision was joined to that of over 10,000 peace and justice activists that converged at the Hague Appeal for Peace conference in May 1999 and who agreed to launching a campaign to integrate peace education into every school of the world. The *Global Campaign for Peace Education* also aims to have peace education taught and learned beyond the school into the non-formal area and to promote the education of all teachers to teach for peace. [You can find informational brochures on it at the back and by visiting [www.haguepeace.org](http://www.haguepeace.org)]

There also exist a handful of successful national initiatives that we can look at as role models. The way peace education has been integrated into the curriculum in Aotearoa - New Zealand, for example, has been outlined in a brochure released by the Ministry of Education and the Peace Foundation last month – [copies of which you can find at the back]. There are also comprehensive peace education programmes being fostered in other countries, such as the excellent model coordinated by the International Education for Peace Institute of Landegg University in Switzerland. (<http://efp.landegg.edu>). The aim of the Project is to contribute to a culture of peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina by addressing what is perhaps the most critical long-term task facing the country: the training of present and future generations of children and youth to be peacemakers.

Some excellent resources include: *Education for Development*, by Susan Fountain. *Learning to Abolish War: Teaching towards a Culture of Peace*. And the *Youth Agenda for Peace and Justice: Time to Abolish War!* – which is written by and for young people.

### **Key agents**

While it is important to recognise the essential role that teachers, parents and elders play in the process of educating for a secure future, it is also important to outline the important role of other, less visible or “obvious” agents in this process, such as that of young people.

### Youth

In the words of the Chair of the Staff Council of the Asian Development Bank “Nations are underdeveloped for many reasons, but certainly the major reasons are inadequate leadership and *absence of youth participation*” (Motilal Sharma, Nov. 2000, conference in Phnom Penh on Building Sustainable Peace and Democracy).

The Global Youth Action Network ([www.youthlink.org](http://www.youthlink.org)), which I help coordinate from Brazil, aims to facilitate and maximise the participation of young people in decision-making processes, starting by promoting educational projects for youth on global issues. Our website on youth activism, a portal shared with its partner organisation TakingITGlobal, receives over 10 million hits a month, making it the most visited website for young leaders globally.

I believe one of the reasons that young people are to be regarded as key agents in the promotion of peace education is because they have the courage to dream and to visualise the kind of world they would like to inhabit. And they have the enthusiasm and determination to work to create that reality, if only they are given the necessary tools.

The *Global Campaign for Peace Education* also recognises the unique role that young people play in the process of teaching and learning peace education globally. As the major recipients of the present education system, the makers of tomorrow’s world and increasingly strong actors of today’s, young people the world over are encouraged through the *Hague Appeal for Peace Youth Programme* to demand a change in the present education system and to support the goals of the *Global Campaign for Peace Education*. Young people are also encouraged to become peer educators in the non-formal educational setting and to explore creative ways of initiating peace education through use of community workshops, seminars, symposiums and debates, internet discussion groups, street theatre/drama, music, dance, story telling and the arts. To facilitate this process of global youth involvement in the peace education campaign the website features an international network of Virtual Youth Desks that serve as active antennas for the Youth Strand of the *Global Campaign for Peace Education* in 12 countries stretching across five continents.

An interesting example of spontaneous coordination of a peace education strategy by young people was the “National Week of Education” coordinated by the *Student Peace Action Network* (SPAN) in the US in November 2001, which launched a national week of teach-ins held on and off University campuses addressing issues ranging from issues directly pertaining to 9-11, e.g. regarding knowledge on Islam and the US’s hidden agenda in its planned military intervention in Afghanistan to broader current topics including the National Missile Defence (NMD) and Star Wars, to the Middle East Conflict.

A further objective of the HAP youth programme is to promote peace education as a double edged “vaccine/stimulator” against one of the most contagious diseases among many in the younger generations: Apathy. Young people need to believe that they *can* make a difference. They need to feel the inspiration to *want to know more*, and to be encouraged to take the reflective transition into *constructive action*.

The dynamism, creativity and idealism inherent in young people is a hidden resource and rich potential that can and must be tapped into and channelled so as to see youth

become building blocks and leaders *of today*. Peace education has the underlying objective of helping to transform the disengaged, uninterested and passive among today's youth into active and committed citizens.

Concrete examples of young peoples' contributions to the creation of a peaceful and just world and their engagement as global citizens are included in the recently launched report from the *International Youth Parliament*, a project of Oxfam Australia, entitled "Highly Affected, Rarely Considered – the impacts of globalisation on young people". The report, which has been written by young people from around the world and is compiled from over 400 submissions from 120 different countries is aimed at decision-makers and offers concrete recommendations for action to government agencies, corporations, multilateral institutions, non-government organisations as well as individuals.. [You can find information fliers about the report at the back of the room].

### Indigenous Peoples

Other key agents to consider in the promotion of peace education are indigenous peoples.

The wonderful country where I am currently based, Brazil, is famous for its rich cultural diversity. With more than 120 surviving indigenous nations and 180 native languages, it is however only just starting to recognise that there is a wealth implicit in its pluricultural and multiethnic society that needs to be protected. The 'Conselho indigenista missionario' (CIMI), the main organ of defence of the identity of the Indian populations inhabiting Brazilian territory, is an example of an indigenous group that is taking the lead in implementing changes in the educational content. It focuses on redressing the ethnocentric and paternalistic nature of the conceptions spread and justified by school textbooks, through publishing alternative textbooks and making educational films and workshops in universities and schools as well as for the general public.

Western civilization needs to drop its imperialistic pretension of universality and recognise other cultures whose knowledge, cultures, economies and value systems have enabled them to coexist in harmony with the environment for centuries. A degree of humility and flexibility is necessary in order to allow for the possibility of mutual learning and to establish a relationship of true co-operation and exchange.

As a proverb from the indigenous Maori of Aotearoa New Zealand says:

*Nau te rourou, naku te rourou, ka ora ai te iwi.*  
(With your basket and my basket people will be nourished).

A wonderful example of this cooperative spirit is the *Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Youth Alliance (INIYA)*, an innovative network of committed youth who recognise the value of education on indigenous heritage and help support indigenous efforts for self-determination on an equal-footing and a collaborative approach. [www.iniya.org]

My personal recommendation would be for peace education resources and approaches to reflect indigenous knowledge and value systems. This includes providing resources to indigenous peoples to produce educational materials, as well as inviting indigenous leaders to educate our communities on aspects of their values and knowledge systems that can help the West regain an environmental and social balance. There is also a fundamental and implicit need to support indigenous efforts at maintaining their own cultural traditions and knowledge systems for their own sake, as well as to recognise their right to self-determination and to follow their chosen, if alternative, path of development.

Another aspect that relates to indigenous 'cosmocentric' perspective of the world, as opposed to the Western 'anthropocentric rationality' is its implicit spirituality.

We need to stop creating the artificial division between inner and outer peace. Between the spiritual and the more pragmatic approach to peace building. Both realities need each other. We need to work together on the creation of inner and outer peace, for they are interrelated and without one, the other is almost meaningless. Spiritual education should be a core component of peace education, helping children connect with their inner guidance and peace, and with the values that are transmitted, through the heart, from a source beyond the rational mind and its limitations.

### Women

Last but not least, it is essential that the international community recognise that any serious effort at educating for a secure future needs to incorporate women.

Since deciding in 1990 to give the girl child priority, UNICEF has contributed significantly to an increase in global awareness on the effects of gender discrimination on millions of girl children. There is however still much work to be done if we are to meet the Millennium Development Goals in education. Meeting the target of narrowing the gender gap by the year 2005 may require, particularly in countries of scarcer economic resources, the setting of an order of priorities.

As addressed by the Bahai's *Statement to the Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund* 1991 (of the Bahai International Community): "Women and girls must be educated (...) Girls will not only render service to humanity as mothers and first educators of the next generation, but, as women, they will make special contributions to the creation of a just world order -- an order characterized by vigour, cooperation, harmony, and a degree of compassion never before witnessed in history. Mothers can now be the primary agents for empowering individuals to transform society".

A culture of peace will necessarily include a critical mass of women as agents of change: women as political actors, women as economic actors and women as peacemakers. And of course women will also remain mothers, girlfriends, lovers, daughters and wives. For as President of the Hague Appeal for Peace Cora Weiss speaks "Women are the glue that hold societies together. Without women at every

negotiating table where the fate of humanity is at stake, there can be no sustainable peace agreements”. (Speech delivered at the New Social Contract conference in Madrid, Nov. 2000).

Women have a vital role in the conflict resolution process. The successful resolution of conflicts in a number of places, such as Bougainville, relied on the skills, experiences, networks, perspectives and active participation of women in the communities – which are often different and complementary to those of men. Thus United Nation’s Security Council Resolution 1325, which was unanimously adopted on Oct. 31<sup>st</sup> 2000, calls for increased representation of women at all decision making levels in national, regional and international mechanisms for the prevention, management and resolution of conflict. It calls for gender sensitivity in all UN missions and in peacekeeping, for more women at the negotiating tables and for the protection of women and girls during armed conflict. This is a historic victory for women and for humankind and it is our responsibility to pass it on to the new generations.

### The way ahead

So let us remember that in the process of working on the education for a secure future we should include the contributions of young people, indigenous people and women – or else we will risk repeating the mistakes of the previous generations. We cannot afford to continue to ignore the transformational power that comes from allowing true participation from the wealth that lies in our diversity.

We must equally remember that peace is political. Wars are often instigated by economic interests. The arms trade is one of the most profitable businesses in the world and many governments have a large stake in it remaining that way. On the other hand – education, and particularly peace education, is empowering. It informs, it “awakens” and prompts people to take action to change the *status quo*, to demand change, to demand the protection of their rights – one of which is the right to a peaceful and dignified life. It also encourages critical and independent thinking and media awareness. And so it is that, paradoxical as it may seem, peace education is perceived as a threat by many governments. This is one of the challenges we must confront. And that is why we need to work together in a concerted effort. That is why we need a critical mass of people demanding a change in our schools curriculums and a more independent media. *That is why we need you to join the Global Campaign for Peace Education* and to help us work on effective strategies to create the political will necessary for our dream to become a reality: to have education for peace and justice integrated into the curriculum of every school in the world. And to empower young people to become transformational agents in this process, in and outside of the school setting.

You will find more information on the GCPE and endorsement sheets at the back.

Thank you.

September 9<sup>h</sup> 2003, New York