

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. *The Child*

From one generation to the next the human child has inherited, learnt and built upon attitudes, behaviours and beliefs, which have moulded the adult's outlook and frame of mind. Through each passing civilisation the struggle between past traditional values and the intense yearning toward new horizons has created the tumultuous space wherein choices have polarised humanity, consequences played out and the platform for future action been established. Within this battlefield of warring human values, the Child is born and growing up.

Slowly but surely, and hastened through modern technology, the human conscience is awakening to the plight of the world's children. The 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child became the first international legally binding treaty to obtain general agreement on the responsibility of governments, educational institutions and communities to create "a world fit for children". At its 20th anniversary in 2009 Dan Seymour, Chief of UNICEF's Gender and Rights Unit, said that the Convention keeps reminding us of what is left to be done and stressed that "*the Convention demands a revolution that places children at the heart of human development – not only because this offers a strong return on our investment (although it does), nor because the vulnerability of childhood calls upon our compassion (although it should), but rather for a more fundamental reason: because it is their right.*"

In today's globalising world where information from all corners of the planet can instantly reach people everywhere, we are deeply aware of the atrocities to the body, mind and soul of girl and boy children throughout all societies, and the dark places in which they receive the first imprints of the world around them. And we are reminded of our own, often painful, journey toward adulthood.

It is therefore most fitting that people in all countries, cultures and societies are looking deep within for root causes to the despicable behaviour of one human being toward another, whether a child, woman or man. A keen public debate is contributing thoughts, opinions and personal experiences to tracing the origin of this debased instinctual behaviour. Together we are summoning the resolve to free the world of this menacing shadow from the past. With the increasing understanding of the interconnectedness, interdependence and indeed inter-relatedness of all lives within our planetary environment, we have an unprecedented opportunity to create a world fit for Life in all its multifarious splendour.

Humanity has reached another peak of extreme tension which calls for irrevocable decisions to be made. Will we, as the Convention demands, place children at the heart of human development? Will we have the foresight, as governments, communities and individuals, to '*provide the world's children with the best we have to give*' (again quoting Dan Seymour)?

Through reaping both the worst and the best from past sowings, the human consciousness has matured and reached a point of deep realisation of the underlying oneness of all life. Numerous templates have been and are being formulated providing guidelines for creating a better world. But these instructions will remain largely dormant until the fire of compassion in the human heart brings them to life.

A World Teacher has said that without heart "*the most patient people, the most valiant, the most striving, will remain cold coffins! Burdened by knowledge, but unwinged, will be those who are heartless!*" Let us breathe Life into the words of our declarations, treaties and conventions. Let our hearts give them wings.

II. World Day of Social Justice: The People's Revolution is On the March

*Rene Wadlow**

The United Nations General Assembly, on the initiative of Nurbch Jeenbrev, the Ambassador of Kyrgyzstan to the U.N. in New York, has proclaimed 20 February as the “World Day of Social Justice”. The World Day of Social Justice gives us an opportunity to take stock of how we can work together at the local, national and global level on policy and action to achieve the goals set out in the resolution of “solidarity, harmony and equality within and among states.”

As the resolution states “Social development and social justice are indispensable for the achievement and maintenance of peace and security within and among nations, and that in turn, social development and social justice cannot be attained in the absence of peace and security or in the absence of respect for all human rights and fundamental freedoms.”

The Preamble to the UN Charter makes social justice one of the chief aims of the organization using the more common expression of that time “social progress”. The Preamble calls for efforts to “*promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom.*”

The US representatives who worked on the draft of the UN Charter were strongly influenced in their views of social progress by the “New Deal” legislation of President Roosevelt and its philosophy as it had been set out by his Vice-President Henry A. Wallace in 1942 when he set out the US war aims. Wallace’s speech was the first time that the war aims of a country were not stated in terms of “national interest” and limited to the demands that had produced the start of the war. Wallace, who had first been the Secretary of Agriculture and who had to deal with the severe depression facing US agriculture, was proposing a world-wide New Deal based on the cooperative action of all of humanity. Wallace said “*The people’s revolution is on the march. When the freedom-loving people march — when the farmers have an opportunity to buy land at reasonable prices and to see the produce of their land through their own organizations, when workers have the opportunity to form unions and bargain through them collectively, and when the children of all the people have an opportunity to attend schools which teach them truths of the real world in which they live — when these opportunities are open to everyone, then the world moves straight ahead...The people are on the march toward ever fuller freedom, toward manifesting here on earth the dignity that is in every human soul.*”

The People’s Revolution found its expression in the cry of the Tunisian uprising — Liberty-Work-Dignity. Today in the demands of “Liberty-Work-Dignity” we hear the demands of farmers to own land under sure conditions, to receive a fair price for their crops as well as the right to organize to protect their interests. We hear the crises of industrial and urban workers to be able to organize and to have their work appreciated for its full value. We hear the demands of students and the young for an education that opens minds and prepares for meaningful work.

The people’s revolution is on the march. While the forces of the *status quo* are still strong and often heavily armed, the energy has shifted from the rulers to the people. The concept of Social Justice has articulated and focused deep demands for liberty, jobs, and dignity.

Some have been surprised – even alarmed – that the people’s revolution in Tunisia and Egypt did not have recognized leaders or an organized political party structure. But the people’s revolution is not that of an elite willing to replace the existing ruling elite. The people’s revolution

is a wave of all moving together, with deep currents below the surface. The tide moves with only a few visible waves but the aspirations are collective. No doubt, there will be individualized leadership, and demands will be formulated into political-party platforms, but the collective demands for social justice and dignity is what makes the difference between the people's revolution and a military coup. This is the true meaning of the World Day of Social Justice.

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III. Proposal for a 2015 UN Global Conference on Women

On the occasion of the International Women's Day, 8 March 2012, the President of the UN General Assembly, H.E. Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser and the UN Secretary-General, H.E Mr. Ban Ki-moon announced their joint proposal for a Global Conference of Women to be convened by the UN in 2015, twenty years after the Women's Summit in Beijing 1995.

Should this proposal be accepted by the UN General Assembly, it would become the fifth women's conference of its kind, and build on the Platform of Action that evolved through the four preceding world women conferences: in Mexico City 1975, Copenhagen 1980, Nairobi 1985, and in Beijing 1995.

In their joint announcement, the UNGA President and the UN Secretary-General express their belief that the 2015 conference would be looking to further implementation of the Platform for Action as well as the issues that have been emerging since the Beijing summit, in particular those relating to the UNSCR 1325 resolution on women and peace & security, equal access to work and decision-making, involvement of rural women and girls, food security, trafficking and all the many issues affecting women and children in various ways and at all levels. The issues within these areas, with their manifested complexities, need to be addressed in a holistic manner and benefit *'from ever-widening potentials of global connectivity'*. The announcement also calls for a greater involvement of young people, in particular women, which would bring *'an important dimension of intergenerational empowerment that did not get a deserving prominence in earlier conferences'*.

It is the hope of the UN Secretary-General and the UNGA President that this proposal will be accepted by the UN Member-States during the on-going 66th session of the General Assembly and welcomed by the international community. (www.un.org <http://www.unwomen.org/>)

IV. A YOUTH BLAST!

The Major Group of Children and Youth (MGCY) will be the official voice of Youth (under 30 years of age) to participate in the negotiations at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20).

Through MGCY hundreds of youth organisations and networks, official youth government delegates, young activists, journalists, professionals, students and children will be participating in shaping the future.

Prior to the Rio+20 meeting, 20 – 22 June, MGCY will be holding the Conference of Youth, “A Youth Blast”, from 10 to 12 June: ‘*for all young people to prepare, strategise and finalise what we will be doing through Rio+20*’. The focus of the youth conference will be:

- *to build partnership among children and youth by providing a space for networking ideas and experiences exchange;*
- *to plan activities for the Rio+20 Summit as well as its follow-up;*
- *to develop an international knowledge base through collecting and identifying information on activities, initiatives and best practices which will be included in the publication on youth activism toward and at Rio; and*
- *to empower the MGCY constituency through developing and disseminating training packs and advocacy tools and facilitating coordination activities and actions of the MGCY on the road to Rio+20 and the Conference itself.*

MGCY encourages all youth to visit their website (<http://uncsdchildreneyouth.org>) and get involved in the process towards achieving sustainable development. The website also contains a participation guideline and further information on how to youth everywhere can help make sure ‘*that Rio+20 leads to real results for us and to the future we want*’.

“Try not – do or do not. There is no try”
(Master Yoda, Star Wars quote from MGCY website)

V. International Essay Contest for Young People **‘Creating the Future We Want’**

This International Essay Contest for Young People is organised by the Goi Peace Foundation and UNESCO and among the endorsers are the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology of Japan. This contest seeks to ‘harness the energy, imagination and initiative of the world’s youth in promoting a culture of peace and sustainable development.’ It also aims ‘to inspire society to learn from the young minds and to think about how each of us can make a difference in the world’.

The 2012 theme is: “Creating the Future We Want”: the future begins in the vision we hold. Share your vision of the future world and how we can make it come true.

The essays entries are divided into two age groups: children up to 14 years of age and youth between 15 and 25. The essays, which can be written in English, French, Spanish, German (with up to 800 words) and Japanese (1600 characters or less), must be received by the Goi Peace Foundation any time before 30 June.

1st prize: Certificate and 100,000 Yen (approx. US\$1,300) 2nd prize: Certificate and 50,000 Yen (\$US650), and 3rd prize: Certificate and gift. 1st prize winner will also be invited to the award ceremony in Tokyo.

For more information e-mail essay@goipeace.or.jp or see website: www.goipeace.or.jp

VI. Be a City Changer

“**I’m a City Changer**” is a global movement, convened by UN-Habitat, the UN Human Settlements Programme, and supported by members of the private and public sector. Its aim is to help create good cities for all by sharing individual, corporate and public initiatives and working together to achieve better cities and a better life for all.

<http://www.imacitychanger.org/imacc/about/contact/>)

Among the key components outlined by the I’m a City Changer campaign for creating sustainable urban development are:

- Resilient cities, through preparing cities for change, managing adversity, and taking action to reduce risk;
- Green cities, through promoting environmentally sound, sustainable and carbon efficient city environments;
- Inclusive cities, through building socially inclusive, accessible, pro-poor, equitable and gender sensitive cities;
- Planned cities, through participatory decision making processes, with particular attention to development that balances social, environmental and economic needs; and
- Productive cities, through planning cities that promote and foster livelihoods for all citizens through economic opportunities.

With the rapidly increasing number of people living in towns and cities it is predicted that by 2050 about two-thirds of the world population (some 6 billion people) will be living in cities.

UN-Habitat describes cities as ‘the hubs of much national production and consumption – economic and social processes that generate wealth and opportunity’ but points out that they can also ‘create disease, crime, pollution, poverty and social unrest.’ Moreover, in some cities, in particular in developing countries, slum dwellers can make up more than 50 per cent of the city population, which have little or no access to shelter, water, education or health services. The vast potential for towns and cities to be catalysts for national development needs to be understood much better by policymakers as well as the corporate world and the general public.

The UN Habitat offers 10 reasons for becoming a Citychanger on their website: <http://www.imacitychanger.org/imacc/about/10-reasons/>

VII. Empower Rural Women: End Hunger and Poverty *International Women’s Day, 8 March 2012.*

On the International Women’s Day, the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, Rashida Manjoo, urged all UN members States and countries to promote the social, cultural and economic rights of rural women.

In her statement she stressed that violence against women results from a complex interplay of individual, family, community and social factors, and that therefore a holistic approach is needed which ‘*does not treat all women homogenously, but recognises that discrimination and violence affect in different ways, depending on how they are positioned within different social, economic and cultural context*’.

Concurring with Rashida Manjoo's remark the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon stressed that discriminatory laws and practices affect not just women but entire communities and nations: *"countries where women lack land ownership rights or access to credit have significantly more malnourished children."* Agricultural yields would rise by 4 per cent if rural women had equal access to productive resources, and this would, says the Secretary-General, strengthen food and nutrition security and relieve as many as 150 million people from hunger. Making up one quarter of the global population, rural women and girls are found at the bottom of every economy, social and political indicator, whether education, income, health or decision-making.

The UN Secretary-General's message to the International Women's Day urges the world community to commit to gender equality and the empowerment of women, not only as a fundamental human right but also as a force for the benefit of all: *"The energy, talent and strength of women and girls represent humankind's most valuable untapped natural resource"*. (<http://www.unwomen.org/>)

"This is why, in echoing the voices from the streets of many cities, towns and villages around the world, we must insist upon structural and institutional changes that will ensure that women are recognized as equal citizens and equal partners in decision-making. This applies particularly in times of transition for states."

"This year's theme for International Women's Day emphasizes that efforts at a local community level can have a reverberating impact well beyond. Only by capitalizing on the potential of women to effect change can we ever expect to realize the global aspiration for more just societies, where the human rights and dignity of every woman, child and man are respected."

(Quotes from Un High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay's statement)
<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/AboutUs/Pages/HighCommissioner.aspx>

VIII. ***'Resilient People, Resilient Planet: A Future Worth Choosing'*** ***Report by UN High-level Panel on Global Sustainability***

In August 2010 a 22-member panel, co-chaired by Tarja Halonen (former President of Finland) and Jacob Zuma, President of South Africa, was formed on the request of the UN Secretary-General to prepare a new blueprint for sustainable development and low-carbon prosperity. On 30 January 2012 their final report was formally launched by the Secretary-General in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

The report's summary reminds the reader, that since the Brundtland report introduced the concept of sustainable development the world has gained a much deeper understanding of the many interconnected challenges facing humanity. *'Sustainable development is not a destination, but a dynamic process of adaptation, learning and action'*. It is also about: *'recognising, understanding and action on interconnections – above all those between the economy, society and the natural environment'*. But the world is not yet on this path.

The High-level panel's long-term vision is to eradicate poverty, reduce inequality and make growth inclusive, and production and consumption sustainable, while combating climate change and respecting a range of other planetary boundaries. It suggests that *'making transparent both the*

cost of action and the cost of inaction’, could bring clarity to the ongoing argumentation and also help summon the political will to decisive action toward a sustainable future.

The report’s 56 recommendations fall under three main headings:

- empowering people to make sustainable choices;
- working towards a sustainable economy; and
- strengthening institutional governance.

The Report includes a letter from the panel co-chairs to the UN Secretary-General in which they point out that: ***‘our recommendations will require commitment – and action – from citizens across all sectors of society: from Heads of State and Government and local mayors to business executives, scientists, religious leaders, civil society activists, and not least, the leaders of the next generation, today’s youth’***.

The ‘Resilient People, Resilient Planet: A Future Worth Choosing’ report will offer an invaluable contribution to the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) in Brazil in June 2012.

Copies of this report will be available in English and other official languages at: www.un.org/gsp eBook and hard copies available through United Nations Publications at <http://www.un.org/publications>

IX. International Day of Nowruz 21st March 2012

Nowruz means new day, new beginnings, renewal of life, and people throughout the Balkans, the Black Sea Basin, the Caucasus, Central Asia and Middle East and beyond are welcoming the new opportunities and challenges for change through celebrations, and the giving of gifts to one another.

It is estimated that Nowruz has been celebrated in different ways and by people of different religions and nationalities for more than three thousand years. In September 2009 Nowruz was included in UNESCO’s Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, in acknowledgement of Nowruz festivals’ as: *“the affirmation of life in harmony with nature, the awareness of the inseparable link between constructive labour and natural cycles of renewal and the solicitous and respectful attitude towards natural sources of life.”*

The UN Secretary-General’s message on the International Day of Nowruz said that his thoughts are with those who are celebrating Nowruz in difficult circumstances, and it is his hope that people everywhere will join forces to ‘celebrate the rebirth of life and express our commitment to building a safer, more peaceful and just global community’. This, he said, *‘is the promise of Nowruz – and our task together throughout the year’*

X. Mission Statement of the International Council of Thirteen Grandmothers

“We represent a global alliance of prayer, education and healing for our Mother Earth, all Her inhabitants, all the children, and for the next seven generations to come.

We are deeply concerned with the unprecedented destruction of our Mother Earth and the destruction of indigenous ways of life. We believe the teachings of our ancestors will light our way through an uncertain future.

We look to further our vision through the realization of projects that protect our diverse cultures: lands, medicines, language and ceremonial ways of prayer and through projects that educate and nurture our children”

The 11th Council Gathering will take place in Montana: 26-29 July 2012 – Northern Cheyenne.
For more information: <http://www.grandmotherscouncil.org/>

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The **Intergovernmental Committee on Intellectual Property and Genetic Resources, Traditional Knowledge and Folklore** will gather in Geneva, Switzerland, for its 21st session from 16 -20 April 2012 to further discuss draft articles on the protection of Traditional Knowledge, which will aim to recognise the holistic nature of traditional knowledge and its intrinsic values, and promote respect for traditional knowledge systems; for the dignity, cultural integrity and intellectual and spiritual values of the traditional knowledge holders who conserve, develop and maintain those systems. <http://www.wipo.int/edocs/mdocs/tk/en/>

XI. World Intellectual Property Day 26 April 2012

This year’s theme ‘Visionary Innovators’ is reminding us of the countless human beings throughout history have opened new doors through their curiosity, insight or determination. Whether within the sphere of the arts or sciences visionary innovators have challenged old boundaries and reshaped our perception and understanding of life and relationships and thus enriched and enlightened us all and the world we live in. <http://www.wipo.int/>

XII. The 50+20 Initiative

The **50+20** project is described as ‘*a collaborative initiative that seeks to learn of new ways and opportunities for management education to transform and reinvent itself*’. The ‘50+’ refers to the approximate time in which business and management education has remained largely unchanged, while ‘20’ relates to the forthcoming Rio+20 conference on Sustainable Development (June 2012) which will mark the 20th anniversary of the 1992 Rio Earth Summit.

50+20 is a collaborative effort of the World Business School Council for Sustainable Business (WBSCSB), the Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME), and the Globally Responsible Leadership Initiative (GRLI), which seeks answers to critical questions about: ‘*the state of the world, the emerging societal issues, the dominant economic logic, the purpose of business, the crucial role of leadership, and the challenges facing management education*’.

The **50+20** management education *for* the world is providing education and research that is relevant and applied; holistic and integrative; responsible and sustainable; inter-disciplinary and multi-level, and learning-oriented. A significant first step will be taken through participating in the Rio+20 Summit and contributing to the public debate on the future challenges that the world community and the planetary environment will have to face together.

The first of two publications will be presented at the Summit: an executive summary which highlights the vision, the challenges and the emerging solutions. The second publication, a comprehensive book for the inspired manager, business students and general public, will be published soon after June Rio+20 Summit.

50+20 furthermore plans to create five new business school initiatives in different geographic areas, Asia, Europe, South America, Africa, and North America, to pioneer and showcase new models for business schools.

“We are asking critical questions about the state of the world, the emerging societal issues, the dominant economic logic, the purpose of business, the crucial role of leadership, and the challenges facing management education.”

<http://50plus20.org/about/what-is-5020> <http://50plus20.org/rio20>

<http://www.uncsd2012.org/rio20/>

XIII. Culture of Peace: Amplifying the Unseen and Unheard Voices of Peace

The United Nations (UN) Department of Public Information (DPI) launched its first Briefing of the winter season for Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) on 19 January 2012 with a panel presentation and audience discussion on the Culture of Peace. The most fundamental of questions was considered: What is peace? ... Recognizing that the UN was founded “to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war” and knowing peace to be much more than the absence of conflict. The Briefing explored the concept of the Culture of Peace, one that is a practical vision for sustainable peace, and that promotes a culture of values based on eight principles, namely: education, sustainable economic and social development, human rights, gender equality, democratic participation, tolerance, support for the free flow of information and the promotion of international peace and security, i.e., the ‘8 action areas’ as articulated in the *1999 United Nations Declaration and Programme of Action for a Culture of Peace [Resolution A/RES/53/243]*. Peace as an essential vehicle for human development and ultimately realizing the Millennium Development Goals was also emphasized.

The Briefing began with a moment of silence, in keeping with the spirit of peace. Although a first for DPI, this tradition of honoring silence has a long history at the UN and has been used to open and close UN General Assembly meetings since its beginning. Moderated by DPI Chief of the NGO Relations Cluster, **Maria-Luisa Chavez**, the meeting got underway with a presentation of the film *Winning Peace*, which looks at the pain of war and the promise of peace: www.bigpictureworld.com/movies/winningpeace.html

The distinguished and eminent panel of experts consisted of:

H.E. Ambassador Anwarul K. Chowdhury – a former Under-Secretary General and High Representative of the United Nations for some of the world’s most vulnerable countries; former Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the UN; former President of the Security Council, President of the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF); a career diplomat, currently Senior Special Advisor to the UN General Assembly President.

Dorothy (Dot) Maver, PhD – educator and peacebuilder working to inspire on behalf of the common good; President of the National Peace Academy in the USA and Executive Director of The River Phoenix Center for Peacebuilding; co-founder of the Global Alliance for Ministries and Infrastructures of Peace; coordinator of Push4Peace.

Michael O'Malley – Program Associate at the UN Liaison Office of Soka Gakkai International (SGI) and chair of SGI's university student group in the US; currently pursuing a Masters of Arts degree in Media Studies at The New School.

Cora Weiss – UN representative for the International Peace Bureau, and it's former President; current President of the Hague Appeal for Peace; among the drafters of Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security; promoter of the civil society drafted resolution, Human Right to Peace.

Ambassador Chowdhury opened by saying, “In a world where waging war has been so common, waging peace is and should be, the center of all human endeavors.” He conveyed a brief history of the culture of peace at the UN and related how the landmark *1999 UN Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace*, a document of hope and substance, came about. At the end of the cold war and on the threshold of a new millennium, UN Member States questioned how to best take advantage of this ‘peace dividend’, and also, how to get the ‘substance’ into the culture of peace? Perhaps, the most significant result was this declaration and program of action. With the honor of chairing these 9-month long negotiations, he wondered: how can peace be such a controversial subject? Ultimately, under his guidance, consensus was reached and the UN General Assembly adopted this document on 13 September 1999. Considered one of the most important documents in the history of the UN, along with the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it “transcends boundaries for eternity” for all humanity. He hopes everyone reads it: http://mod.sgi.org/assets/pdf/UN_CulturePeace_bklt_r4.pdf Now thirteen years later, this document with its 8 action areas [a blueprint for the culture of peace] has yet to be fully implemented. Civil society has taken the lead. All UN offices should highlight and support it at the grassroots. Women and youth are essential; each of us becomes an agent of peace in how we act. How can we integrate peace in our lives? If we're not peaceful, how can we ask for world peace? Spirituality is essential. He stressed the growing recognition of the Human Right to Peace, which requires all of our support.

Dot Maver began with the definition of peace that she uses in her work from the Earth Charter: “*Peace is the wholeness created by right relationships with oneself, other persons, other cultures, other life, Earth, and the larger whole of which all are a part.*” She inspired with her declaration that peace is sweeping the world and shared her thoughts and experiences regarding the invisible field of peace that already exists. There are so many peace groups in society that it is impossible to name them all—visit WiserEarth's website to see an ever increasing tally. Infrastructures for peace called by various names (peace ministries, academies, commissions) are becoming a framework for moving through challenges as outworn systems break down; “...as we shift from living in a culture wrought with violence and dysfunction where people's needs are not being fully met... to a culture where peace and justice, loving understanding and sharing, truth and reconciliation prevails, where everyone's needs are met and there is true equity”. The best example of an existing Peace System, and the vital principle of cooperation, is Mother Nature. We can each play our part in making the world a better place, knowing that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Four countries now have peace ministries or departments: Solomon Islands, Costa Rica, Nepal and most recently, South Sudan. Education shapes society; and a peace framework without those working in it having learned peace skills is ineffective... local to global is heartening in that we can all make a difference. Currently, there are over 400 peace studies programs at the university level and we are beginning to celebrate PhDs in peacebuilding! 2012 is proving to be a turning point for humanity. There are innumerable collaborative initiatives; one example is Push4Peace. A 90-day initiative focused on the UN International Day of Peace, 21 September, with a goal of reaching one billion people taking action for the culture of peace. It is hoped you will participate: www.push4peace.org Youth are key—it's time to tell a new story—the story of peace!

Michael O'Malley admitted how hard it was at first to understand “culture of peace” because it seemed so abstract and vast. Realizing that it’s not about the arts in particular, now he gets that it is about consciousness and fostering values. He brought up the point that although Member States can create policies and treaties, they can’t legislate “culture”. Culture is determined and influenced by our collective attitudes and beliefs, and each of us has a role to play—within our families, communities, countries and the world— in shaping culture. The *UN Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace* calls out to not only governments but to parents, teachers, politicians, journalists, religious bodies, intellectuals, artists and NGOs—all of us—to play a crucial role in working alongside governments. To mark the end of the *UN International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World 2001-2010*, over 1000 NGOs from around the world contributed to an End-of-the-Decade Report that detailed their activities to advance the Culture of Peace in their local communities. Coming together to continue the momentum gained during the Decade, a group, made up of civil society organizations at the UN committed to building a Culture of Peace, has formed. This consortium is called *United for Culture of Peace (U4CoP)* www.gmcop.org and works to amplify the voices of the “Global Movement for the Culture of Peace”, described in the program of action. It intends to launch a global network for NGOs to help connect civil society organizations that are working to advance the culture of peace. His initial reservations about the Culture of Peace being too all embracing and far-reaching are now seen as its greatest strength.

Cora Weiss directed everyone to remember what *www* really stands for -- *World Without War!* Another UN Resolution is needed to ban nuclear weapons and she would support an Occupy movement to achieve it. She says, “A Culture of Peace is not the absence of war, but must be the presence of human security and justice.” 875 million guns are in circulation, and 7 to 8 million more are made *each* year. It is necessary to remember that terrorism and the culture of violence includes those who go hungry; the poor; those without education, or healthcare; those subject to economic and sexual exploitation; people suffering from nuclear, chemical and biological remediation; those exposed to the Fukushima radiation and considered contagious, etc. Peace does not have to be an expense or a burden on the government. For every dollar spent on war, spending on education creates two and a half times more jobs. Education is of the utmost importance. She calls for a radically different education that does not glorify war or naturalize violence, but educates for peace and includes participation, critical inquiry and reflection. Go to: www.peace-ed-campaign.org She acknowledges the need for, and encourages, civil society to involve itself in peace initiatives such as the *UN General Assembly Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace*, as well as the *Santiago Declaration on the Human Right to Peace*, which is working its way through the Human Rights Council and hopefully to the General Assembly for adoption. Remember: No human security, no Culture of Peace!

A lively question and answer period followed the panel discussion. One participant reminded us of Dag Hammarskjöld (Secretary-General 1953-1964) who said, “Unless there is a spiritual renaissance, the world will know no peace.”...And Einstein who said that to solve a problem, we must approach it from a different level of consciousness than from which it was created. In response to the question of whether nuclear arms makes us safer, a key point was made that *having no weapons at all is a form of security*, and that *proliferation of weapons may give power to the state, but it does not advance human security*. Feeding a fear-based mentality with weapons, usually serves to perpetuate it. One panelist underscored this by quoting the renowned pacifist Mahatma Gandhi: “The force generated by non-violence is infinitely greater than the force of all the arms created by man’s ingenuity.” Throughout the Briefing all the perspectives on war and peace echoed the sentiment that peace requires non-violent conflict resolution. Conflicts are inevitable, but it is how we chose to solve them, which creates sustainable peace. Today, in contemporary conflicts, as much as 90% of casualties are among civilians, most of whom are women and children. War as a way of settling differences is not just. To the question: what can we do to foster the culture of peace? — Stop buying violent toys for children and curtail violent video games and violent movies; hold a toy drive to collect toy guns; call on your government to drastically cut the military budget—we have more than enough weapons; read the 1999 *UN Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace* and tell 10 people about it; meditate—cultivate inner peace; plan or support an annual International Day of Peace (21 September) celebration in your community; contact your local schools and ask them to add peace curriculum (it’s never too early to teach peace

—begin with pre-kindergarten); Google a copy of the Human Right to Peace document and give it to your representative, because they may be on the Human Rights Council.

The Briefing concluded with a message from **Gita Brooke** (co-founder of *Operation Peace Through Unity [OPTU]* in New Zealand) read by NGO DPI Executive Committee Chair, Charles Hitchcock, thanking DPI and all who poured energy into the vision this special Briefing held. Referring to her community as a small dot on the world map, those in the room were reminded of those unseen voices around the world joining via social media and the live webcast. —Including a global peace meditation online (the result of a Twitter request) at *Global Coherence Initiative Care Room* taking place during the time of the Briefing. — The recitation of this letter* affirmed, yet again, that unheard voices were being amplified and gave confirmation to the interconnectedness of that invisible field of peace and goodwill, which was felt and apparent in the room throughout the Briefing.

Anne Creter, Representative to the UN for OPTU wrote in a follow-up article: “What better way for the UN Department of Public Information to start 2012 than to kick off their weekly non-governmental organization (NGO) briefings on 19 January than with the potent and timely theme: “**Culture of Peace: Amplifying the Unseen and Unheard Voices of Peace.**” Surely, it was a dream-come-true — at least for the group, *United for Culture of Peace* www.gmcop.org — a group whose passion and dedication to the culture of peace empowered them to collaborate behind the scenes with a delightfully responsive DPI, to make it happen. It seems a [positive] omen for the promise of what is yet to come in 2012, as the world shifts towards a culture of peace! Observed by a full house—along with many unseen - unheard voices actively participating by various social media; web cast to a worldwide audience; and archived at: <http://www.un.org/wcm/content/site/dpingorelations/home/events/briefings/ws2012/19jan2012>, the briefing seemed to anchor the culture of peace at the UN. The excitement in the room was palpable. Audience questions were exceptional. The positive feedback about it exceeded all expectations.”

Youth delegate Alex Freedman from Railroad Street Youth Project www.rsyp.org wrote afterwards about his experience at the Briefing, and also acknowledged ‘the energy in the room’ that day: “...But most powerful was the crowd that the briefing and the topic itself pulled together: a room full of future Peacekeepers. It was inspiring to see how many people from so many cultures, talking about Peace and Ending War. Everyone brought positivity, sincerity, compassion and a sense of urgency. The space truly held the intention of creating peace – all of our personal differences seemed insignificant in the face of such a righteous and pressing Universal need.”

Marjorie A. Schwartz, a first time attendee at a briefing of this nature also reported her impressions: “So what did this hopeful skeptic get from this event? Perhaps, of greatest importance was a renewed awareness that one voice can make a difference... To those who continue these efforts, I have deep respect and admiration. It is because of you and those like you that I can hold onto dreams as big as ‘peace on earth and goodwill toward (hu)man(ity)’.” She now counts *herself* as a peacebuilder.

Readers are invited to join the *Global Movement for the Culture of Peace* on Facebook and use #hashtag #U4Peace on Twitter.

Iris Spellings (optu.ny@gmail.com) and Anne Creter (Annecrets@aol.com) -- both are Representatives to the UN for OPTU

**For this small speck on the world map, the theme of this first Briefing in 2012 carries profound significance.*

In every little town, village, settlement or family throughout the entire world there will be whispers of hope, and voices that courageously - and in the face of status quo - are pronouncing the coming in of a new era: the era in which harmony, justice and peaceful relations will take root in and evolve from the Heart of humanity.

The theme: “Culture of Peace; Amplifying the Unseen and Unheard Voices of Peace” can thus become a Call to unity – its sound bringing us all together for a brighter – more enlightened – future for All.’

XIV. Happiness and Well-Being: Defining a New Economic Paradigm

In July 2011 the [Resolution 65/309](#), entitled “*Happiness: towards a holistic approach to development*”, presented by the Kingdom of Bhutan and co-sponsored by 68 countries, was adopted by consensus by the UN General Assembly.

The resolution recognises that ‘*the gross domestic product indicator was not designed to and does not adequately reflect the happiness and well-being of people in a country*’ and calls for ‘*.... a more inclusive, equitable and balanced approach to economic growth that promotes sustainable development, poverty eradication, happiness and well-being of all peoples*’.

The resolution also ‘welcomes the offer of Bhutan’ to convene a panel discussion on the theme of happiness and well-being during the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly. This High Level Meeting on ‘Happiness and Well Being: Defining a New Economic Paradigm’ will take place 2 April 2012 at the UN headquarters in New York, where the Bhutanese prime minister will be representing King Jigme Khesar Narngyel. The meeting will be attended by a select but representative group of government representatives, by all UN missions, and by leading economists, scholars and spiritual and civil society leaders, representing both developed and developing countries.

The outcome of this meeting will include:

- a statement on the new economy for voluntary signature by all the participants;
- building a global movement and action networks to promote implementation of the new economy;
- voluntary specific policy recommendations for consideration by governments in the short, medium, and long term;
- establishment of an independent experts Task Force to elaborate the details of the new economic paradigm;
- a strategy to present the new economic paradigm at the special event to be hosted by the Royal Government of Bhutan during the Rio+20 summit in June this year; and
- a strategy for effective communication of the new economy to reach the widest possible audience.

The Royal Government of Bhutan’s input for the Draft Outcome Document for Rio+20, entitled “Economic Paradigm”, urges the world community to take to heart that fact that ‘*the stress of poverty on countless millions of our fellow human beings is no less than the stress on the planet of the lifestyles of the rich*’. But it also underscores the ‘good news’ that – on every continent – there are living examples of what can work; sustainable production methods, appropriate technologies, and ‘*communities that are not spiralling downwards into depression and fear but living prosperously and in harmony with nature*’. Humanity even has well-developed measurement systems of wellbeing with robust methodologies and good data sources, including the Bhutan Gross National Happiness (GNH) index with its nine domains and 72 core indicators. We furthermore have new accounting methods, developed by brilliant ecological economists, which can move us beyond the narrow GDP-based measures and provide humanity with ‘*a much more comprehensive and accurate picture of our true wealth and progress*’.

The Bhutan contribution to the Draft Outcome Document for Rio (<http://www.2apr.gov.bt/images/stories/pdf/bhutansubmissiontorio.pdf>) concludes: *“In short, we have at our fingertips all that we need to create the new economic paradigm on the ground, in policy, in measurement, in accounting, and in regulatory institutions. All that is needed is the political will. Nothing practical is stopping us doing exactly what is needed to ensure that Rio+20 is a true celebration and not a veil of tears and gloom”*.

“There cannot be enduring peace, prosperity, equality and brotherhood in this world if our aims are so separate and divergent”, says King Jigme Khesar Narngyel of Bhutan, “if we do not accept that in the end we are people, all alike, sharing the earth among ourselves and also with other sentient beings, all of whom have an equal role and stake in the state of this planet and its players.”

See also Solutions Journal (www.thesolutionsjournal.com) .

XV. Rio + 20

The Secretary-General of the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), Mr. Sha Zukang, told the National Commission on Sustainable Development (Brasilia, Brazil 9 March 2012) that Rio+20 is expected to be *‘the largest, most participatory event in UN history.’* And we want to see a meaningful outcome of the Conference rather than *‘empty bureaucratic rhetoric, or a poetic statement’*, said Mr Sha. We must work together and make ambition win over status quo.

Mr. Sha saw ‘Green Economy’ as a crucial, possibly a ‘make-or-break’ issue, but hoped that agreements could be reached on, 1) a green economy roadmap, including milestones, 2) a menu of policy options, 3) a toolkit of good practices, and 4) a platform where countries can share experiences and learn from one another.

Mr. Sha also stressed that the strongest advocates for change come from civil society: *“They are shouting for equality, inclusive societies, bold action. They are the strongest allies for the future we want and its reflection in the Rio outcome”*. <http://www.uncsd2012.org/rio20/>

XVI. 2 Million Friends to End the Afghan War

The ‘2 Million Friends to end the Afghan War’ is one of the action plans for 2012 which the Afghan Youth Peace Volunteers (AYPV) is preparing for this year.

The group calls on people throughout the world community to light **‘2 million candles’** on the 10 December 2012, the International Day of Human Rights, in memory of the victims of war and in a collective resolve to work together for peace in Afghanistan and a life without war.

“We are human beings who are tired of the past and present situations in Afghanistan”, says Khamad Jan (AYPV), and “we organised ourselves as the Afghan Youth Peace Volunteers in order to share the suffering of fellow human beings in our land and to express our longing for friendship, peace and non-violence to the world”.

The 2 million candles project has the support of Dr. Sima Simar, Chairperson of the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission and the Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Mairead Maguire who is planning to attend the 10 December event. For more information on how to participate: <http://vcnv.org/2-million-candles-to-end-the-afghan-war>

XII. 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.