

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. Leadership

It could be argued that the recent landslide win by Hamas over Fatah has brought another of today's urgent issues to the fore – namely that of leadership.

From consistently denying the existence of Israel as a state, opposing with every means the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories, boycotting the first Palestinian parliamentary elections and then – in early 2005 – proclaiming cease fire, Hamas proceeds to winning the January 2006 Palestinian parliamentary election.

Having lived for decades in an atmosphere of violence, trauma and tension and strong political pressure from forces outside their territories, the Palestinian peoples have spoken and made their choice. Under the watchful eyes of independent international election monitoring democracy was born in this conflict-ridden area of the world.

In the midst of rampant corruption and suffering, and in the face of predictable reactions to their choice of government from Israel and others, the people of this Islamic nationhood, women and men alike, are taking the first tentative steps in a new direction – towards democracy.

Democracy, ideally 'government by all people', is necessarily a long process of transferring the responsibility of leadership to the peoples of the world. Like emperors and kings in the past we too have been using, misusing and abusing the power that the freedom to dictate has extended to us. And although helping the world to rid itself of old social barriers and class distinctions, democracy itself cannot prevent us from repeating the old habits of separative, selfish and destructive behaviour. In the increasing number of nations today which are ruled by democratically elected governments, the deep divide between the rich and the poor has nevertheless continued to widen, and the ancient habits of greed and corruption are still sowing seeds of mistrust between peoples, communities and nations.

All the same, democracy has opened a window of opportunity for an altogether new kind of leadership. Despite the chaos and confusion of seemingly conflicting interests, and despite the individual or corporate struggle for power and position, we, men and women throughout the world are – more than ever – capable of shouldering the responsibility that true leadership will demand.

Slowly and tentatively democracies are emerging out of war zones around the world as the peoples of the land are beginning to cooperate and to make choices regarding their common future.

Democracy has challenged us individual human beings to step out of the shadows of the past and, in the light of a new day, to recognise our entire human family - in all its diversity - as a whole.

The Hamas candidate, Jamila Shanti, elected mainly by the Palestinian women, declares that her main aim will be to help restore and rebuild the homes, the education, the health and above all the spirit of the people in the country.

Let us all follow her lead.

II. A Culture of Peace

There is really nothing as strong, as dynamic and irresistible as an idea whose time has come. Despite every possible obstacle, from inertia or ridicule to opposition, it pushes – in its own time – through the hardest crust into the light.

An awakening understanding of the interconnectedness of all things and an increasingly inclusive sense of family is appearing within and throughout the entire world community. We can no longer ignore that we are part of a greater, living and evolving, whole.

The spirit encapsulated in the Preamble of the UN Charter is coming alive and reverberating within the hearts of us women and men of all nations. And the pressure is felt everywhere for the need to build together a new civilization and a new culture that acknowledges, respects and celebrates all cultures, and reveres all life.

In October 1999 the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace (A/RES/ 53/243) which calls on all peoples and all governments to work together for the realization of a culture of peace and “*adherence to the principles of freedom, justice, democracy, tolerance, solidarity, cooperation, pluralism, cultural diversity, dialogue and understanding at all levels of society and among nations*”.

Throughout the world people are heeding the call and reaching out beyond their own particular groups to add their special skills and knowledge to that of others in a mutual endeavour to transform a culture of conflict into one of peace and non-violence.

In the beginning of the new millennium the idea of a Ministry or Department of Peace began to take shape. Among the individuals pioneering this idea were US Democrat Dennis Kucinich, supported by many groups and individuals throughout the United States, and Diane Basterfield in the United Kingdom, who succeeded in gaining considerable interest and support from the public as well as some members of Parliament.

Subsequently the first People’s Summit for Departments of Peace took place in London in October 2005 and the next Summit will be hosted by the Canadian Working Group for a Federal Department of Peace in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada, 21-22 June 2006.

The Ministry/Department of Peace initiative is spreading to many countries including Japan, Romania, Australia, and also New Zealand.

In 2003 Operation Peace through Unity (OPTU) wrote to the Prime Minister of New Zealand to inform the Government of the Ministry for Peace initiatives abroad and ask for their thoughts on this matter. The initial response was that the Government saw no immediate need for such a new department/ministry. But the door was not firmly shut.

In December 2005, OPTU revisited the issue with a proposal, outlining our thoughts, and the basic principles behind it, and inviting the thoughts, advice and involvement of others within the community.

A New Zealand Ministry for Peace, established as an instrument for the creation of a culture of peace:

With globalisation bringing the challenge for change and the opportunity for transformation to all societal structures and to all relationships globalwide, the issue of governance, leadership and sovereignty is brought into focus.

New actors, such as transnational corporations, are wielding power and influence, which can and do at times affect the decision-making of sovereign states. The increasing influence of international non-governmental organizations who – although not elected to do so – are, on behalf of the general public, taking issues which are of common concern to the governments and to the United Nations.

The struggle for power and influence, for a fair deal, or simply for survival, together with the deepening understanding of the interdependence and interconnectedness of all on the planet, have challenged us to realize that each one of us is responsible to a degree for the state of affairs of the world; it is we people who – at all levels of society – will need to be the bringers of change and transformation.

The first article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights has restored sovereignty to the individual human being: *”All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.”*

In our hearts and in our hands lies the future civilization.

The primary aim of a Ministry for Peace within the New Zealand Government would be acting as an instrument for the building of a culture of peace in accordance with the guidelines of the UN Declaration and Programme of Action for a Culture of Peace, through:

- 1. identifying root-causes of conflict, disharmony and hostility within and between peoples, cultures and nations;*
- 2. actively promoting the employment of conflict-resolution, mediation, negotiation and other peacebuilding/peacemaking skills, and encouraging that these skills become common practice;*
- 3. acting as a focal point for comprehensive, consistent and constructive cooperation and consultation between government (and its various departments) and interest groups within the various parts of society (education, health; environment, industry, unions, science, arts, media, police, military, volunteers, local government etc.) ensuring that the legislative process of formulating any specific law takes into account its effect on the community in its entirety;*
- 4. forming working partnerships with international institutions and co-workers for the building of a culture of peace worldwide;*
- 5. keeping the government and the general public aware of the UN resolutions to which our Government has committed itself and us all to implement.*

The future world community structures will, I believe, come to resemble more a living, breathing, continuously evolving organism than that of an organization as today. All of its parts will know their rightful place within the whole, serving the whole.

‘To me the most urgent problem of our time is the problem of discovering a way of overcoming evil without becoming another form of evil in the process’.

Laurens van de Post

III. Peacebuilding Commission

On 19 January 2006, at the United Nations headquarters in New York, the DPI/NGO Section held a briefing updating non-governmental organizations (NGOs) on the new Peacebuilding Commission. The Commission was one of the main reform items of the 2005 World Summit Outcome document and the first to be actually realized. It was established by the General Assembly on 20 December 2005 and its main task will be to assist countries emerging from conflict to achieve sustainable peace.

Distinguished speakers for the morning’s event were: Anna-Karin Eneström, Deputy Chef de Cabinet, Office of the President of the General Assembly; Bruce Jones, Co-director, Center on International Cooperation; and Robert Orr, Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Planning, Executive Office of the Secretary-General, who joined the briefing later. The panel discussion and the Q and A session, which followed, covered such topics as: the Commission’s mandate, negotiations leading up to the establishment of this new advisory body and current developments in making it operational.

Anna-Karin Eneström related that *all* Member States agreed that a Peacebuilding Commission was a good idea--especially the African States. She noted that the final outcome of the document involved many compromises and that every word was weighed very carefully. Differences of opinion arose between Member States on how they wanted the Commission to work regarding its membership and the relationship between the Peacebuilding Commission, Security Council, Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), and other bodies of the UN. The new Peace Commission believes it will provide a necessary link between the Security Council (security issues) and ECOSOC (economic and social development issues), and will facilitate coordination between *all* parties involved—namely, the country, or countries, in question, other UN bodies and donors, such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, etc., who might provide funding in post-conflict situations.

The historical importance of the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission was highlighted by Ms. Eneström when she explained that never before had a joint subsidiary body of the Security Council and the General Assembly been established. She praised the two Co-Chairs leading the negotiations for their hard work and dedication, Ambassador Loy of Denmark and Ambassador Mahiga of Tanzania, who will continue their work as Members of the Peacebuilding Commission.

Bruce Jones opened by commending Ms. Eneström and the General Assembly President Jan Eliasson for their successful efforts in taking a simple idea of establishing the Peacebuilding Commission to the General Assembly and seeing it through. He pointed out that over the years there

has been an enormous decline in civil wars due to UN and other institution's actions, yet the unfortunate trend in the 1990s, for countries emerging from conflict to relapse back into conflict, continues. Dr. Jones outlined from his perspective three basic reasons for that: the Security Council failed to consult adequately with major donors, troop contributors and the country in question; political and budgetary reasons (short-term peacekeeping contracts); and the fact that implementations on the ground failed. He stated that by bringing all the actors to the table, this intergovernmental advisory body will be able to coordinate and facilitate a common outline or strategy for action and its implementation. Stressing that the UN as an institution had much to learn from countries that have gone through reconstruction, he also noted that for the Peacebuilding Commission to take effective action, the affected countries must be willing to appeal to the Security Council for assistance. He closed by stating the NGOs had a substantial role to play in keeping the Commission focused on the role it's supposed to play regarding peace building, and invited all Member States to participate accordingly in the Commission.

Robert Orr, who later joined the briefing, stated that right now the focus of the Peacebuilding Commission will be on post-conflict situations and that later it will include pure prevention. Echoing the other panelists in emphasizing the important role of the NGOs in peacebuilding efforts, he urged them to "keep our feet to the fire", both the UN and Member States.

Addressing the question: 'Where does disarmament come into this?' panelists answered by noting that currently disarmament is not well managed in post-conflict situations. Regarding a concern for the lack of focus on prevention, Dr. Jones responded by stating that there is overwhelming evidence that the single most important thing you can do for peace prevention is to end previous wars, because in large part wars recur, unless measures are taken to sustain countries in this time of post-war crisis. He added that this must be done through the lens of the international community, so the NGO community is very important in that regard.

Another question had to do with what country would be a good candidate to be looked at by the Commission. Anna-Karin Eneström responded by stating it was too early to name any specific countries, yet Dr. Jones added that countries like Burundi, Sierra Leone and East Timor would be good candidates to start with, while going into Congo or Haiti at this time would be destined to fail. All acknowledged the necessity for the new Commission to begin with measured steps.

With a standing Organizational Committee to be composed of 31 Members—7 from the Security Council, 7 from the General Assembly, 7 from ECOSOC, 5 Troop Contributors and 5 Donors—seven additional members will be elected to ensure representation from all regional groups and by countries that have experienced post-conflict recovery. Elections are planned to take place soon, and with newly elected Members destined to be put in place as quickly and smoothly as possible, Ms. Eneström said it is feasible the new Commission will begin working as early as March of 2006.

The United Nations Peacebuilding Commission is cause for new hope at the UN and for all people of the world marking as it does a significant step forward to a safer and more secure future. It has the potential to become, perhaps within ten years time, as Robert Orr said, 'one of the key pillars of the Organization's work' and 'its core function'. We need to make it work. To do this the Peace Commission needs the support of all—Member States, organizations, and individuals.

Iris Spellings, OPTU Representative to the UN NGO/DPI

IV. The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA)

“*Living Beyond Our Means: Natural Assets and Human Well-Being*” is the title of the Statement from the Board of MA. Although written mainly for the general public, it is nevertheless founded on the much larger and detailed documentation which is based on the findings of more than 1,360 experts from around the world.

MA was requested by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan to assess the consequences of eco-system change and to outline a comprehensive action plan for enhancing ‘*conservation and sustainable use of those systems and their contribution to human well-being*’.

At the heart of the Assessment is a stark warning: human activity is putting such strain on the natural functions of Earth that the ability of the planet’s ecosystems to sustain future generations can no longer be taken for granted. It shows that healthy ecosystems are central to ‘the aspirations of humankind’.

The Assessment reports on possible solutions to the stresses building up in the planet’s natural infrastructure and offers the world some key steps that would, if applied, help reduce the degradation of our ecosystem, among which are:

Change the economic background to decision-making by:

- *Making sure the value of all ecosystem services, not just those bought and sold in the market, are taken into account when making decisions;*
- *Removing subsidies to agriculture, fisheries, and energy that cause harm to people and the environment;*
- *Introducing payments to landowners in return for managing their lands in ways that protect ecosystem services, such as water quality and carbon storage, that are of value to society.*

Improve policy, planning, and management by:

- *Integrating decision-making between different departments and sectors, as well as international institutions, to ensure that policies are focused on protection of ecosystems;*
- *Including sound management of ecosystem services in all regional planning decisions and in the poverty reduction strategies being prepared by many developing countries;*
- *Empowering marginalized groups to influence decisions affecting ecosystem services, and recognize in law local communities’ ownership of natural resources;*
- *Using all relevant forms of knowledge and information about ecosystems in decision-making, including the knowledge of local and indigenous groups.*

Influence individual behaviour by:

- *Providing public education on why and how to reduce consumption of threatened ecosystem services;*
- *Establishing reliable certification systems to give people the choice to buy sustainably harvested products.*

Develop and use environment-friendly technology by

- *Investing in agricultural science and technology aimed at increasing food production with minimal harmful trade-offs;*

- *Restoring degraded ecosystems;*
- *Promoting technologies to increase energy efficiency and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.*

Website: www.biodiv.org/mareports-pub-4085.html

V. Poverty – some of the ways it affects people’s lives

It was the World Bank that first used the one-dollar-a-day as indicator of extreme poverty. We are told that today more than a billion people are living within or below this extreme poverty line, and that more than half of the world’s people live on less than US\$2 a day.

However, “Social Watch” – a coalition of some 400 citizens groups and NGOs – disputes the accuracy of the one or two dollars a day yardstick.

In their report: “*Roars and Whispers, Gender and Poverty: Promises vs. Action*”, released to coincide with the 2005 World Summit, World Watch insists that extreme poverty cannot be defined in this way alone, but also involves “*unequal access to goods, job opportunities, information and social services and reduced participation in society*”.

The report, compiled by a research team based in Montevideo, using statistical data from each country evaluated, has also introduced two new indexes to measure social development: the Basic Capabilities Index (CBI), which is based on 3 indicators, namely the proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel; under-five infant mortality; and the proportion of children who stay in school through the fifth grade; and the Gender Equity Index (GEI), which will complement the human development indexes commonly used.

The report shows that extreme poverty is actually increasing in Africa, Latin America, the Middle East, Eastern Europe and most of Asia; that the international community has largely failed to live up to the commitments it adopted five years ago to eradicate poverty and promote development, and that spending on social services is decreasing throughout the world while inequality has grown since the 1990s.

Inequalities

The “*Report on the World Social Situation 2005: the Inequality Predicament*” by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) also highlights the persistent and deepening inequality worldwide and stresses that while “*some parts of the world have experienced unprecedented growth and improvement in living standards in recent years, poverty remains entrenched, and much of the world is trapped in an inequality predicament*”.

The Report warns that focus on economic growth and income generation can lead to the accumulation of wealth by a few and deepen the poverty of many: “*In fact, despite considerable*

economic growth in many regions, the world is more unequal than it was ten years ago” .

Globalisation has brought about many of these inequalities, including within the area of employment, job security and wages.

Changing labour markets and increased global competition have spurred an explosion of the informal economy and deterioration in wages, benefits and working conditions, particularly in developing countries.

Hunger

The recent UN Food and Agriculture Organisation's annual hunger report states that hunger and malnutrition are among the root causes of poverty, illiteracy, disease and mortality of millions of people in developing countries.

In his statement on World Food Day (16 October 2005) Executive Director of the World Food Programme (WFP) James T. Morris, pointed out that the number of chronically hungry is on the rise again, after decades of progress. “We’re losing ground”, he said.

In order to provide assistance to the some 100 million children and the estimated 15 million under-nourished expectant and nursing mothers who are currently receiving no support, the sum of US\$5 billion a year would be required. Not a lot of money, insists Mr. Morris, *‘when you consider that between them, the developed countries spend far more than that every week on agricultural subsidies’*.

A further report “*World Resources 2005: The Wealth of the Poor: Managing Ecosystems to Fight Poverty*” finds that *‘environmental organizations have not addressed poverty, and development groups have not considered the environment enough in the past.’*

Comments Jonathan Lash, President of the World Resources Institute (WRI): *“Traditional assumptions about addressing poverty treat the environment almost as an afterthought”*. And yet, three-fourths of the world poor lives in rural areas, depending on the environment for their livelihood.

“Environment resources”, stresses Jonathan Lash, *“are absolutely essential, rather than incidental, if we are to have any hope of meeting our goals of poverty reduction.”*

Last resort

Poverty and misery also sets the scene for desperate measures and extreme exploitation of human labour. The International Labour Organisation estimates that there are today at least 12.3 million people worldwide who are victims of forced labour. About one-fifth of all forced labourers are trafficked: almost 20 per cent in Asia, Latin America, and sub-Saharan Africa, and over 75 per cent in the Middle East and in industrialized and transition countries where forced labour for commercial sexual exploitation (between 40-50 per cent are estimated to be children).

There are of course many other contributing factors to poverty which were mentioned and discussed in the reports, such as climate change, environmental degradation, health, drugs, organized crime

and corruption, as well as the violent conflicts within and between tribes, cultures and nations. All the reports mentioned in this article are pointing to the complexity of the issue of poverty, and underscoring the urgent need to see the whole picture and to accept co-responsibility for bringing changes for the better.

Poverty – some of the solutions

Most of the reports mentioned in this article have done their best to heed the call of the UN General Assembly President, Jan Eliasson, made in his statement on the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty (17 October 2005), when he urges that “*we must ensure that the full story about poverty in the world – both the enormous unmet needs, but also the progress many developing countries are making – is heard*”.

The *2005 Human Development Report* (published by the UN Development Programme) highlights ‘*the human costs of missed targets and broken promises*’ and suggests that ‘*in a world of interconnected threats and opportunities aid is an investment as well as a moral imperative – an investment in shared prosperity, collective security and a common future*’.

The report identifies three conditions for effective aid:

- It has to be delivered in sufficient quantity to support human development take-off;
- It has to be delivered on a predictable, low transaction cost, value for money basis; and
- Effective aid requires “country ownership.” Developing countries themselves have primary responsibility for creating the conditions under which aid can yield optimal results.

However, says the Report, there is a chronic under-financing of aid which is reflected in the priorities made in public spending: “*For every US\$1 that rich countries spend on aid they allocate another US\$10 to military budgets*”. The Report stresses the importance of the world looking ‘*beyond military security to human security*’ and meeting its commitment to spend 0.7 per cent of gross national income on aid.

A report by the Oakland Institute, entitled “*Food Aid or Food Sovereignty?, Ending World Hunger in Our Time*” calls on food aid programmes to shift their focus from dumping agricultural products on developing countries to helping build local agricultural infrastructures and supporting small-scale farmers.

Among the Report’s recommendations are:

- Support for small farmers through strong agricultural policies including land distribution;
- Support for the production of staple food rather than cash crops;
- Protection of prices and markets; and
- The management of national food stocks.

The *World Resources 2005* report outlines how natural resources – soils, forests, water fisheries – managed at the local level, are often the most effective means for the world’s rural poor people to create wealth for themselves. However the poor are often excluded from participation in decision-making with regard to ecosystem management: “*Community stewardship of local resources should be a critical element of any poverty-reduction model*”.

These reports, among numerous others, are contributing to giving us a clearer picture of today's globalizing world, and helping us, as individuals as well as communities and nations, to realize the impact that each action or decision has on the whole body of humanity.

Throughout all this information rings the appeal for cooperation, inclusiveness, and the will of the individual human being at every level of society to help create together a better, fairer and healthier world.

Websites: www.socwatch.org – www.un.org/publications - www.ilo.org/forcedlabour -
www.wfp.org – www.fao.org – www.wri.org
www.oaklandinstitute.org

VI. Desert and Desertification

This year's international theme, deserts and desertification will be the focus of the 2006 World Environment Day, 5 of June, and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) recently announced that Algiers has been chosen for the official celebrations.

The appropriateness of highlighting the theme of deserts and desertification in a North African state was stressed by the Algerian Minister of Environment as well as the Executive Director of UNEP, Klaus Toepfer. Like many of its neighbouring countries, a major part of Algeria is covered by the sands of the world's largest desert, the Sahara, and plagued by soil erosion from over-grazing, drought and desertification.

Desertification is about land degradation and loss of the land's biological productivity, caused by human-induced factors as well as climate change, and is now affecting one third of the surface of the world.

Klaus Toepfer stressed that land is – next to water and air – the very base of life: “but unlike air and water, which can be cleaned up and rehabilitated, once soils are lost it can take millennia for nature to recreate them”.

The agenda of this year's Environment Day will aim at giving ‘human face to environmental issues’. It will seek to encourage and empower people to become ‘active agents of sustainable and equitable development’.

www.unep.org

VII. “Unite for Children, Unite Against AIDS”

In October 2005, the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Ann Veneman, launched a campaign under the name “Unite for Children, Unite against AIDS”.

To clarify the severity of the situation some revealing statistics were offered:

- Every 15 seconds, somewhere in the world, a child is infected with AIDS;
- An estimated 15 million children worldwide have lost one or both their parents to HIV/AIDS;
- Less than 10 per cent of children orphaned or made vulnerable by AIDS receive any support;
- Less than 10 per cent of pregnant women are offered services to prevent HIV transmission to their infants;
- Less than 5 per cent of young HIV-positive children in need of treatment are receiving it.

This Campaign hopes to focus global attention on the devastating impact that the HIV/AIDS pandemic has on children all over the world and to help strengthen the commitment to the fight against AIDS. Said Ann Veneman: “It is a disease that has redefined their childhoods, causing them to grow up too fast, or sadly not at all”. In the worst affected countries life expectancy has plummeted from the mid-60s to the early-30s.

“Unite for Children, Unite against AIDS” presents an opportunity for real progress, through action across a variety of fronts. Speaking at the press conference at the UN Headquarters, the First Lady of the Rwandese Republic, Jeanette Kagame conceded that: “We have been slow to act and what we have done has not been enough”, and continued: ““We must take united action now... because the disease will not wait for us to catch up””.

The importance of education to prevent transmission of the disease and to break down the stigma associated with it was stressed at the campaign launch. A young woman, now co-chair of the Asia Pacific Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS told of the painful experience of being treated like a monster in her own home. But they didn’t mean to be cruel, she said, “they just didn’t know any better”.

The UNICEF global campaign aims by 2010 to:

- Reduce the percentage of young people living with HIV/AIDS by 25 per cent globally;
- Offer appropriate services to 80 per cent of women needing them to prevent mother-to-child transmission;
- Provide paediatric AIDS treatment to 80 per cent of children in need; and
- Reach 80 per cent of children most affected and in need of protection and support

Source UN Chronicle: http://www.un.org/Pubs/chronicle/2005/webArticles/110705_AIDS.html

VIII. Reflections on UN60

With the kind permission of *Wilfrid Grey*, long-time UN official, Peace through Unity is reprinting his “reflections on UN60”, which first appeared in the October 2005 issue of the UNGA-Link UK newsletter:

“While the whole NGO Community is disappointed at the chopped-back results of the 60th Anniversary Summit, it is a good moment to look back and see what is really positive in the history

of the UN so far. I have now completed eighteen years service in and around the UN, so I hope I may have the experience to make this assessment.

First, we must never forget that the United Nations is the only global institution which still commands universal respect. It might be thought that this universality ought to be taken for granted after the cataclysm of the Second World War. But Churchill always wanted a more regional organization and he was certainly not interested in decolonization or the birth of new nations. More important, in a world where loyalties are still largely confined to the family, to religious organisations and only spasmodically to the nation state, it is remarkable that the UN has somehow held together with 191 nations willing to pay their annual membership fee to join in.

Second, the role of Civil Society has increased and is increasing all the time. Again this development cannot be taken for granted, because it threatens the absolute power of the nation states. Member states fear that they may have to share both power and influence with Civil Society who will fight for their place in the sun. They realize only too well that ‘power cannot be given: it has to be taken’.

It is, however, a major step forward that increasingly nowadays the negative term ‘Non-Governmental Organisation’ is being replaced by the more positive and inclusive term ‘Civil Society’. Civil Society is still hobbled, especially in the South, by lack of money but that situation will improve.

Here are some remarkable highlights of this advance of Civil Society. The first was the extraordinary effort of *Homer Jack*, Founder of the World Council of Religion and Peace, to persuade the member states at the height of the Cold War to pass a Declaration on Religious Toleration. In the nineties *Jim Paul*, Director of the Global Policy Forum, skillfully negotiated with the Chairman of the Security Council for him and his colleagues to meet regularly for the first time with a selection of NGOs who could advise them with expert local knowledge before they began to craft a Resolution on, say, Somalia or East Timor. Most recently I have been impressed with the way *Bill Pace* of the World Federalists has marshaled a huge coalition of NGOs to help create the Statute of the International Criminal Court. And this June, the round-table presentations to Member States by NGOs before the latest Summit took place were unprecedented.

Lastly, I want to affirm against much opinion in the present American Administration that the major World Conferences in the Nineties on Population, on the Environment, and especially in Beijing on Women’s Rights, were not in the least a waste of money. They brought about a fresh dialogue between Civil Society and Member States. Those from Civil Society who attended fortified each other for the struggle ahead and also discovered what they had to do to ground the conclusions of the Conferences in the domestic laws of their own countries.

I wish I could report equally favourably on progress made in the way things are done in the General Assembly. But during my time the GA has failed to become the Town Meeting of the World. All too often it has remained a forum for rubber-stamping conclusions reached in its main committees. Overseas bureaucrats (diplomats) in cahoots with home-based bureaucrats (civil servants) will never inspire the general public to come to hear their scripted arguments. *An infusion of Civil Society*

members who could speak as well as listen might liven things up. Meanwhile the alternative of a People's Assembly alongside the GA remains a lively option.

In this unsatisfactory situation the advocacy work of *UNGA-Link* remains of crucial importance. Multilateral negotiation is hard and often unrewarding work and I have felt the diplomats at the UN more than earn their keep.

I know of no better summary of the UN's laborious progress – but progress none the less – than these words from the evergreen *Brian Urquhart*: '*International cooperation is slow, irritating, complicated, and extremely boring sometimes and un-heroic*'. Let me end this appraisal with these words from that inimitable world statesman *Dag Hammarskjöld*: '*Everything will be all right when people stop thinking of the UN as a weird Picasso drawing and think of it as a drawing they made themselves*'."

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IX. The Great Invocation in English

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.