

Many to Many

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“Many to Many” under the aegis of Operation Peace Through Unity is a communicating link between “we, the peoples” of all nations, races, creeds and ideologies offering in the spirit of the preamble of the United Nations Charter an instrument for the furthering of better relationships based on deepening mutual understanding and the aspiration to promote unity and cooperation beyond all differences.

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I. Motherhood

In the midst of all the upheaval, collapse and disillusionment within today's societal and planetary environment, can't one also detect a distinct sense of hope and expectancy of better things to come?

Following the Webster Pocket Dictionary's definition of 'Mother' as the 'female parent', it offers further elaboration on the concept, saying that it is '*the quality or condition etc. that gives rise to something else; to be the origin of...*' adding that '*necessity is the mother of invention*'.

It could well be the deepening recognition of the mother aspect within each human being, irrespective of sex, that lies at the core of this irrepressible feeling – this expectant certainty - that we are all involved, willingly and unwillingly, in the tremendous process of giving birth – of inventing – a new civilization.

The profound, and universally significant, dynamic interaction between a feminine and masculine pole is becoming common knowledge. The anthropologist, A.L. Kroeber, describes the act of giving birth as 'the highest state of tension that the organism can bear creatively'. Continuously this state of creative tension between the two opposite poles of one single energy is replacing old forms with new ones better equipped for what lies ahead.

Throughout the ages humanity has been searching for, thought about, and pondered deeply the origin of all creation, and intuitively felt the deep connectedness between every form of life. For centuries people from different cultures and parts of the world have looked to the sky and recognized the longstanding 'family' relation with other radiant bodies within the firmament; heavenly sisters and brothers with whom we share the potential for creating temporary forms which continuously interact with and influence one another. The human mind stretches beyond the limits of its physical habitat in deep acknowledgement of the vast sphere within which life seems endlessly to be unfolding its true Being in accordance with an underlying, preordained directive and destination.

Perhaps we need to see the collapse of the societal structures we built, not so much as a failure, punishment, or a fatal blow, but as a necessary and inevitable learning experience as we are growing into what we were meant to be. Perhaps we should accept it as an opportunity for the freeing and refocusing of our energy into building a truer, more enlightened and united world community? Maybe we should leave our self-indulgent guilt trips, cynicism and blame games behind with the rubble of the old, and find ways of marrying – uniting – our energies so as to become the origin of the future culture and civilisation?

As the human mind is the mother of new inventions, so is the human heart the place of birth of a new civilisation. These two aspects within each mother will hold and nurture the seed thought until the time comes for it to emerge, mature, and eventually - in the fullness of time - come to reveal all the things hoped for.

Meister Eckhart said that, in our own time, and in our own culture: "*we are all meant to be the mothers of God*". Through the labour of love; through the highest state of tension that we can bear creatively, will the Kingdom of God manifest on earth - as it is in heaven.

II. IMPRESSIONS FROM THE 63RD ANNUAL UNITED NATIONS DPI/NGO CONFERENCE, Melbourne, Australia, 30 August – 1 September 2010

The following reports from the 63rd Annual United Nations DPI/NGO Conference, Melbourne, Australia, 30 August – 1 September 2010, were written by some of the delegates representing Operation Peace through Unity.

OPTU made the suggestion that delegation members write a short account with their impressions from the conference; what they got out of the experience; if it had contributed to a deeper understanding of the problems we all face and must overcome together; and who among the speakers and people attending were particularly inspiring/empowering.

Mary-Ann Ewing, Teacher at Wanganui High School, writes:

A. What I got out of this experience:

"Since returning to Whanganui, I have spoken to friends and family about what the UN DPI/NGO conference was like and find myself repeating the word 'sincerity' as I talk about it. From the opening speeches through to the closing speeches, I was struck by the sincerity of all those who spoke, whether they be official United Nations representatives, keynote speakers, various panelists in their role as specialists in their particular fields of expertise or fellow delegates who were asking questions from the floor. I was impressed with the lack of jargon used at the conference, at specific references to problems and possible solutions and with the open dialogue and respect shown to each speaker on any given day both by and to the delegates.

I have now seen at first-hand how a United Nations conference operates – each session ran strictly to time; morning and afternoon tea breaks and lunch breaks were clearly demarcated; agendas were closely followed and protocol was observed but not at the expense of politeness and respect to individuals and to different cultures.

B. Impressions and challenges that deepened my understanding of the problems we all have to face and overcome:

(a) Health – DPI/NGO conference 2010. *The purpose of the conference was to assess the progress made in each Millennium Development Goal (MDG) by now, 2010, and to examine what needs to be done by 2015. The idea was to bring together collective ideas, skills and experience to bear on the problems of health in the Asia and Pacific regions, in particular. The intent was to see this conference as an opportunity for action, not just for words.*

(b) Health – Non-communicable diseases in the developing world – exposing the myths. *Chronic respiratory diseases; Cancer; Diabetes: All three are connected to Smoking; Inactivity; Poor Diet. Account for 60% of global deaths per year. Of the 2/3 of deaths over the past twenty years 1/3 has been of NCDs. Of this 2/3, 80% occur in the developing world. It is an epidemic. Non-communicable diseases are also called Lifestyle Diseases, now also called Exploitative Diseases (think of poisoned powdered milk, global companies sponsoring baby milk powder, oil companies and their agendas, tobacco industries, pharmaceutical companies...) NCDs also have an economic effect as most of these deaths are in the low-income bracket. 75% who die of cardiac arrest come from the low-income bracket or the poor. In same bracket, only 10% have a chance of receiving modern treatment for cardiac arrest.*

Myths? Diabetes is a disease of old people. Not true.

We can't do anything about it. Not true.

Either/Or, as in Spend money on this! Or that! Not true.

Something to think about: the same things that cause climate change cause NCDs.

(c) Health – Activism. *Achieving the MDGs will only marginally help global health, if at all. Why? Equity and human rights are not automatically fixed up with health programmes. It is time that academics make an apology – instead of expounding the obvious or collecting data for data's own sake, we should be nurturing activists. Instead of training health and medical engineers, we should be training health and*

medical activists – people who speak out, people who take part. MDGs are Outcomes. We must focus on the Processes.

(d) Health – Migration, Violence and Human Trafficking. We should aspire to have a world where there is freedom from want and freedom from fear. There must be a fundamental respect for people to accept the responsibility to protect. Not everybody (including governments) have this moral perspective. Migration is a right. This right is abused for economic and financial reasons. In 2009, 79% of migrants are recorded as being women and children. Actually the majority was men, used for agricultural labour but women are more likely to keep records hence the data are skewed towards women.

(e) Health – War and Armed conflict. 8/10 of the world's poorest countries are either at war or have been affected by recent war or conflict.

(f) Health – Media. The media has a 'watchdog' role; to inform, to educate, to entertain. However, is subjected to a number of forces:

i) Governments can be heavy-handed over the control of media

ii) Data and information has to be brought to the attention of the media so that the media can disseminate it.

(g) Health – Sport. Should countries put sport high on their political agendas? It can bring peace and unite people. It can help encourage people to think we are one, that we can reach our potential. The disintegration of the family is a big problem now – values have eroded, people now consumed by convenience and self. Sport has a role to bring us back to these values – respect, inspire, assist each other. It involves young people too – can unite different ages together as well. It is not a substitute but it is a very important mechanism.

(h) Health – Individual Responsibility. How can individuals help achieve MDGs Think Globally. Act Locally. We need to socially and economically empower groups of people (to become activists). We need to encourage and nurture individuals to become the voice and speakers of their own cause.

C. Who amongst the speakers and people I met, in particular inspired/empowered me:

(a) Inspiring quotations: 'To be a voice for the voiceless' – 'A call for peace, a call for health. A call for the redistribution of opportunity' – 'Where someone has a right, someone else has a responsibility' – 'Every minute counts – make History' – 'Ban-Ki Moon – a manager for reform' 'Humanity cannot exist alongside nuclear weapons' – 'There is no such thing as an undeveloped country. They are all developing' – 'Poverty is everybody's business' – 'Depression is an absence of hope'.

(b) Inspiring speakers: Kiyotaka Akasaka, the Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information; Dr Caleb Tyndale O. Otto (Palau); Dr Claudio Schufton, (Chile); Dr Sue Wareham; (Australia); Tim Costello, currently had of World Vision, Australia (former Special Adviser to the Director-General of the World Health Organisation); Sir George Alleyne of Barbados, currently the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for HIV/AIDS in the Caribbean region; Dr Sakena Yacoobi, founder and executive director of the Afghan Institute of Learning (AIL), an Afghan women-led NGO; Mike Gooda, Board member of the Centre for Rural and remote Mental Health, Queensland and the Australian representative on the International Indigenous Council, which focuses on healing and addiction; and Barbara Flick Nicol (Australian indigenous health activist).

D. Anything else I may wish to comment on:

(a) The key note speakers, Barbara Flick Nicol and Mick Gooda, spoke about the present-day plight of the Australian indigenous people. There is a life expectancy gap of 10-17 years between indigenous and non-indigenous people in Australia. Nicol challenged the Government of Australia to give more effort to reaching the MDGs and she issued a challenge to her own people to stop abusing alcohol, their children, cigarettes and all the other things that endangered their health and which no amount of money could change. Barbara urged everyone to: **"Pull back the blinds and have a look into our hearts and into our minds and create strong, real partnerships for us to grow as one Australia where there is harmony and peace among us all"**.

(b) Because 2010 is the International Year of Youth, it was appropriate to engage youth in this conference on steps to achieve the MDGs by 2015. It was obvious at the conference that youth were represented, largely in the 18-24 age bracket. Youth are an integral part of society yet they are rarely

included in high level debate and the search for solutions. In fact, it is this demographic who are faced with present and future challenges as the status quo of the world in which they live. They are the next generation of world leaders and their input is essential to achieving possible and realistic solutions to the current issues facing global health.

E. Conclusion to report:

After attending this conference, I believe that a collective commitment to achieve global health is essential. In the words of Princess Muna, of Jordan, "It is a moral imperative to improve the iniquitous and the unjust in health disparities". However, because it may seem to be an impossible dream to unite a common observance of human rights when it comes to improving the health of all, especially of the disadvantaged, the poor and the vulnerable, this is not a reason to do nothing.

Partnership between governments, the community, NGOs and so on is critical to achieve the MDGs by 2015. To me, this conference was an opportunity for words but these words included what was working just as much as what there is left to do. We need to create a culture of humanism. I understand this is what we should aspire to achieve as human beings. We can sow the seeds of this in our own homes, in our communities, our towns, our country. Our planet.

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Meredith Paterson, Wanganui High School student:

I expected the conference to clarify development issues around global health and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). All it seemed to clarify was the complexity of the issues. At times it was a long-haul, and then a few words would send it flying. I heard a lot to inspire, inform and stun. Some main messages underlined for me were the importance of community self-determination and the need for cooperation between Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and communities, and between NGOs and other NGOs. Also highlighted was the need for cultural understanding and awareness of other sets of values.

The most powerful workshop I went to was called 'Code red: the Aboriginal Health Crisis.' An Indigenous Australian lady from the audience ended up sharing her experiences. The words sparked from her lips, "I want to tell the government to get the hell away. We know what we're doing." It made clear to me the need for understanding of another set of values and need to use the expertise already in the community. I saw again that when we see the western model as the only way to live, we limit cultural understanding and cooperation.

During the roundtable on The Role of NGOs and Civil Society in Helping Achieve the MDGs, Dr Aleida Guevara of Cuba said "Our societies are very different. It isn't good to make comparisons. But what we can show is a different way to live."

Jamesa Wagwau of Uganda shared the best analogy for development I've heard. During a roundtable he held up his hand. Countries are like fingers, all at different stages of development. I want to add that fingers are all connected to the same hand. Think of all our hands can do; touch, create, write, caress, communicate... A global hand could surely achieve the MDGs. A thought: what if the symbol for the United Nations was a hand?

Coming to the idea of health, many workshops mentioned the importance of spiritual wellbeing, including the 'Code Red Aboriginal Health' workshop. Although WHO defines health as only physical and mental, I believe the Maori concept of Haoura which divides health into physical, mental/emotional, spiritual and social wellbeing is much more accurate.

The lady at the Code Red workshop talked about the broken spirit of her people. A broken spirit spirals into a whirlpool of hopelessness, fear, disempowerment and loss of identity. I met a lady, Jacinta, from Myanmar who quietly proclaimed that the spirit of the Burmese people is so crushed (by the Junta) they have lost the will to fight for change. A point raised in several panel discussions was that we need to

engage the most vulnerable members of communities to act as agents of change. I think this means not only engaging ethnic minorities and the underprivileged but the young people also. If anything, we young people are the most vulnerable to inheriting faulty worldviews, shallow values and a culture of violence.

Youth may be 'the future' and the 'leaders of tomorrow,' but we have the ability to lead, act and uphold just values now. If we enable young people to develop an awareness of global issues and strong sense of values now, maybe our so called leaders of tomorrow will be better prepared to act. Youth from Australia, the United States and New Zealand were well represented at the conference. We were even provided with free breakfast. We heard from great speakers, met others and discussed how we can and are furthering the MDGs in our own communities. Yet answers to how youth could contribute were vaguely avoided during panel discussions.

The conference left me with a lot to think about. Sometimes I felt there was a lack of practical courses of action to achieve the MDGs. But I was encouraged by all that people are already doing in youth organisations in Australia, eye clinics in Cuba and schools for women in Iran, to name a few. If we approach the MDGs with a shared perspective of global cooperation and continue to use the skills we already have, we will make great progress. We should not let the pressure of perfection stop us from trying. As Dr Mary Norton, the Chair Person of the UN DPI, finished the conference on, "we should not let the perfect be the enemy of the good." Contact meredithpt@gmail.com

Samuel Kemp, design student, Whanganui School of Design:

The UN DPI/NGO conference in Melbourne was my first time participating at a conference of its size and importance. As such, I tried to attend with as much of an open mind as possible, eager to learn all that I could. What really took me by surprise was what left the greatest impression on me. Rather than being impacted by statistics and new facts on different crises that are happening around the world it was the people I met that caught my attention the most. There was a strong youth presence at the conference and almost all of them were either establishing new NGOs or actively involved in aiding existing organisations with their individual skills. I found this both challenging and also empowering. Meeting people my own age making such a difference in the lives of others has given me a lot to reflect upon in terms of how I will use my specific talents and skills to help others less fortunate than myself.

Nick Allardice, the General Manager from the Oaktree Foundation was one youth delegate in particular that stood out. The Oaktree Foundation is run entirely by youth under the age of twenty-six. I found one workshop that Nick ran really insightful in terms of learning how to build up a new organisation by empowering youth and giving them room to grow and push the boundaries themselves. The results of the Oaktree Foundation speak for themselves. For example they have spoken directly to over 500 million individuals about extreme poverty see www.theoaktree.org to learn more about what they do.

On a personal level as a student of graphic design and visual communication I heard a lot about the need for NGOs to connect with the general public and present their ideas in a way that will be understood by mainstream society. However, there was little focus on finding a solution to this problem. In particular there was little acknowledgement of the media's ability to aid organisations in their struggle to raise awareness about causes. It reinforced a particular observation I have made for the need of a platform to link aid groups with other professions that can improve the way they communicate their messages to the general public. It is this concept that I am currently considering to develop and establish. Having been to the conference it has really challenged me to make this a reality. It reinforces a theme that came through strongly that youth have a part to play now. We need to be mentored and given the chance to grow. If we do nothing then it will be our children who will condemn us. Contact: sam.kemp.nz@gmail.com

Raoul Solomon, Wanganui High School student:

The UN DPI/NGO conference held in Melbourne this year was, for me, a great leap from a comparatively sheltered perspective on critical issues facing our society and planet today, to be surrounded by passionate

groups made up of dedicated people who have often sacrificed their own livelihoods to pursue an unthanked campaign to improve the lives of others.

The conference as a whole is designed to be a gathering point for people to share ideas, network with people of common interests, and to motivate everyone to continue with the hard task of selflessly helping others in the interests of a better global community.

For me, with no particular preference bias toward a particular aspect of the MDGs or wider goals of non-governmental organisations – unlike the vast majority of delegates who were representing their particular sphere – the conference was first and foremost a learning opportunity. While it is now somewhat strange and somewhat embarrassing to admit, until shortly before I learnt about the conference I was mainly unfamiliar with the Millennium Development Goals, established in the year 2000 with the aim to eliminate seven major areas of human affliction by 2015; poverty, uneducation, gender discrimination, child mortality, maternal mortality, HIV/AIDS, environmental exploitation – along with an eighth goal to form global partnerships to reach, and then maintain, these goals. These partnerships endeavour to bring together individuals and organizations whose focus is primarily limited to a single area of the MDGs, allowing people to work together cohesively rather than in a fragmented approach that might ultimately hinder the greater aim.

This dearth of knowledge was quickly displaced by the numerous workshops stalls and keynotes, presented by leading experts and advocates in their own sphere of interest. Also very interesting was the representation by NGOs that targeted highly specific areas of human rights violations, social concerns and others, ranging from the treatment of the Australian aborigines, to preventing abuse of international organ transplants.

As a young person, I found the conference to be exceptionally accommodating of youth initiatives, and there was a very strong presence of people under 25 – mostly from Australia, but also from around Europe and America. Every morning there was an exclusive ‘Youth Breakfast’, which provided excellent networking opportunities, as well as also a presentation from several speakers. Particularly moving for me was a young man from the Congo, Alfonse; who gave an exceptionally moving talk on his home country, but also of how, despite his own troubles, he is advocating improving lives all over the world. Also very impressive was the closing speech by the ex Australian United Nations Youth Delegate, Chris Varney. I found personally that his speech of all those given by politicians and activists driven by a single issue, touched the chord of the entire concept of the MDGs, - a call for unity and cooperation, and a call for action over discussion and muddling within overly complex bureaucracy.

Which leads on to the grimmer, yet necessarily realistic perspective that the conference gave me. As someone essentially ignorant of the processes of the NGOs, it was saddening to see the sheer amount of politicking underway beneath the ideals and goals. Obviously NGOs are still organizations working within countries – often with political opposition to their aims – but generally the constant promotion of their own aims above those of the conference as a whole was somewhat frustrating, and my personal feeling being that this lack of cooperation could hinder progress in both the short and long term. Especially with the 2015 deadline rapidly approaching, and a very long way to go.

As a closing note, I would like to thank Operation Peace Through Unity for giving me this eye-opening opportunity, and hence providing me with the foundation of knowledge and motivation to help tackle some of these critical issues in my own community and abroad. *Contact: raoulsolomon@gmail.com*

III. Elimination of Violence

In his message on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon paid tribute to all the many efforts by ordinary citizens everywhere in the world, who are working hard to protect women and girls and to promote their empowerment and rights. ‘*No longer are women’s organizations alone*’, he said. However: “*There*

is one universal truth, applicable to all countries, cultures and communities: violence against women is never acceptable, never excusable, never tolerable”.

In 2008, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon launched the campaign entitled UNiTE to End Violence against Women, which calls on governments, civil society, women’s organizations, young people, the private sector, the media and the entire UN system, to join forces in addressing the global pandemic of violence against women and girls. UNiTE aims, by 2015, to achieve five main goals in all countries:

- adopt and enforce national laws to address and punish all forms of violence against women and girls;
- strengthen data collection on the prevalence of violence against women and girls;
- increase public awareness and social mobilization; and
- address sexual violence in conflict.

In the following year, November 2009, the UN Secretary-General launched the Network of Men Leaders. This initiative, which is gaining the support of an increasing number of world leaders, aims to strengthen the efforts of men and boys throughout the world who are joining the women’s struggle to break down the traditional, brutal and inequitable, behavioral patterns between men and women, inherited from past generations. (<http://www.un.org>)

But violence against women is not inevitable, insists the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) Executive Director, Thoraya Ahmed Obaid: *“families and communities can change social norms and attitudes”*. As a key partner of the UNiTE Campaign and the UN Task Force on Violence against Women, UNFPA is working with governments and civil society to promote the right to sexual and reproductive health and to carry forward the recommendations in Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace and security. (<http://www.unfpa.org/public/>)

“We are convinced that a coordinated and comprehensive approach will move us closer to a world where women and girls can live free from fear, violence and discrimination, reach their full potential, and enjoy equal opportunity and mutual and confidence with men”, says Thoraya Ahmed Obaid.

“The child has the breath and spirit of life.

The child, present here and now, is the past embodied and the future becoming”

(quote from ‘The World’s Religions for the World’s Children’, organized by Religions for Peace in cooperation with UNICEF, Princeton NJ, July 1990)

IV. Women’s Empowerment Principles Equality Means Business

The Women’s Empowerment Principles is a recent joint initiative of UNIFEM and the UN Global Compact. Through a thorough international multi-stakeholder consultative process it has formulated a set of 7 principles, which they believe will help companies *‘tailor existing policies and practices – or establish new ones – to realize women’s empowerment’*. The Principles also *‘reflect the interests of Governments and civil society and will support interactions among stakeholders, as achieving gender equality requires the participation of all actors’*. The seven principles aim to:

1. Establish high-level corporate leadership for gender equality;

2. Treat all women and men fairly at work – respect and support human rights and nondiscrimination;
3. Ensure the health, safety and well-being of all women and men workers;
4. Promote education, training and professional development for women;
5. Implement enterprise development, supply chain and marketing practices that empower women;
6. Promote equality through community initiatives and advocacy;
7. Measure and publicly report on progress to achieve gender equality.

The hope is that these Principles will provide a set of considerations to help the private sector focus on key elements integral to promoting gender equality in the workplace, marketplace and community.

In a global interdependent political, social and economic environment, partnerships play an increasingly vital role to:

- create a vibrant business environment involving a broad partnership of actors, enablers, contributors and innovators to open opportunities for women and men; and
- enable the active and interactive participation of governments, international financial institutions, the private sector, investors, nongovernmental organizations, academia and professional organizations to work together (<http://www.unglobalcompact.org> and <http://www.un.org>)

V. Reflection Group on Global Development Perspectives

On 15 November 2010 an alliance of civil society groups, networks and foundations launched the Civil Society Reflection Group on Global Development Perspectives. The group, which includes among its members the *Third World Network*, *Social Watch*, *Dag Hammarskjold Foundation*, *terre des homes*, *Global Policy Forum*, *the Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation* and others, will assess conventional as well as alternative models of development and well-being. It will further reconsider development goals and indicators, including the MDGs, and draw conclusions for future development strategies. The group will be preparing a report which will contain specific policy recommendations for the 2012 UN Conference on Sustainable Development.

The Reflection Group points to the urgent need to draw lessons from the global crises of today, and to fundamentally rethink our goals and measures of development and social progress, and says: “*The time between the Summits 2010 and 2012 provides a unique window of opportunity to reconsider the current development paradigm and to develop strategies towards a holistic, rights-based approach of global development and well-being.*” The Reflection Group is committed to contributing to this process of rethinking. (www.reflectiongroup.org)

VI. Global Green Growth

In his keynote speech at the Copenhagen Climate Change Conference last year Lee Myung-bak, President of Republic of Korea, mentioned his vision of an institute that would focus on ‘low carbon, green growth, and on 16 June 2010 the Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI) was officially launched in Seoul, Republic of Korea.

GGGI (<http://www.globalgreen.org>) aims to function as a global think tank for developing green growth strategies, which will integrate the objectives for poverty reduction, economic and social development, environmental sustainability and energy security. It will support emerging and

developing nations in their efforts to create and implement national and local green growth strategies and policies.

“Thanks to its independence and the direct involvement of developing countries institutions, it will be in a position to be a trusted advisor to countries as they plan their own future. Thanks to its global nature, it will be able to exchange and promulgate experiences on green growth from across the world. Thanks to its network of governments, civil societies and private sector, it will be in a position to offer support across formulation, implementation and execution of the plans”
(<http://www.unfccc.org>)

VII. YOUNGO

This international youth movement works in close cooperation with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and hopes to represent the voice of Youth within the UNFCCC framework in preparation for the RIO+20 Conference. The following statement outlines their commitment to work for a common cause – for the common good:

“We all know what a massive undertaking it would be for our leaders to agree on a set of achievable, equitable and implementable goals for climate change. What can youth do to help? The truth is, we’re probably far more powerful together than any of us can imagine or could be individually! While we may not hold high office nor will we be sitting at the negotiation table, we can persuade and influence key decision-makers in government, business and media, galvanize public opinion and mobilize grassroots movements”

(http://youthclimate.org/about_youth_climate/younggo-unfccc/) .

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VIII. “People are the real wealth of a nation”

When UN Development Administrator, Helen Clark, launched the 2010 Human Development Report: “The Real Wealth of Nations: Pathways to Human Development”, 23 November, she said that the very first Human Development Report, published twenty years ago, began with the words: ‘**people are the real wealth of a nation**’, and had also stressed the point that *‘that measuring national progress by economic alone was inappropriate, and that improving people’s lives – not pursuing growth for its own sake – should be the ultimate goal of development.*
(<http://www.undp.org>)

The 2010 Report features introductory reflections by Nobel Prize winning economist, Amartya Sen, who worked on the conception of the first 1990 Human Development Report with the reports’ founder Mahbub ul Haq. Together they laid the foundation for a new way of thinking about and measuring development, which has had a profound impact on development policies throughout the world. Looking back at reports from the past several decades reveals that there is no single formula for sustainable progress – and that important gains have been achieved without consistent economic growth.

Amartya Sen says that although there is much to celebrate in what has been achieved since the first Report *‘we also have to be alive to ways of improving the assessment of old adversities and of recognizing – and responding to – new threats that endanger human well-being and freedom’.* Human development and human rights are mutually reinforcing; helping to secure the well-being and dignity of all people, building self-respect and the respect of others.

*“Wealth is evidently not the good we are seeking,
for it is merely useful for the sake of something else”
Aristotle*

IX. Green Economy

A Brief for Policymakers on the Green Economy and Millennium Development Goals

This Report, prepared by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) for the September 2010 Summit, urges that a transition to a ‘green economy’ is crucial for reaching the MDGs. ‘Green Economy’ will not only improve human well-being and lessen inequality but also reduce environmental risks and ecological scarcities.

In his foreword to the Report, UNEP Executive Director, Achim Steiner, says that *‘although the environment in a MDG context is often perceived as being confined to MDG7, which addresses serious issues such as freshwater scarcity, the spread of slums, greenhouse gas and ozone-depleting emissions, biodiversity loss and deforestation, the environment in reality is more complex’*. All the MDG7 challenges should, he insists ‘be seen also in the context of their relationship to poverty, education, health, and equitable access to opportunity’.

The Report underscores this statement by giving, as an example, a potential drought in Ethiopia: *“If climate change were to produce a drought in Ethiopia that halved the incomes of the poorest of the 88 million Ethiopians, the fall in global GDP would be a mere 0.003%, but the impact on this population would be devastating”*.

The many challenges facing humanity today are unparalleled in human history in terms of their scale, complexity and interconnectedness, and need, says Achim Steiner, to be targeting *‘international collaboration and policy solutions that reflect a multi-dimensional understanding of the biosphere and its limits, of society and its divisions, of the political economy and its drivers, and last but not least, of our changing economic compass and the evolution in thinking that is needed to actually measure our progress towards a safe economic and ecological destination’*.

The “Green Economy Report” will describe how greening the world’s economies lower environmental risks and ecological scarcities, which hurt the poor and disadvantaged the most. (www.unep.org/greeneconomy)

X. “Sustainable Societies; Responsive Citizens”

Theme for DPI/NGO Conference in 2011

From the 3 – 5 September 2011 the Annual United Nations Conference of Non-Governmental Organisations, associated with the United Nations Department of Public Information (DPI), will take place in Bonn, Germany, with focus on the theme ‘Sustainable Societies; Responsive Citizens’. The planning committee envisions that the conference sub themes could include environmental sustainability, green manufacturing and commerce, transparent governance, grassroots activism and commitments to limit personal carbon footprints, and that the outcome would provide a major civil society contribution to the forthcoming Rio+20 Conference.

In addition to NGO representatives the conference will, as in previous years, include delegates from civil society organizations, grassroots constituencies, the UN system and Member States, representatives of the media, academia, the private sector and other institutions.
(<http://www.un.org/dpi/ngosection>)

XI. Security Without Nuclear Deterrence

This recent book by Commander Robert Green, Royal Navy (Ret) was published in Christchurch, New Zealand.

Cmdr Green's thesis is that, far from preventing wars, nuclear deterrence could be their cause. He lends credence to this from his personal experience in the Royal Navy, both at sea and in administrative positions. His time in a nuclear strike jet squadron was undertaken without question, without really considering the effects of the use of a nuclear bomb on the target and its surroundings. He also had first hand experience of the dangers involved in the Falklands War, but by this time was beginning to have personal doubts about the wide ranging fallout from the threatened use of nuclear weapons. He raises the question of responsibility from the government leader who 'makes the decision' to the service man or woman who has to carry it out – which in many cases could turn out to be a 'suicide' mission.

The flawed notion that a nuclear deterrence is necessary to prevent wars is shown to be, more correctly, a policy of nuclear terrorism. The scale of the damage both direct and indirect is out of all proportion to any security which might be sought. In reality, the result of nuclear deterrence is likely to be "... increased international tension, hostility and mistrust fuelling the arms race..". The author discusses not only the reasons why nuclear weapons do not provide security but also outlines alternative solutions. He gives these a historical perspective which is compelling reading, including the International Court of Justice Advisory Opinion in 1996.

I would highly recommend reading this very interesting and informative book, details of which are given below.

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Green, R.D. (2010). *Security without nuclear deterrence*. Christchurch, NZ: Astron Media and Disarmament & Security Centre. ISBN 978-0-473-16781-3

'It is not power that corrupts but fear'

(from Aung San Suu Kyi's Freedom from Fear speech)

XII. Tolstoy and Gandhi: Light as Darkness Approached

Article by Rene Wadlow *, November 2010

November 20 marks the death of Leo Tolstoy 100 years ago in 1910 when he left his estate Yasnaya Polyana and walked to a railroad station at Astopovo, a journey with no set destination. As Isaiah Berlin writes at the end of his well-known essay on Tolstoy's philosophy of history [The Hedgehog and the Fox](#): "*At once insanely proud and filled with self-hatred, omniscient and doubting everything, cold and violently passionate, contemptuous and self-abasing, tormented and detached, surrounded by an adoring family, by devoted followers, by the admiration of the entire*

civilized world, and yet almost wholly isolated, he is the most tragic of the great writers, a desperate old man, beyond human aid, wandering self-blinded at Colonus.”

Yet the darkness of the final two years of Tolstoy’s life was enlightened by his written contacts with Mohandas Gandhi (not yet called Mahatma). Gandhi had read Tolstoy’s fundamental spiritual-political work The Kingdom of God is Within You shortly after it was published in English in 1893 and had been much moved by it. Gandhi had his friends translate the book into his native language, Gujarati.

Gandhi had read earlier in London Helena Blavatsky’s The Voice of Silence, published in 1889, which elaborated the doctrine of liberation through service to others with the Buddhist concept of Bodhisattva – the enlightened being who postpones indefinitely entry into nirvana in order to serve others. The voice of the silence is the inner voice of the Higher Self or the soul. There is also developed the idea ‘*to render good for evil*’.

Thus Gandhi was well prepared to react positively to Tolstoy’s vision even if the vocabulary was largely Christian. Christ’s teaching, writes Tolstoy, differs from other teachings in that it guides humans not by eternal rules but by an inward consciousness of the possibility of reaching divine perfection. Tolstoy stresses the Middle Way, which led the French writer E.M. de Vogue to write that Tolstoy had the soul of an Indian Buddhist. Tolstoy had discovered that non-violence must have a spiritual foundation, most clearly expressed for him in the Gospels.

Leo Tolstoy and Gandhi never met, but they corresponded with each other during the final two years of Tolstoy’s life, 1909 and 1910. Tolstoy had read Hind Swaraj (1909) where Gandhi set out his vision of a liberated India, the means to reach liberation, and what an independent India could mean for the world. It was Gandhi’s plan of action before he set out to put it in practice. Gandhi had listed some of Tolstoy’s books in a list of supplementary reading to Hind Swaraj, in particular The Kingdom of God is Within You and Letter to a Hindoo, Tolstoy’s reply to an Indian revolutionary who had proposed a violent uprising.

Tolstoy wrote to Gandhi: “*I read your book with great interest because I think that the question you treat in it – the passive resistance – is a question of the greatest importance not only for India but for the whole humanity.*” Tolstoy had also read Joseph Doha’s 1909 biography of Gandhi An Indian Patriot in South Africa, the first biography of Gandhi to be written. In August 1910, Gandhi wrote to Tolstoy to announce the creation of his ashram in South Africa called Tolstoy Farm.

Gandhi’s efforts in South Africa were signs to Tolstoy that non-violence based on the importance of personal virtue could be put into practice. Much of the past years of Tolstoy’s life was a harsh struggle against darkness as represented by the State, its war-making power, its ideologies, and the social thinking that structured the State. Colonialism, imperialism and the oppression of the indigenous races were the hallmark of the State. He saw the forces at work that would lead to the First World War and the Russian Revolution. By 1901 he had been excommunicated from the Russian Orthodox Church – not that he expected much light to come from Church-State relations. The Church did insist that no prayers be said at Tolstoy’s funeral.

For Tolstoy as for Gandhi, non-violence was an expression of ‘*soul force*’ – the outward expression of the Inner Kingdom.

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*“We possess a single infallible guide, the Universal Spirit that lives in men as a whole, and in each one of us,
which makes us aspire to what we should aspire:
It is the Spirit that commands the tree to grow toward the sun;
The flower to throw off its seed in autumn;
Us to reach out towards God;
And by so doing, become united to each other”*

Leo Tolstoy

XIII. THE GREAT INVOCATION

From the point of Light within the Mind of God
Let light stream forth into the minds of men.
Let Light descend on Earth.

From the point of Love within the Heart of God
Let love stream forth into the hearts of men
May Christ return to Earth.

From the centre where the Will of God is known
Let purpose guide the little wills of men –
The purpose which the Masters know and serve.

From the centre which we call the race of men
Let the Plan of Love and Light work out
And may it seal the door where evil dwells.

Let Light and Love and Power restore the plan on Earth.