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COMMISSION FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, 48th session, 3-12 February 2010

Item 3(a), Priority theme, Social Integration

Statement by the Triglav Circle

Mister Chairman,

Thank you for this opportunity to make a statement on behalf of the Triglav Circle, which was created in the wake of the World Summit for Social Development to work on enriching the public discourse on global issues with spiritual and ethical perspectives.

Adopted fifteen years ago, the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action has, in spite of the efforts of this Commission, largely disappeared from the public discourse. And its core objectives – the reduction of poverty and inequalities, progress towards full employment, and the promotion of social integration – are probably, for most people of the world, more distant than they were a few decades ago.

Various explanations for this state of affairs, and possible remedies, are put forward by those who broadly share this diagnosis and believe that a change in course is necessary. I would like, Mr. Chairman, to focus this intervention on one thought and direction for reflection: the values considered as “soft” in the dominant political culture have to become operational. A reversal in the hierarchy of values has to occur. And the most fundamental of these so-called “soft” values is Love, more commonly invoked as empathy, sympathy, compassion, and solidarity.

Social Integration, or, to use a Confucian concept, social harmony, necessary for the well-being of small communities, of nations, and the world community, requires, as stressed in the Copenhagen text, a balance of rights and responsibilities. It requires free citizens who are aware of their duties; and public institutions which are aware of the general interest. Such private and public virtues have to be informed and oriented by Love. Allow me to substantiate this assertion with a few historic references.

The 15th century Japanese Noh play, features Yama-Uba, or “old woman of the mountains.” Yama Uba incarnates the Principle of Love, which endlessly moves about in every person. Her stage appearance, a wizened old woman, reflects the actuality of her ceaseless and painful struggle to bring blessings and resolve the problems that divide people. This is the work of Love.

Considering the foundations of government and society, John Locke, one of the great inspirations of modern liberalism and democracy, wrote in 1754 in *Of the Conduct of the Understanding*, the following: “Our Savior’s great rule that we should love our neighbors as ourselves, is such a fundamental truth for the regulating of human society, that, I think, by that alone one might without difficulty determine all the cases and doubts in social morality.” Locke places this fundamental truth – which is shared by all great religions and philosophies- on a par with Sir Isaac Newton’s discovery of gravity. It has the same importance and the same quality of universality.

Applied to social integration, or to any segment of human affairs, for example the functioning of the world economy, this precept of Love means thinking of the Other and building bridges of solidarity in the heart and mind of each of us

and in the culture of the institutions that we have established in order to live together in reasonable harmony. Moreover, Locke knew that in seeking the good of the Other, one finds one's own well-being, or happiness.

The same moral philosophy was shared by Adam Smith, the much quoted father of the market economy. Forgotten in the drive for unregulated and socially irresponsible global capitalism justified by the "free market", are Smith's assumptions and requirements for the successful and morally just functioning of the "invisible hand." Developed in his *Theory of Moral Sentiments* his view is that the free initiative of economic agents has to be immersed in "sympathy" for the other.

More recently, Erich Fromm commenting on the centrality of the "Love thy neighbor as thy self", saw "fraternal love" as the organizing principle of a world community. Solidarity is a form of oneness by which all humanity is bound. "It is an attitude, which determines the relatedness of a person to the world as a whole." It consists in the sense of responsibility, care, and respect for the Other, the wish to further his or her life. And, says Fromm, this form of love begins with love of the poor and the stranger.

Mr. Chairman, I could mention many other thinkers, such as Mencius and Tolstoy, and, great political leaders such as Gandhi or Nelson Mandela. The message I wish to convey is that the rooting of political thinking and political action on universal values, assembled in the notion of Love, is eminently practical. Its implications for national and international policies can be identified through good will and good work. To put the Other, be it person or nation, at the core of one's thinking and action is not unrealistic, nor opposed to reason. And, certainly not in contradiction with efficiency, provided this concept is not unduly impoverished. But it ought to be clear to all, that the promotion and rewarding of self-seeking individualism, of unrestrained drive for power and wealth, of competitive behavior with the winner taking all, is a path to an increasingly conflicted and ultimately self destructive world. Instrumental reason alone is insufficient to bridle humankind's material desires. Let's not forget that the inclination to work for the common good is also a fundamental characteristic of human nature.

Without solidarity, the kind we can learn from observing a bee hive with its mutually serving and selfless inhabitants, human survival is in jeopardy. To be thought about is Plato's observation that both reason and magnanimity must be nurtured to ensure their supporting role in the soul of humankind and in the making of society. Idealism is necessary to comprehend and begin to address the problems of our time. Moral philosophy needs to explicitly orient political action.

Mr. Chairman, the Triglav Circle believes that such was the central message of the Copenhagen Summit. We trust that, under your leadership, this Commission will contribute to the revival of this founding text for social progress.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.