

# *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. Fault-finding – Truth-revealing***

Fault-finding and blame-making is today - as it has always been - a popular preoccupation, revealing as much as it hides. Through news media and electronic chatter boxes we contribute to the voluminous amount of voices and waves of opinion. This whirlpool of intriguing snippets of facts and fiction is drawing us in, stirring our emotions and stimulating our brains.

It is interesting that, according to the dictionary, the origin of the word 'fault' is the Latin word: *'fallere'*, which means to 'deceive'. The instinctual habit to apportion blame to an outside entity for any personal hurt or discomfort, any problem or situation, is deep-rooted in our defence mechanism. Like the child we tend to angrily kick the stove that burnt our hand, thus adding a sore foot to the already tense and stressful situation between two parties!

But whatever our personal point of view may be regarding these fast-food cafés for busy brains, they do form an integral part of the global grid of connectedness between us all. We are stirred to think, to connect and relate to a greater whole; the world is becoming smaller and relationships more up-close. And the incessant buzz of infectious gossiping and quick, micro-wave heated, opinions is beginning to fade into the background as irrelevant noise. Thoughtful commentaries are universally being read and shared as we discuss the many points of view on the challenges and unhealthy state of affairs between people and nations and within our depleted environment. Although the strident and confrontational overtones may still dominate the public debate, one can sense the note of urgency to understand better the causes behind our predicament. We are, albeit with some hesitance, seeking the truth and the cause behind the many and complex symptoms.

Old habits are proving hard to break. But the dictionary offers another thought provoking use of the word 'fault', namely 'an extended break in the continuity of layers of rock formation, caused by movement of the earth's crust'. Increasingly sophisticated modern technology has enabled humanity to move beyond the earth's atmosphere and - from space - we see the deep scars and the expanding areas of barrenness on our planet; we measure the thinning ozone layer and general pollution of the earth's atmosphere and accumulate data on the state of health of all planetary species including ourselves. Slowly but inexorably human intelligence, curiosity and inner drive *is* breaking through layers of ignorance and *is* revealing the consequences of old unsustainable habits and rigid mindsets. It will, however, be up to each individual human being - in our billions - to remove the crust around its heart.

With ingenuity, persistence and ambition layer upon layer of worlds within worlds within our universe are being unveiled - a universe within which humanity and planet Earth form but a miniscule part! Scientists begin to understand how genetic messages are being passed on between cells within the circumference of a form so as to perform different duties and fight off infections. And soon they hope they will be able to produce a 3D model of the human body, which will include all, *'from organs right down to the individual cells, proteins and genes.'*

<http://science.time.com/2014/01/09/crystallography-100-years/#ixzz2vQdBPxIj>

As one scientist suggests, it seems as if a master plan, deep within the heart of every cell, is followed by each single unit of the whole. Will we human beings also learn to communicate and cooperate for the common good? As self-conscious human beings will we, free-willingly, choose to serve the continuing revelation of intent and purpose of Life

in all Its wondrous beauty and majesty? Will we listen to and follow the master plan within our hearts? It has been said that *'synthesis is the one luminous path of the heart'*. Let us choose this lighted – enlightened – path, into a brighter future.

## ***II. Make this the Last Year of Suffering***

A new UNICEF report entitled 'Under Siege: The devastating impact on children of three years of conflict in Syria' takes stock of the impact that three years of violence and rights violations have had on children.

The report tells us that –

- ! within a year, from March 2013 to March 2014, the number of children affected by this war has risen from 2.3 million to more than 5.5 million,
- ! the number of displaced children has tripled, from 920,000 to almost 3 million,
- ! the number of child refugees more than quadrupled, from 260,000 to more than 1.2 million children (425,000 under 5 years of age) and
- ! by the end of January 2014, 37,498 Syrian children had been born as refugees.

As the social fabric of Syria is being torn apart, the experience of conflict has become 'normal' for children and pre-war life faded into a 'distant memory'. The report also tells us about the resilience of children; how older children will be taking the place of caregivers, teachers and councilors to the younger ones, and how, despite being surrounded by devastation, they will remain hopeful.

### **Make this the last year of suffering:**

But, although children can show an astonishing ability and will to heal and recover, another year of conflict and suffering could well be pushing Syrian children beyond the point of no return, says the UNICEF report: *"With every month that passes, their chances of recovering their stolen potential – and rebuilding their futures – dwindle"*.

UNICEF appeals to the global community to participate in every way possible to make 2014 the last year of suffering and outlines some 'critical measures' which should be taken to help the children to *"grow, learn, and develop the skills that will rebuild their war-ravaged country and restore its diverse and multicultural society"*:

- 1. end the vicious cycle of violence in Syria now**, so that Syria's children and their families can return home to a safe environment, free from threats of violence, fear, exploitation and abuse, and resume their schooling –
- 2. grant immediate access to the under-reached 1 million children**, by allowing UNICEF and other humanitarian agencies to deliver vitally needed assistance to children living in areas under siege –
- 3. create a protective environment for children**, to prevent children from being recruited to take part in the conflict, exploited sexually, physically or emotionally, and to reinforce mechanisms already in place to monitor violations of International Humanitarian Law and International Human Rights Law –
- 4. invest in children's education**: UNICEF is seeking US\$276 million which will help increase the number of children in schools, create more class rooms and provide more trained teachers, books and other learning material –
- 5. help children's inner healing**: UNICEF will need US\$110 million to help children who are in need of psychological support to heal their hidden wounds inflicted by the conflict. The funds will be used to train teachers, community leaders, and for monitoring children suffering the worst traumas. It will also allow

the expansion of Child-Friendly Space in which children can begin to heal through sports, arts, and creative writing –

- 6. provide support to host communities and governments.** Extra funds and commitments are needed to alleviate tensions and foster stronger bonds between refugees and those hosting them. Syrian refugees are overwhelmingly settling in poor communities, which can add to the strain on already over-burdened health, education, water and hygiene services. Providing support to children's services will have a doubly positive impact – improving living conditions for Syrians and poor local children alike. It will also be reinforcing government and community efforts to promote coexistence and tolerance between their own populations and the Syrian refugees.

[www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org) [www.childrenofsyria.info](http://www.childrenofsyria.info)

*'Helping people should not be politicized'*

Unicef co-worker

### **III. The Hague Conference on Private international Law**

Hans van Loon has served the Hague Conference on Private International Law since 1978, and as Secretary General from 1996 until his retirement in 2013.

The following passages are taken, with Hans's kind permission, from his farewell speech, 14 June 2013 at The Hague Peace Palace, in which he offers some thoughts and reflections from the many years of the work and service within this unique Organisation:

*"At the centre of the Hague Conference's work – although it is an intergovernmental organisation, and organisation founded by States – stands the human being: men, women and children, families, companies and other entities, crossing border for private or business purposes, in a world that is composed of hundreds of civil and commercial legal regimes and cultures. The mission of the Conference is to facilitate this unfolding of human aspirations in our increasingly interdependent world: With respect for existing legal diversity; and with a special eye for those who are vulnerable, in particular children."*

In a globalizing world this mission is increasingly relevant to the entire human family, and 'it is, in essence, also a contribution to peace in our world. As Lao Tzu has said:

*"If there is to be peace in the world,*

*There must be peace in the nations.*

*If there is to be peace in the nations,*

*There must be peace in the cities.*

*If there is to be peace in the cities,*

*There must be peace between neighbours.*

*If there is to be peace between neighbours,*

*There must be peace in the home.*

*...which often comes with additional challenges when the home is an international one!"*

*"It has been a wonderful experience to witness how the rapid development towards global interdependence has been reflected in the Conference and its work over the past decades" says Hans. And "the expansion in the Asia Pacific region is now supported by our Regional Office in Hong Kong, which was opened in December 2013." There has been huge growth of interest in the Conference in the Americas, and its most recent Member State in Africa is Zambia. And "in Europe we have seen an amazing development of legislative activity by the European Union in the field of private*

*international law as a result of the Treaty of Amsterdam of 1999*". The European Union has been a Member of the Conference since 2007, and *"the Hague Conference has thus become the global forum for the development of private international law where the European Union works with its main partners and this has already given remarkable results"*. In this way *"coordination between the management of legal diversity at the global and European levels may go hand in hand"*.

In his speech Hans emphasizes that The Hague Conference aims to work *for* people as well as *with* people throughout the world, and: *"a culture of communities have come into being around the Organisation and around the legal instruments it has created in different areas"*, including:

- ! Extensive networks of Ministries in the capitals of the 74 Members of the Conference and some 70 other States, and of the Embassies here in The Hague
- ! Global networks of administrative authorities in charge of the operation of Conventions – including well over 2500 Central Authorities in our 100 countries from all corners of the earth, and thousands of other competent authorities
- ! Communities of courts, including a global Hague network of judges in family matters
- ! Communities of legal professionals and academics consisting of networks extending across the planet

Together these communities are making the Conventions known and also making them work in an increasing number of States, and *"since the turn of the Century, many of these are emerging countries, often in need of special assistance, which the Conference has been able to provide thanks to the generosity of many Members, including in particular our host Country"*.

After his many years of service as Secretary General of The Hague Conference on Private International Law, Hans van Loon concludes by expressing his gratitude to all colleagues, co-workers, past and present, and close family, stressing that: *"if the Hague Conference is a growing, vibrant organisation, this is because of its eminent practical mission and of the good will, hard work, enthusiasm, and even passion that it continues to assemble around it from thousands of people the world over"*

Quoting the final lines of the saying by Lao Tzu :  
***"If there is to be peace in the home,  
There must be peace in the heart"***,

Hans van Loon reminds us all that: ***"Our close relationships at home, but also at work, offer each of us, every day, opportunities to practice peace in the heart"***

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**The Hague Conference on Private International Law** ([www.hcch.net](http://www.hcch.net)) is the World Organisation for Cross-border Cooperation in Civil and Commercial Matters. It develops and services multilateral treaties dealing with many of the legal challenges people face in their cross-border relationships and transactions. The Conference cooperates closely with the United Nations and other international organisations.

[Hans van Loon](#), a member of the [Institute de droit international](#), led the Conference from 1996- 2013 during a time of rapid expansion of the Organisation and its work. He is now an independent consultant ([h.vanloon@ppl.nl](mailto:h.vanloon@ppl.nl))

#### ***IV. The World Beyond War*** **A Global Movement to End all Wars**

Individuals and organisations all over the world are invited to sign a statement in support of ending all war and join in the planning of a new movement to be launched on the International Day of Peace, 21<sup>st</sup> September, 2014:

##### **Statement:**

***I understand that wars and militarism make us less safe rather than protect us,  
that they kill, injure and traumatize adults, children and infants,  
severely damage the natural environment, erode civil liberties  
and drain our economies, siphoning resources from life-affirming activities.  
I commit to engage in and support nonviolent efforts to end all war  
and preparations for war  
and to create a sustainable and just peace***

To sign this statement and for more information, please visit:

<http://WorldBeyondWar.org>

World Beyond War, described in Its own words:

- **Who:** a growing coalition of individuals and groups;
- **What:** a global movement to end all war and preparations for war;
- **When:** starting now with an official launch planned for the International Day of Peace. September 21, 2014;
- **Where:** in ourselves, in our homes, in our communities, in our nations and all over the world;
- **Why:** war is immoral, it endangers us, it threatens our environment, it erodes our liberties, and it impoverishes us;
- **How:** building on the progress which is being made, disarmament, ending occupations, and advancing alternatives to war.

*“It is time for the thinking man to realise that what we do to other living things and our environment we do to ourselves. As previous civilisations have learnt, the only way is to create harmony in our world and move beyond hypocrisy” – Nozar Mossadeghi*

<http://www.worldbeyondwar.org/who/#sthash.jO3EzwTJ.dpuf>

#### ***V. The Fierce Urgency of Now***

In her keynote speech in Rome on 7 March, the eve on the International Women’s Day, Mary Robinson, former president of Ireland, welcomed the opportunity to highlight the inequalities which many women still face around the world, urging that *‘we can’t keep half of the populations outside the door’*. The 1946 Universal Declaration of Human Rights states at the outset that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights, and yet *‘gender inequality still persists in every society in the 21<sup>st</sup> century’*, she said.

Ms Robinson mentioned the important work of the Empowering Women in Agriculture (EWA) and the ‘impressive’ amount of research and broad collaboration emerging in Africa in 2014, the Year of Agriculture and Food Security of the African Union, and to see the central and crucial role that African women are playing in this collective effort. ([http://www.fasngo.org/assets/files/EWA/Launch%20of%20Ewa\\_rev.pdf](http://www.fasngo.org/assets/files/EWA/Launch%20of%20Ewa_rev.pdf))

Ms Robinson spoke of the [Mary Robinson Foundation – Climate Justice](#) which highlights the themes of food and nutrition, security and women’s empowerment. She referred to the Foundation’s ‘**Declaration on Climate Justice**’ \*, which concludes with a quote taken from Martin Luther King’s Speech some 50 years ago which speaks of “**the fierce urgency of now.**” Considering the many inter-related challenges facing the world today, the global urgency has never been greater, says

Mary Robinson; the ‘business as usual’ approach must end and ‘fierce urgency’ compel us to act.

Calling on international agencies to break out of the ‘boxes’ which constrain policy making, she stressed that for global development to be sustainable ‘**the issues of climate change, gender equality and food security must all go hand-in-hand.**’

\*text of Declaration on Climate Justice (September 2013)

### **Our vision**

*As a diverse group of concerned world citizens and advocates, we stand in defence of a global climate system that is safe for all of humanity. We demand a world where our children and future generations are assured of fair and just opportunities for social stability, employment, a healthy planet and prosperity.*

*We are united in the need for an urgent response to the climate crisis - a response informed by the current impacts of climate change and the science that points to the possibility of a global temperature increase of 4°C by the end of this century. The economic and social costs of climate impacts on people, their rights, their homes, their food security and the ecosystems on which they depend cannot be ignored any longer. Nor can we overlook the injustice faced by the poorest and most vulnerable who bear a disproportionate burden from the impacts of climate change.*

*This reality drives our vision of climate justice. It puts people at the centre and delivers results for the climate, for human rights, and for development. Our vision acknowledges the injustices caused by climate change and the responsibility of those who have caused it. It requires us to build a common future based on justice for those who are most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and a just transition to a safe and secure society and planet for everyone.*

### **Achieving climate justice**

*A greater imagination of the possible is vital to achieve a just and sustainable world. The priority pathways to achieve climate justice are:*

**- Giving voice:** *The world cannot respond adequately to climate change unless people and communities are at the centre of decision-making at all levels – local, national and international. By sharing their knowledge, communities can take the lead in shaping effective solutions. We will only succeed if we give voice to those most affected, listen to their solutions, and empower them to act.*

**- A new way to grow:** *There is a global limit to the carbon we can emit while maintaining a safe climate and it is essential that equitable ways to limit these emissions are achieved. Transforming our economic system to one based on low-carbon production and consumption can create inclusive sustainable development and reduce inequality. As a global community, we must innovate now to enable us to leave the majority of the remaining fossil fuel reserves in the ground – driving our transition to a climate resilient future.*

*To achieve a just transition, it is crucial that we invest in social protection, enhance worker’s skills for redeployment in a low-carbon economy and promote access to sustainable development for all. Access to sustainable energy for the poorest is fundamental to making this transition fair and to achieving the right to development. Climate justice also means free worldwide access to breakthrough technologies for the transition to sustainability, for example, efficient organic solar panels and new chemical energy storage schemes.*

**- Investing in the future:** *A new investment model is required to deal with the risks posed by climate change – now and in the future, so that intergenerational equity can be achieved. Policy certainty sends signals to invest in the right things. By avoiding investment in high-carbon assets that become obsolete, and prioritizing sustainable alternatives, we create a new investment model that builds capacity and resilience while lowering emissions.*

*Citizens are entitled to have a say in how their savings, such as pensions, are invested to achieve the climate future they want. It is critical that companies fulfil their social compact to invest in ways that benefit communities and the environment. Political leaders have to provide clear*

signals to business and investors that an equitable low-carbon economic future is the only sustainable option.

- **Commitment and accountability:** Achieving climate justice requires that broader issues of inequality and weak governance are addressed both within countries and at a global level. Accountability is key. It is imperative that Governments commit to bold action informed by science, and deliver on commitments made in the climate change regime to reduce emissions and provide climate finance, in particular for the most vulnerable countries.

All countries are part of the solution but developed countries must take the lead, followed by those less developed, but with the capacity to act. Climate justice increases the likelihood of strong commitments being made as all countries need to be treated fairly to play their part in a global deal. For many communities, including indigenous peoples around the world, adaptation to climate change is an urgent priority that has to be addressed much more assertively than before.

- **Rule of law:** Climate change will exacerbate the vulnerability of urban and rural communities already suffering from unequal protection from the law. In the absence of adequate climate action there will be increased litigation by communities, companies and countries. International and national legal processes and systems will need to evolve and be used more imaginatively to ensure accountability and justice. Strong legal frameworks can provide certainty to ensure transparency, longevity, credibility and effective enforcement of climate and related policies.

### **Transformative leadership**

World leaders have an opportunity and responsibility to demonstrate that they understand the urgency of the problem and the need to find equitable solutions now.

At the international level and through the United Nations, it is crucial that leaders focus attention on climate change as an issue of justice, global development and human security. By treating people and countries fairly, climate justice can help to deliver a strong, legally binding climate agreement in 2015. It is the responsibility of leaders to ensure that the post-2015 development agenda and the UNFCCC climate negotiations support each other to deliver a fair and ambitious global framework by the end of 2015. Local and national leaders will implement these policies on the ground, creating an understanding of the shared challenge amongst the citizens of the world and facilitating a transformation to a sustainable global society.

As part of global collective action, greater emphasis should be given to the role of diverse coalitions that are already emerging at the community, local, city, corporate and country levels and the vital role they play in mobilizing action. These coalitions are already championing the solutions needed to solve the crisis and their effect can be maximized by supporting them to connect and scale up for greater impact.

Climate justice places people at its centre and focuses attention on rights, opportunities and fairness. For the sake of those affected by climate impacts now and in the future, we have no more time to waste. The 'fierce urgency of now' compels us to act.

Mary Robinson

<http://www.mrfcj.org/media/pdf/Declaration-on-Climate-Justice.pdf>

***“To denigrate women is to spit in the face of God”***

*Desmond Tutu*

## **VI. Global Food Policy Report – 2013 A World Free of Hunger and Malnutrition**

International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), established in 1975, has published this yearly report, the third of its kind, which offers ‘research-based solutions to sustainably reduce poverty and end hunger and malnutrition’. The institute cooperates with partners throughout the world, including public institutions, the private sector and farmers’ organisations; it conducts research, ensures sustainable food production, improvement of markets and trade and healthy food systems, with a view to building resilience, strengthening institutions and governance.



The Global Food Policy Report includes contributions from IFPRI researchers and leading food policy experts on such crucial questions as:

- ! What is the direction of the global development agenda as the world approaches the 2015 deadline of the Millennium Development Goals?
- ! What are the best policies and investments to ensure we can end hunger and under-nutrition by 2025
- ! How effective will India's landmark National Food Security Act be in ensuring access to adequate food at affordable prices?
- ! What policies, investments, and technologies will do most to sustainably increase agricultural productivity, to link smallholder farmers to markets, and to ensure that their products are safe and nutritious?
- ! How do we get the politics of nutrition right, to create an environment in which policies promote food and nutrition security? And
- ! What have been the major developments in regions and countries where poor and hungry people reside?

***'Ending hunger and under-nutrition by 2015 should be a top priority in the post-2015 development agenda'***, stresses the Report.

<http://www.ifpri.org/gfpr/2013>

## ***VII. A New Global Land Cover Data Base***

This Global Land Cover SHARE database (GLC-SHARE), spearheaded by the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), is seen as representing a major and historic improvement which will gather *'under one roof previously scattered information about land cover'*. Dr. John Latham, Global Land Cover Network Programme Coordinator (FAO), sees this update as a most valuable tool in assessing the sustainability of agriculture and increasing resilience of livelihoods.

Using internationally accepted definitions and standards GLC-SHARE will pull together all data and submit it to a *'thorough quality-control, harmonising process'* which will bring *'a wealth of country-level information into one consolidated dataset spanning the entire planet'*.

At the launch of the new Global Land Cover Data Base (17 March), Johan Latham stressed that: *"a strong understanding of our planet's land cover is essential to promoting sustainable land resources management – including agricultural production to feed a growing population – that makes efficient use of increasingly scarce natural resources, yet safeguards the environment"*. ([www.fao.org/gtos](http://www.fao.org/gtos) )

## ***VIII. Twentieth Anniversary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change***

On 21 March UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon congratulated the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) on its entry into force 20 years ago, and commended it for having *'galvanized the world to seek multilateral solutions to the grave threat of climate change.'* Through the past two decades an infrastructure has been created *'to spur a resilient, low-carbon global economy'*. The world is now challenged to

use this infrastructure ‘ - not only to tackle climate change but to deliver sustainable energy for all, make the air in our cities fit to breathe, generate decent jobs and help eradicate extreme poverty ’ , said the UN Secretary-General , and stressed that all these urgent issues are ‘mutually reinforcing components of the post-2015 development agenda’.

A Climate Summit will take place on 23 September 2014 to which all world leaders are invited, as well as representatives of business, finance, industry, and civil society “to work together for a transformative result”, said UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

The Summit will take place in New York one year before the conclusion of a global climate agreement in 2015 through the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, and aims “to build a solid foundation on which to anchor successful negotiations and sustained progress on the road to reducing emissions and strengthening adaptation strategies”. <http://www.un.org/climatechange/summit2014/>

### ***IX. Quote from the President of the General Assembly’s Message on World Day of Social Justice – 20 February 2014***

***“Our new agenda must use the accomplishments of the past fifteen years as a springboard for further action: it must focus on eradicating extreme poverty and eliminating inequalities... “***

***“Social justice and empowerment are crucial components of that new agenda. We must serve the needs and harness the capacities of all members of our global family, especially women, the young, older persons and persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and the poor and marginalized among us.”***

***“In the period remaining until the 2015 target date for the achievement of the MDGs and in concert with the theme of this year’s fifty-second regular session of the Commission for Social Development – ‘Promoting empowerment of people in achieving poverty eradication, social integration and full employment and decent work for all’ – we must redouble our collective efforts so as to enable us to complete the unfinished business of the MDGs”*** <http://www.ilo.org/global/lang--en/index.htm>

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A newly released publication (5 March 2014). entitled “Beyond Macroeconomic Stability: Structural Transformation and Inclusive Development” explores the link between structural transformation and inclusive development. <http://www.ilo.org/global/publications/lang--en/index.htm>

### ***X. Heartbeat***

Heartbeat is the name of a group of young Israeli and Palestinian musicians who are using the power of music to reach people and create a peaceful dialogue and transform conflict. Since 2007 they have brought Palestinian and Israeli high school students and young people together ‘to talk, listen and make music’.

Their lyrics, in Arabic, Hebrew as well as English, are reflecting issues that are creating tension between people and ask clear and straight questions , such as ‘what’s the Wall

good for’? Do we put physical and psychological walls between each other when we are afraid? Are walls making it easier to alienate us from each other – to hate each other?

Heartbeat was founded by Aaron Shneyer who aimed to bring together young musicians from the Hebrew and Arabic communities as a tool for reaching out to schools, community centres, music venues and workshops with their message that peace and harmony between Israelis and Palestinians is fully possible.

“We believe”, says the Heartbeat team, “that the silent majority of Israelis and Palestinians desperately wants the same thing yet has almost no opportunity to be heard, and we understand that music is an incredibly powerful tool to amplify the voices of the silent majority”

Heartbeat has also performed at a Congressional office building in Washington to share their firm belief that a better future for the Middle East is fully possible.

<http://charterforcompassion.org/node/6987> ...

Music has an amazing ability to connect people, build trust and inspire hope in the darkest of places. Modern, popular music has long been the voice of change all around the world and a powerful means for youth expression and non-violent action. By bringing together young Jewish and Arab musicians and strengthening their voices, we are working to build a global culture of trust, compassion, and respect.

<http://www.jewishexponent.com/heartbeat-concert-israeli-palestinian-youth-musicians>

## ***XI. Global Education and Skills Forum Dubai – March 2014***

This 2<sup>nd</sup> annual Forum, also called the “Davos of Education”, brought together governments, business, civil society and youth leaders with the aim of building bridges between the world of education and the world of work and hoping to show that universal quality education is everyone’s business, because “*it holds the key to shared prosperity, social inclusion and peace*”.

However “*the global learning crisis is holding back all social and economic progress and hurting marginalized girls and women the hardest*”, said Irina Bokova, UNESCO Director-General and one of the key speakers at the event. We need, she added to show the ‘political resolve, innovation and dynamic partnerships to set the world on a sustainable path to growth’.

The meeting was organized in support of the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon’s Education First Initiative and, in the words of Vikas Pota, Varkey GEMS Foundation’s CEO: “*it will challenge the world’s leaders to find real solutions to the most crucial issue of our time: education*”. We are, said Vikas Pota, facing ‘*a ticking time bomb of an entire generation being uneducated or unprepared for a new world of work. There is no time left for talking shops; we need to take decisions that result in real & rapid change.*”

***“I call on world leaders and all involved with education to join this initiative and fulfil the promise to make quality education available to all children, young people and adults. Together, we can empower individuals to transform our world”***

***Ban Ki-moon***

## ***XII. Does Public Education Educate for Credentials or for Life?***

According to the New Oxford Dictionary, the word *educate*, derived from the Latin, *educare* – to lead out, is defined as, “... give intellectual, moral, and social instruction to (someone, especially a child)” (New Oxford Dictionary). And *education*, “ is the process of receiving or giving systematic instruction: a body of knowledge acquired while being educated. (Ibid)

While the definitions emphasise education in a particular subject, an educated person needs more than just knowledge. From this store of information on which the person may draw, understanding what it all means and how it can be used requires abstract thought and judgement to be added.

The emphasis of the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) is on programmes which lead to worthwhile qualifications that lead to employment and a good future. That would put a specific credential above a holistic education of a person as a member of society. It would also seem to be trying to predict which credentials are marketable. More on credentials later.

But, education is much wider than single discipline mastery. As Horace said, “Wisdom is not wisdom when it is derived from books alone.” A large part of an education comes from intangible sources such as peer and tutor interactions covering socially acceptable and ethical behaviour and life-skills. In fact, the latter is often more important as it will last much longer than the facts taught in class. Behaviours which become habits in later life would seem to be much more valuable and important than subject content, but they are not given high priority in secondary or tertiary education.

Education is successful if it creates curiosity in the learner, no matter the age. Curiosity will lead to a lifetime quest to find out more about yourself, others and life in all its magnificent beauty and variety. Society, as a body of individual human beings, is more likely to prosper if each member is well educated. Along with curiosity, creativity and questioning the status quo will lead to improvements and progress. Any opportunity to test thinking and ideas is part of the education process, which can take place anywhere and at any time.

However by using standardisation and national testing, creativity is being squashed. (Robinson, 2013). Schools are not recognising creativity and, “... we are failing to prepare the next generation for the challenges that lie ahead” (Robinson, 2013, para 2). A balance between learning and living is the aim to allow natural talent to be identified and applied. However, the national school curriculum, in UK as well as in NZ, is likely to stifle the creativity of both staff and students. For more on this see Sir Ken Robinson’s TED talk (2006) ‘How Schools Kill Creativity’ at [http://www.ted.com/talks/ken\\_robinson\\_says\\_schools\\_kill\\_creativity](http://www.ted.com/talks/ken_robinson_says_schools_kill_creativity) And also his TED talk (2013) on the US No Child Left Behind Act at [http://www.ted.com/talks/ken\\_robinson\\_how\\_to\\_escape\\_education\\_s\\_death\\_valley](http://www.ted.com/talks/ken_robinson_how_to_escape_education_s_death_valley)

While it is necessary for people to be able to earn an income, by the time the skills needed for the current workforce are taught, the employment scene will have changed and different skills could be needed. Using job training instead of a holistic education

could end up with a generation of human robots. Only the humans might be more difficult to ‘re-programme’ for any new tasks. Already some students at schools and colleges are very reluctant to study anything that will not be tested/assessed, assuming that everything else is ‘useless’.

Humans have a trio of needs – physical, mental and spiritual. Education should be expected to cover all three by catering to different intelligences (Gardner, 2008) and learning styles (Dunn and Dunn, 1993), as well as allowing students to move up Maslow’s hierarchy of needs. Several experiments in a project-based instruction model have been and are being introduced to encourage a more integrated and interrelated approach to learning – away from the single discipline/silo model common in schools. This gives greater opportunities to develop critical thinking skills and experimentation, both vital to producing a well educated member of society, who is able to question and challenge the stated views and assumptions of others, such as journalists and politicians. (Brookfield, 1987). By questioning and looking for alternative ways of thinking gives opportunities to increase one’s knowledge base, leading to greater curiosity.

Being able to work with others and learn from them can improve social interaction and citizenship by gaining a fuller appreciation of current affairs both locally and internationally. With the speed of communications and the ability to travel more easily, everyone has become a global citizen, with a consequent need to be well educated in more than just job skills. More and more jobs will require people to move to different countries leading to the demand for cultural and linguistic skills to complement the technical job skills. Another reason for a good all-round education.

Critical thinking will widen and improve understanding to be able to take full advantage of any educational opportunity which presents itself. It would seem time to give this skill greater prominence.

Michael Staton (2013) suggests, “Credentials are *so* 20<sup>th</sup> century” (Staton, 2013, para 6). Their value has been in question since the Great Recession and they will likely become obsolete to be replaced by alternative methods of showing potential employers ability and skill. When this happens, it will become even more important for each person to be responsible for his/her own lifetime learning in each of the three areas – physical, mental and spiritual. Will they have the requisite skills?

According to the Devil’s Dictionary by Ambrose Bierce,  
education is, “That which discloses to the wise and disguises from the foolish their lack of understanding.”, and,  
understanding is, “A cerebral secretion that enables one having it to know a house from a horse by the roof on the house.” (Bierce, 2003)

Education is for life – not just employment; the ability to enjoy and appreciate the world and our place in it. Is the current educational system doing our young people a dis-service in following political ideological models at the expense growing well educated members of society, able to think critically and follow their curiosity?

Would love to hear your views. Send to Kate Smith at [k\\_smith@clear.net.nz](mailto:k_smith@clear.net.nz)

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### ***XIII. Peacebuilding***

Together with Peacebuilding Commission Chair, Antonio de Aguiar Patriota and UN Development Programme (UNDP) Administrator, Helen Clark, UN Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson appealed to the UN Security Council (19 March) to help shape a more effective UN peacebuilding architecture.

“Peacebuilding lies at the very heart of UN aspirations in countries emerging from conflict”, said Jan Eliasson, and “inclusivity, institution-building and international/regional support are the three key ingredients to long-lasting post-conflict peace”.

The UN Deputy Secretary-General urged that it be remembered that the Peacebuilding Commission is a subsidiary organ of the UN Security Council and ‘*can only be of optimal use if the Council empowers it and utilizes its potential*’. It was his hope that the Council would take advantage of the review of the peacebuilding architecture in 2015 ‘*to shape the kind of Peacebuilding Commission that will be relevant, catalytic and effective, not least from the perspective of the Security Council and, of course, the interests of those States that are affected*’.

With many serious and urgent challenges and conflicts taking place within the borders of several countries Jan Eliasson felt confident that in the future ‘the Governments and people of these countries could gain considerably from an efficient and broadly anchored UN peacebuilding architecture.’ <http://www.un.org/en/peacebuilding/>

### ***XIV. The Ten Principles***

The UN Global Compact urges businesses and companies to ‘embrace, support and enact’ a set of core values within human rights, labour standards, the environment and anti-corruption:

1. Businesses should support and respect the protection of internationally proclaimed human rights, and
2. make sure that they are not complicit in human rights abuses.
3. Businesses should uphold the freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining,
4. the elimination of all forms of forced and compulsory labour,
5. the effective abolition of child labour, and
6. the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation.
7. Businesses should support a precautionary approach to environmental challenges,
8. undertake initiatives to promote greater environmental responsibility, and
9. encourage the development and diffusion of environmentally friendly technologies.
10. Businesses should work against corruption in all its forms, including extortion and bribery.

<http://www.unglobalcompact.org/AboutTheGC/TheTenPrinciples/index.html>

### *XV. 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.