

# *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. Trust***

While leaders of nations, surrounded by discreet armies of secret service personnel, are delivering public statements with promises and assurances, the general state of affairs of peoples and planet are rapidly deteriorating. And in times of increasing upheaval and unrest trust is among the first of casualties; mistrust and uncertainty spreading like a particularly vicious strand of virus through local and global neighbourhoods and relationships, feverish anxiety blurring overheated brains and clouding clarity of thought.

In times like these we have tended to find somebody to blame for the sad state of affairs, and whose duty it therefore is to 'fix' things. There was even a time when the sins of a community were ceremoniously put on a goat's back, the animal then carrying this burden into the wilderness, leaving the community residents to continue their daily routines. While modern societies will scoff at such an ancient method, we still have the tendency to lay the blame anywhere else but at our own doorstep.

However, today there is a growing understanding that we are in fact living and moving within the global 'wilderness', which contains all the unattended and unresolved issues that we have in common. Despite the almost crushing feeling of despair at the magnitude of human suffering and indignities to be faced, there is also a growing sense of the need to take ownership of the general state of affairs; an increasing readiness to work together and to bring about the much needed changes and transformation of old unsustainable habits and attitudes. While war-faring countries and groups are killing people and destroying homes and environments as they squabble over lines drawn in the swirling sand, the heart of humanity is rapidly shedding the numbing sense of fatigue and despair, and waking up to its true – invincible - power. Inherited habits and inhibitions are falling away and allowing for new alliances and groups to emerge in deep recognition of our common humanity.

It can truly be said that we live in watershed times where an aging civilisation, however reluctantly, is having to make way for the new dispensation that the Aquarian Age will bring. Whatever nationality, race, culture or belief we may belong to, whatever our individual circumstances may be, we are being provided with the challenge and the opportunity to choose and decide which way to go.

In his address to the Human Rights Council, 27 February, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, stressed that: "*disregard for human rights is a disease, and it is a disease that is spreading – north, south, east and west*". But human rights form an intrinsic part of all we do and *are*, he said, and urged that we all speak up for human rights '*in an impartial way without double standards*'.

The shockwaves of disturbing news global wide, together with daily doses of perplexing statements from people in power, will surely make us realise – as did the little boy in H.C. Andersen's fairy-tale '*The Emperor's New Clothes*' - that today's many 'emperors' are in fact naked, revealing all! The regular stream of tailor-made words, containing the 'perfect' texture and blend of reassurances of protection and warnings against 'the enemy', is losing their mesmerising hold on us and freeing our capacity to discern facts from fiction.

We realise that it is we who will be responsible for and have the power to heal the world community of the spreading 'disease' of general disregard for human rights; it is we who can and must learn to practice, impartially and without double standards, the principles they hold. It is we who can awaken and nurture into full expression the vision held within

the human heart. It is also we who can help restore and enable the wilderness to reveal its true being in all its wondrous glory.

Will we do so? Yes. We will.

## ***II. World Government Summit***

Emirati City of Dubai, 13 February 2017

There was general agreement at the Summit that 2016 had been a particularly challenging year, which had left deeply troubling, and largely unresolved, issues at the feet of an increasingly complex, troubled, and disunited world community.

In his address at the Summit, the United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres acknowledged that globalisation - 'complete with technological development' - has brought enormous progress, such as a huge increase in wealth, a general improvement in welfare as well as a reduction in 'absolute poverty' worldwide. But it has also contributed to the increase of inequality, he said, underscoring this point during question time by pointing out that, today: 'eight people have as much wealth as half of the world population'. We are also seeing the inability of the 'political establishments' of countries to take care of this inequality and to handle the increasing problems related to the movements of people, migrants and refugees. The linkage that is made between this predicament and terrorism is further adding to the general feeling of insecurity and anxiety.

We are faced with a '*terrible lack of trust*', said the UN Secretary-General; there is a deep rooted lack of trust between countries and also in relation to 'governance in global multilateral institutions'. We live in a world which is '*no longer bipolar, no longer unipolar but it is not yet multipolar*'. Relationships are unclear and unpredictable, and there is an urgent need to agree to address together the root causes of conflict. We need global responses, and global responses need multilateral institutions that are able to play their role. Speaking of the general mistrust in multilateral institutions, the UN Secretary General mentioned the obvious lack of confidence in the Security Council today. There is, he said, a '*clear perception that the Security Council no longer corresponds to the logic of today's world in relation to what the world was after the Second World War, when the Security Council was built*'. It is clear that many international organisations are lacking the efficiency and capacity to respond effectively to the problems that must be faced.

In his role within the UN Secretariat, the Secretary-General mentioned his firm commitment to 'three ways of reform':

*Firstly* to adapt the present UN peace and security strategies and 'operational set-ups' to meet current needs. Today we have 70 to 80 percent of our budget in peacekeeping operations, most of them in areas where there is no peace to keep, he said. If we want '*prevention and sustaining of peace to prevail, we need to link peace and security with sustainable and inclusive development*', and we must ensure that this, together with the improvement of the human rights situation worldwide, will '*guarantee that the root causes of conflict are addressed*'.

*Secondly* the Secretary-General mentioned current rules and regulations which were making it difficult to act effectively and could make one believe that '*they were conceived to paralyze the institution*'! We need, he said, '*to create a win-win confidence building capacity among different member states – Western Group, G77, and all others –*

*to make them understand that it is in the benefit of everybody to have a UN that is more nimble, more decentralised, with much more simplified procedures’.*

*Thirdly* was mentioned the need to reform the UN development system: We must recognise that we are still fragmented, still unable to fully coordinate our action, and the accountability in the UN system needs to be strengthened.

To reform the UN development system; to strengthen coordination and accountability, and to make all organizations work together to support governments in implementing the different crucial objectives that were approved, such as the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement, and different other aspects of international cooperation, are areas in which the reform of the UN is crucial. The UN Secretary-General stated: *‘Reform at country level, reform in the way countries deal with each other and the way international organizations operate, reform in our multilateral governance system and development system are crucial to re-establishing trust’*, and stressed: ***“Without trust I don’t think we will be able to address the very difficult challenges we face today.”***

In response to a question concerning the influence that a powerful country could have on decision-making within the United Nations, the UN Secretary-General responded that it is very important to underline that nobody in the UN represents a government or a country: *“People in the United Nations have just one area of loyalty they need to respect – it is the United Nations Charter”*. The UN needs to be able to act with impartiality in all circumstances and cannot be biased in favour of anybody.

In response to the last question, ‘Are you optimistic going forward?’ António Guterres responded by quoting Jean Monnet, one of the fathers of the European Union, whose response to the same question was: *“I am not optimistic, I am not pessimistic, I am just determined”*.

<https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2017-02-13/secretary-general%E2%80%99s-remarks-world-government-summit-qa-delivered>

### ***III. ‘Stop Dividing Humanity into Us and Them’***

The urgent appeal to world leaders from the outgoing UN Deputy Secretary-General, Jan Eliasson, before leaving office was, *“to stop dividing humanity into ‘us and them”*. In an interview with UN News, 31 December 2016 (by Ramesh Jaura), he expanded on the reason behind his appeal, saying that he was deeply worried, *“about this trend of identifying yourself in contrast to others, rather than together with others”*. This ‘us and them’ sentiment feeds polarisation and division which can make us more receptive to fearmongering and even selling hatred.

What is needed is hope, and the sense of togetherness. Togetherness is the most basic message, he said, which *‘translates itself into how we, in the future, deal with migration and refugees’*, and also how we are and will be dealing with root causes to end all conflicts. He urges us all to realise that *‘there is an element of spirituality needed in what we do’*.

In his acknowledgement of his successor, Amina Mohammed (Nigeria) he saw her as one of the most important architects behind the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). She, like himself, had had useful experiences from working within their respective governments (Sweden and Nigeria) which he believed she, like himself, would find most useful. Amina Mohammed worked for three successive administrations in Nigeria.

*‘Learn how to see. Realize that everything connects to everything else.’*

Leonardo da Vinci

### ***III. The Sustainable Development Goals: A Universal Path to transform our World***

When the President of the 71st Session of the UN General Assembly, H.E. Mr. Peter Thomson, took his oath of office (13 September 2016), he made a firm commitment to push forward the implementation of each of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda. These Goals, grounded in the principle of ‘leaving no-one behind’, were adopted by all 193 Member States (25 September 2015) for the purpose of *‘eradicating poverty and fostering shared prosperity; tackling inequalities; advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls; making the world safer and more just; combating climate change and protecting our natural environment’*.

In his address to the Chamber (8 November), the UNGA President elaborated further on how he – under the theme ‘The Sustainable Development Goals: A Universal Push to Transform our World’ - would strive to strengthen the momentum for SDG implementation through calling upon *“all actors – globally, regionally, nationally and at community levels – to view our world through the lens of sustainability, human dignity and equity”*.

Assisting him in this endeavour, a SDG Implementation team has been appointed within his Office led by Special Advisor Ambassador Dessima Williams, experts from the UN Secretariat, from UNDP, World Bank Group, UNFPA, UNICEF and Member States. The appointment of Ambassador Macharia Kamau as Special Envoy on SDG Implementation and Climate Change will provide expert assistance and global advocacy.

In his briefing, 8 November 2016, the UNGA President outlines 6 areas which in particular will be the focus of the efforts. Among these were:

- *aligning increased private investments and capital with SDGs, including through ‘greening’ the financial system and its regulatory mechanism;*
- *convening a joint meeting with ECOSOC on global economic governance;*
- *mobilising young innovators including on the margins of the ECOSOC Forum on Science Technology and Invention, and*
- *further foster work on South-South and Triangular cooperation.*

In his letter of 10 November (letter in Arabic, Russian, Chinese, French, Spanish as well as English) to all Heads of Government of the Member States of the United Nations, the UNGA President outlines the focus chosen for the UNGA’s 71st session and underscores the importance of the involvement of Youth for realising the Sustainable Development Goals. The following quotes are from this letter:

*“Since today’s youth will be the inheritors of the success or failure of the Sustainable Development Goals, their ownership and commitment to the Goals will be critical to success. For this to be so, they must be taught to embrace the 17 Goals as fundamental to their future well-being and sustainability.”*

*“In pursuit of this high purpose, I am writing to you and every Head of Government of the Member States of the United Nations, with the request that national efforts are made to educate young people on the vital importance of the Sustainable Development Goals.*

*If every school curriculum in the world incorporates the Sustainable Development Goals, every school teaches them, and every young person on the planet is made aware of them as rights and responsibilities, the world will stand a very good chance of attaining the Goals by 2030.”*

For full text, see: <http://www.un.org/pga/71/wp-content/uploads/sites/40/2015/08/Letter-to-Heads-of-State-and-Government-from-UN-PGA-Educating-Youth-about-SDGs-Nov-2016-EN.pdf>

<http://www.un.org/pga/71/2016/11/08/sdg-implementation-strategy-briefing-of-member-states-by-the-president-of-the-general-assembly/>

#### ***IV. The Partnership of “Ethics in Action” Multireligious Collaboration for Positive Peace - New York, 21 February 2017***

Religions for Peace (RfP) Co-Presidents, Honorary Presidents, and International Trustees were among the many leaders from other religious traditions (Buddhist, Christian, Jain, Hindu, Jewish, and Muslim) who gathered at the Vatican, 2-3 February 2017, to find ways in which the world’s religious communities can guide ‘the world back from the brink and reality of war’, toward a positive peace ‘rooted in the unbreakable link between unfolding human dignity and advancing shared well-being’. Here, participants shared experiences on the positive role that grassroots initiatives can play in easing the tension between religiously and ethnically divided communities and contribute to mutual respect and understanding.

Ethics in Action is a partnership, co-hosted by the Chancellor of Pontifical Academics of Sciences and Social Sciences, the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network, Religions for Peace, and the University of Notre Dame. In the ‘Ethics in Action Peace Statement’ is outlined their commitment:

*“to mobilize the scientific, academic, and international community to spread the message that religion should not be instrumentalized and manipulated in the name of political agendas. Rather, the religious leaders are committed to reducing the fear in their communities, combating the lies that accompany the drumbeats of war, and actively promoting the virtues of positive peace and the institutions in their communities that embody and enact these virtues. This must include tackling the spread of hatred and violence via the internet and social media”.*

The Statement further offers specific proposals, both in terms of advocacy and their own engagement. Under the heading of ‘Advocacy’ are:

- the request to ‘*the UN Secretary-General to put the issue of religion and peace on the UN Security Council agenda during 2017 in support of global peace and sustainable development*’;
- to ‘*devise and implement a media-savvy, cross-cultural, inclusive strategy to change the narrative about Islam in the United States and Europe, and minority communities in Islamic-majority countries*’, and to
- ‘*push for full implementation of the Paris Agreement, and raise awareness of the links between climate change and conflict.*’

Among proposals to own engagements are, to:

- ‘*widely promote the virtue of non-violent conflict resolution*’
- ‘*work with foundations to support grassroots inter-religious initiatives in conflict-ridden multi-religious communities*’, and to
- ‘*develop and disseminate through religious networks and Ethics in Action education curriculum to promote the culture of peace.*’

The global Religions for Peace network comprises a World Council of senior religious leaders from all regions of the world; six regional inter-religious bodies and more than ninety national ones; and also the Global Women of Faith Network and Global Interfaith Youth Network. 777 United Nations Plaza I, New York, NY 10017 USA I Tel: 212 687-2163 I Fax: 212 983-0098 (<http://www.rfp.org/splash-page.html>)

**"In a gentle way, each of us has the capacity to shake the world."**

Mahatma Gandhi

## ***VI. International Women's Day 2017***

### ***'Women in the Changing World of Work: Planet 50-50 by 2030'***

At the official commemorations of the International Women's Day, taking place at the UN Headquarters in New York, the UN General Assembly President, H.E. Peter Thomson, said that, although positive developments have been taking place regarding the promotion and protection of women's and children's human rights, let us acknowledge that *'this progress has often been slow, fragile and uneven'*. If governments and other stakeholders are serious about achieving a Planet 50-50 by 2030, *'specific action must be taken now to accelerate the realisation of gender equality'*.

In her message the UN Women Executive Director, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, agreed with the above statement and stressed that we do want to construct a different world of work for women. To achieve this will require an expansion of decent work and employment opportunities, she stressed, and also governments' involvement in promoting *'women's participation in economic life, the support of important collectives like trade unions, and the voices of women themselves in framing solutions to overcome current barriers'*. <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2017/2/statement-ed-phumzile-iwd-2017#sthash.N3wxUmVX.dpuf>

## ***VII. Youth Create Gender Equality – Economic Empowerment in the Changing World of Work***

The above inspiring statement was the title of the Youth Forum, hosted by the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), which took place at the UN Headquarters in New York on the 11-12 March 2017.

The UN Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy Executive Director of UN Women, Lakshmi Puri, opened the CSW61 Youth Forum by declaring: 'You are the leaders of today'! Welcoming all the young women and men present that had come from over 85 countries and were filling the room to capacity she assured them, that millions of youths around the world would also be reached and 'engaged' via webcast and social media.

This is your forum, she told the Youths; you have made it open and inclusive, and made *'a thousand flowers of ideas, aspirations, motivations and actions bloom'*. However, we also need to acknowledge the engagement of many generations – people of a certain age like me – who are providing *'the intergenerational combustion that it needs to blast off into space'*. Your presence here speaks of the commitment you have made to achieving gender equality and actively participating in the 'key processes' of our changing world. Lakshmi Puri acknowledged the many challenges ahead; with Youth unemployment reaching 'epic' proportions, the opportunities for young women to find decent work and productive employment could be slim; the realisation of their human rights and gender equality in the world at work likely to continue to be an uphill struggle. However, our

world of work is changing fast, she said, and these changes offer opportunities for all, including young women and girls. Never before has the world experienced such ‘dynamic changes in technologies, economies and societies’, she added, and you, young people, are in a unique position to use innovation and technology to: *‘disrupt, to recalibrate, to upend, to challenge inequalities, and be the force that transforms processes and create gender equal societies’*.

Acknowledging that gaps in education have begun to close, she reminded the meeting that *‘education alone is not enough to knock down gender-based discrimination and violence in the world of work’*. Within the labour market women are still kept out of some jobs and segregated into others – often the lowest paying ones, lacking social protection and labour rights. The global gender pay gap is 23 percent.

Year 2015 was a landmark year of ‘ground-breaking commitments’ made, not least for the advancement of gender equality, said Lakshmi Puri; Goal 5 in the ‘Transforming our world: 2030 Agenda of the Sustainable Development’ offers detailed and universally agreed upon guidelines on how we can together achieve gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls.\*) Our campaign ‘Planet 50-50 by 2030’ is a reminder of the urgency of accelerated action, full and effective implementation and significantly increased resources’ she said, and ***‘countless studies show that investing in women, young women and girls has a ‘multiplier effect on poverty eradication, productivity as well as sustainable growth’***. Today, more than a year and a half after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, let us ‘remain cognizant of the road that still lies ahead’. Governments, decision makers, the United Nations, *all* of us are ‘accountable for addressing the structural barriers which affect the interests, talents, and intellectual capital of girls and young women’.

Lakshmi Puri concluded by telling the Youths that “your voice matters. Use it!”  
<http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2017/3/speech-ded-puri-at-csw61-youth-forum-opening#sthash.fvp60fry.dpuf>  
\*) [http://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E)

### ***VIII. High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development July 2017***

A high-level political forum on sustainable development will convene under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council from 10 to 19 of July this year, and the theme for the forum will be: ‘Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world’. The Forum will focus in particular on, and review in depth, the following Sustainable Development Goals:

Goal 1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere

Goal 2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture

Goal 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

Goal 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

Goal 9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation,

Goal 14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development, and

Goal 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development.

The Forum will include a three-day ministerial meeting from 17 to 19 July.  
<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/hlpf>

## ***IX. The 34<sup>th</sup> Session of the Human Rights Council Geneva, February 2017***

In his opening statement the UN human rights chief, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, acknowledged the presence of the Heads of State and Government, the UN Secretary-General, the UNGA President, Ministers as well as the many Colleagues and Friends, and then reminded the meeting that - just a few hundred yards away from here - *'the League of Nations was dissolved, finally and formally, on 8 April 1946'*. The League of Nations was not only stymied by military aggressions, he said, but also *'undermined from the outset by rejection of the principle of non-discrimination'*.

By contrast the authors of the United Nations Charter had made sure that human rights was placed in the Preamble of the UN Charter, in which 'we, the peoples of the United Nations', made the commitment to saving future generations from the scourge of war, *through reaffirming our 'faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small.'* Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein believes that it is an important point for us realise that, at the time of signing (26 June 1945), the peoples of the world had experienced *'killing on a scale hitherto unknown to humans'*, with cities across the world *'pulverized and still smoking'*, bearing witness to *'immense human malevolence and stupidity'*.

It was on this backdrop that the universal respect of human rights was confirmed as an indispensable condition for achieving peace between peoples, cultures and nations. And through the years the human rights principles have slowly found their way into constitutional and domestic law of states and gradually changed the way we human beings relate to one another within and across all borders. Modern means of transportation and communication have made us realise the indivisibility of humanity. The Human Rights Commissioner suggests that *'of all the great post-war achievements, it is this assertion of the universality of rights in human rights law that may be the most noteworthy.'* It is only when these rights are no longer upheld that we realise how important they are to the individual as well as to every community.

People today know of the need to respect the dignity and worth of every human being: 'Ever-growing numbers of people now know that torture is prohibited in all circumstances. That arbitrary arrest and detention, the denial of due process, repression of peaceful protests and free speech – including the role of the press – are violations of rights'. People know that they have a right to development, to decent food, water, health, housing, education and more. And that: *"without a commitment to fundamental human rights, to the dignity and worth of the human person and to the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small, our world will become chaos, misery and warfare."*

Referring to the unprecedented marches of 21 January this year, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein believed their essential message was about standing together for the human rights of women and all human beings. These marches delivered a clear message to those political actors *'who, as in the days of the League, threaten the multilateral system or intend to withdraw from parts of it'*. We, the peoples, will not sit idly by, he said. Our rights, the rights of others and the very future of our planet cannot, and must not, be thrown aside by *'reckless political profiteers'*.

*‘When humans understand fully they have rights, it is next to impossible to make them un-know it’*, said Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein.

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=21229&LangID=E#sthash.rWc8DYRa.dpuf>

## ***X. Whanganui River Recognised in Law as a Living Entity***

After more than a century-long struggle, led by the local Maori tribe of Whanganui, (on the west coast of North Island of New Zealand), the Whanganui River was granted the same legal rights as a human being on the 16 March 2017.

*“We can trace our genealogy to the origins of the universe”* said Gerrard Albert, the lead negotiator for the local Whanganui iwi, *“and therefore rather than us being masters of the natural world, we are part of it”*. We consider the river an ancestor and always have, he said, and, instead of treating it from the perspective of ownership and management, we can now relate to the river as a living entity. This new status of the river means that if anybody harmed or abused it, the law now sees no differentiation between harming the tribe or harming the river because ‘they are one and the same’.

This should not be seen as an ‘anti-development, or anti-economic use of the river’ said Gerrard, but as a resolve to start from the point of seeing the river as a living being, *‘and then consider its future from that central belief’*. Gerrard stressed that *‘all Māori tribes regarded themselves as part of the universe, at one with and equal to the mountains, the rivers and the seas.’*

As Chris Finlayson, the minister for the Treaty of Waitangi negotiations remarked, the river will from now on have its own legal identity ‘with all the corresponding rights, duties and liabilities of a legal person’. Some people will see this as ‘pretty strange’, he said, but it is ‘no stranger than family trusts, or companies, or incorporated societies’. The river will be represented by two officials, one from the Whanganui iwi and the other from the Crown’.

A Maori saying: ‘Ko au te awa, ko te awa ko au’, confirms: ‘I am the river and the river is me’.

[https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/mar/16/new-zealand-river-granted-same-legal-rights-as-human-being?CMP=share\\_btn\\_link](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/mar/16/new-zealand-river-granted-same-legal-rights-as-human-being?CMP=share_btn_link)

## ***XI. United Nations Environment’s Seed Capital Assistance Fund***

The Seed Capital Assistance Facility (SCAF) describes its vision as to *‘increase the availability of investment for early-stage development of low-carbon projects in developing countries’*.

In regions, such as sub-Saharan Africa where 600 million people lack access to electricity, *‘clean energy has the potential to greatly improve quality of life, economic development and environmental sustainability.’* While entrepreneurs have the power to transform markets, SCAF will provide that seed financing and enterprise assistance, which is so necessary for early-stage clean energy project developers and entrepreneurs to get started, and thus filling the gap between the ‘lack of bankable projects’ and available finance.

The Blue Circle is a windfarm project developer, who received co-funding support for developments of three projects in Vietnam, Cambodia and Indonesia, where wind production is still in its infancy. The Blue Circle CEO acknowledged SCAF as a *'great instrument that helps us seize opportunities we would otherwise find difficult to take'*.  
<http://www.scaf-energy.org> / <http://www.scaf-energy.org/contact>

## ***XII. Ocean Conference***

The full title for this Ocean Conference is: *"High-level UN Conference to Support the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development"*. It will coincide with the World Oceans Day, and be co-hosted by the Governments of Fiji and Sweden, 5-9 June 2017.

Giving a lecture at the *University of the South Pacific* (USP) in his hometown of Suva (16 March), UN General Assembly President H.E. Peter Thomson spoke of the forthcoming Ocean Conference and expressed his hope that it would become a game changer, which would *'reverse the decline in the health of our ocean for people, planet and prosperity'* I also hope that it will be *'solution-focused with engagement from all'*. For the full week of the Conference, *'the whole of the UN campus will be turned over to addressing the Ocean'*, he said.

For Pacific Small Island Developing States, like Fiji, our culture is inherently enmeshed in the Ocean, said the UNGA President; with the Ocean making up almost 98 percent of the area of our region and serving as an essential source of our food security and well-being, *'the stakes could not be higher for the success of the Ocean Conference'*. Throughout the globe *'unrestrained human activity has placed the Ocean's health into serious jeopardy'*, said the UNGA President; marine pollution is cluttering the Ocean, and the equivalent of a garbage truck of plastic is dumped into the ocean every minute of the day. To this sad state of affairs must be added the degrading of coastal ecosystems due to overdevelopment, the rising of sea levels and run-off from agricultural and industrial activities on land. And *'coral reefs around the world are in dire straits. Rising CO2 levels in the atmosphere are causing ocean acidification and ocean warming with very serious consequences for marine life.'* To all this can be added the woes of overfishing, the IUU ('illegal, unreported and unregulated') fishing, as well as the lack of high seas governance, and *'you'll appreciate that we have much to do to reverse the cycle of decline in which the ocean is caught'*.

And this, ladies and gentlemen, is where you come in, said the UN General Assembly President. While the high-level meeting in New York might feel a long way away, the aim of the Ocean Conference is to rally all people, whether young or old, and all stakeholders both large and small, to forge new and innovative partnerships, and to make voluntary commitments for action to help save our ocean. While national governments have primary responsibility for driving achievement of the SDGs, the United Nations, as well as international financial institutions, civil society, the private sector, academic and scientific communities, and grassroots organizations must all work together.

Furthermore, new models of sustainable financing and finding innovative new ways of running economies, of doing business, and of managing labour markets shall also need to be developed, based on the principles of equality and sustainability, he said, stressing that *'each one of us has choices to make'*.

As young people, you have an especially important contribution to make, the University students were told: *“In an era where technology and innovation are driving social and economic change at a pace and scale never seen before, the ideas, creativity, and commitment to succeed of young people, can indeed have an exponential impact on the transformation of our world for the better.”*

<http://www.un.org/pga/71/2017/03/16/lecture-at-university-of-the-south-pacific/>  
For Ocean Conference information see: <https://oceanconference.un.org/about>

### ***XIII. 2017 – The International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development***

Why do people travel? And, where do they go? Their own country, or overseas?

There are many reasons, including visiting family or friends living overseas (or in a different part of the country), taking a vacation, experiencing something new, exploring ‘new’ cultures, getting to understand different ways of life, pursuing interests or study and also as part of their work obligations. The importance of tourism can be seen from the UN Secretary General’s comment, that: *“Every day, more than three million tourists cross international borders. Every year, almost 1.2 billion people travel abroad”*.

Tourism covers any travel away from one’s home, which can include international travel. In either case, the same basic costs and benefits will apply to some degree.

There is much discussion about the ‘costs’ of tourism, including the contribution to greenhouse gases by air travel as well as a general consumption of scarce resources. It is also of concern that too many tourists can destroy the very things which drew them there in the first place, as well as placing an undue burden on the local economy and infrastructure. However, there are very measurable ‘benefits’ to locals as well as tourists. The designation of 2017 as the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development can be seen as a major element in working toward the success of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. To play their part in achieving the SDGs, tourists may wish to consider the following: Be aware of the working conditions of local workers in your holiday accommodation (Goal 8 which seeks to promote decent work); be aware of water use or packaging of mementos (Goal 12 which seeks to ensure sustainable consumption and production); consider the effect of your cruise ship on the oceans and marine life (Goal 14 which seeks to preserve marine resources); by being exposed to different cultural values and habits allows a greater understanding and respect for each other’s differences (Goal 16 which deals with peace and justice). More information on this can be found on the UN World Tourism Organisation website, <http://icr.unwto.org/content/tourism-and-sdgs>, which contains a wealth of detail on tourism in all its facets and is well worth a visit.

Getting the balance right will mean that tourism can continue to provide benefits to all in a sustainable way and may even lead to positive future improvements, such as mutual understanding and respect, over time.

So, what benefits can be gained from tourism? The more obvious are economic in nature, such as increasing employment and income for the destinations. There is a large and varied supply chain involved – travel, transport, accommodation, retailing, advertising, promotion, social media – for established and new enterprises, both domestically and internationally. This will have positive consequential effects to help

eradicate poverty and improve well-being. It will allow people in developing countries to share the natural beauty of their people and environment, culture and history with others. Up to 58% of all international travellers by 2030 are expected to visit Asia, Latin America, Central and Eastern Europe, the Middle East and Africa. Bear in mind that tourism benefits are not confined to exotic destinations – they apply equally to exploring one’s own country.

It is also becoming very obvious that people are seeking different ways of enjoying their travel. Instead of the traditional, packaged, one-size-fits-all style of coach trips or huge ocean liner cruises, many people want to have an authentic experience of the local people and environment, ranging from adventure tourism, freedom camping or boutique B & B accommodation. These provide opportunities for more economic growth while reducing the pressure on finite resources.

However, there are other, less tangible benefits to tourism. When people meet and get to know each other, they are better able to understand and value each other’s cultural outlook, life style and way of thinking. This will give a much greater appreciation of sustainable practices which they can implement when travelling and at home, and thus contribute to a more peaceful co-existence for all life on the planet. New approaches to travel and artistic creations such as art works and photography, will allow experiences to be shared to educate and inform others.

Many UN institutions and departments are heavily involved in the promotion of the International Year as well as the Sustainable Development Goals. Perhaps it is by this overall guidance and emphasis on education, that the sustainable nature of tourism can be appreciated. But the people’s movement for the UN – the United Nations Associations (UNAs) – can play an important part, too.

Recently our local branch of UNA NZ partnered with Peace Through Unity to organise an event at which the manager in charge of tourism for the local District Council spoke on the topic of: “*The International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development: how this affects our local community and environment*”. She included many of the ideas discussed above, but on a local level. She emphasised that attention was being given to the balance needed between attracting more tourists to enhance the local economy and providing the resources necessary for their enjoyment and possible return. Visitors to Whanganui/Wanganui come from all over and throughout the year. We welcome both fellow New Zealanders and those from overseas.

Why don’t you come and visit with us – let us show you around ‘our town’, sustainably!

Kate Smith, UNA NZ branch president and co-worker for PTU. Contact [k\\_smith@clear.net.nz](mailto:k_smith@clear.net.nz)

#### ***XIV. Nowruz***

For more than 3,000 years Nowruz has signified the arrival of spring, as well as the traditional Iranian new year holiday; a day of celebration in which people of many different cultures, religions and languages throughout western, central and southern Asia, the Balkans and other regions, have been coming together to share traditions and rituals, passed from generation to generation, in a day of ‘togetherness, tolerance, harmony and joy’.

Since 2009, Nowruz has been inscribed on the UNESCO Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity as a festivity of rich diversity promoting peace and solidarity across regions and generations. In her message on the occasion of the

International Day of Nowruz (21 March) Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO, says that: *'At a time when violent extremism seeks to destroy diversity and freedoms, Nowruz is a reminder of the power of culture and heritage to build resilient and sustainable societies'*. Irina Bokova concludes her message by urging us all to *'embrace the values of Nowruz and be inspired by its universal message of peace solidarity'*.  
<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002475/247567e.pdf>  
<http://holidaysofyear.com/international-day-of-nowruz/>

## ***XV. The Human Development Report***

At the launch of the 2016 'Human Development for Everyone' Report (Stockholm), Helen Clark stressed that ever since the first report (1990) the powerful idea that **'people are the real wealth of nations'** has been the core driver of the human development work and initiatives, and has put people at the centre of development, *'both as its drivers and its beneficiaries'*.

This year's report, *'Human Development for Everyone'* is highlighting those who have been left behind by development progress over the past 25 years, as well as how such exclusion can be overcome. The Human Development Index which accompanies each report provides indicators for income, education, and health status report to offer a more 'balanced picture of progress than measuring by GDP per capita alone'. The 2030 Agenda is also committed to 'leaving no one behind', she noted, and clearly aims to *'advance all three strands of sustainable development – the economic, the social, and the environment – simultaneously'*. For this goal to be realised it is essential to build and sustain the 'foundations for the peaceful, just, and inclusive societies'.

Helen Clark highlighted three 'key messages' of the report, first of all pointing out that *'averages disguise inequalities'*. She went on to explain that, although the Human Development Index, since 1990, has shown substantial progress in every region across education attainment, health status and income levels... *'when one looks beneath the averages, it is clear that a significant number of lives have been scarcely touched by that progress'*. Certain groups, including women and girls, rural populations, persons with disabilities, ethnic minorities, indigenous peoples, migrants and refugees, older people and others, face disadvantages which are multidimensional, she said, and those born into disadvantaged families are more likely to suffer disadvantages themselves.

Further to this: *'those who have been systematically excluded often face deep and persistent barriers, which are embedded in laws and local norms, resulting in unequal access to economic resources and political participation.'* They are also more vulnerable to the impacts of shocks and crises, she added.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> key message urges that: national statistical systems need to collect *'disaggregated data across a wider range of socio-economic indicators'*, to ensure human development for everyone, adding *'even gender-disaggregated data is in short supply in many countries'*. The report recommends that a broader view of development, which - along with established goals such as health and education – will include 'voice and empowerment'. Both these are objectives of human development and a powerful means which can ensure that *'all groups are represented at the table when national priorities are being set'*.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> key message calls for global institutional reforms which will support ‘better regulation of global markets, governance of multilateral institutions, and strengthening global civil society...’.

Among the national policy recommendations, included in the report, is mentioned the ‘**The Global Deal**’ - a global initiative, championed by Prime Minister Stefan Löfven of Sweden, with the objective of : ‘jointly addressing the challenges in the global labour market and enabling all people to benefit from globalisation’ .

<http://www.theglobaldeal.com/about/>

In concluding her address at the launch of the Human Development Report, the out-going Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme, wanted to emphasise the ‘optimism’ of the report, assuring the reader that ‘*human development for everyone is not a dream, it is attainable*’, and that countries such as Sweden were inspirational in their commitment to ‘equitable development’. The Report, launched today, will show how the human development approach ‘supports the achievement of the broader 2030 Agenda and a more peaceful and equitable world.’

<http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/presscenter/speeches/2017/02/27/helen-clark-speech-at-the-high-level-briefing-on-the-partnership-to-support-national-human-rights-institutions-on-a-complementary-approach-to-working-across-the-un-charter-for-agenda-2030.html>

## ***XVI. 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.