

# ***World Good Will Seminar***

A Day of Reflection on the Theme:

## **“FROM INTELLECT TO INTUITION” & ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITY AND THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS**



***Geneva***

**Friday 28 October 2016**

**Palais des Nations, Room XI**

Place des Nations, 1211 Genève

**World Good Will**

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# WORLD GOOD WILL SEMINAR



An afternoon of reflections on the theme the ethical responsibilities that not only the United Nations but also the affiliated NGOs as well as humanity itself are facing when trying to implement the 2030 agenda or the Sustainable Development Goals:

## ***Ethical Responsibility and the Sustainable Development Goals***

Friday 28 October 2016 --- 15:00-18:00

Palais des Nations, Room XI, Place des Nations, 1201 Genève

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### **Programme**

15:00 **Opening and Introduction**

15:05 **World Good Will, Ethical Responsibility and the Sustainable Development Goals – the Challenge of this century**

*Mintze van der Velde* – Lucis Trust, World Good Will – Geneva

15:25 **Dag Hammarskjöld - Ethics in International Cooperation**

*Marco Toscano-Rivalta* – Staff member United Nations Geneva

15:55 **The UN Sustainable Development Goals and Human Values**

*Vita de Waal* - Foundation for Gaia, Global Ecovillage Network, Planetary Association for Clean Energy

16:20 **Break**

16:50 **A Crisis of Growth, a Crisis of Consciousness**

*Patrice Brasseur* – Association Psychosophie

17:15 **The UN: Reflecting the World, Reflecting Ourselves**

*Judith Hegedus* - College Board, mission-driven not-for-profit organization that connects students to college success and opportunity

17:40 **Plenary Discussion with all speakers**

18:00 **End of the Day**

Entrance free

***This event is financed exclusively by donations.  
Your contribution is warmly welcomed.***

For more information, please write to:

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## Introductory Remarks

*We all have within us a centre of stillness surrounded by silence.*

Dag Hammarskjöld

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, dear friends,

Before we start the discussions of this afternoon, allow me to make a few practical remarks:

1. The speakers of today will be sitting at this table and if you cannot hear them well enough please use the ear-piece at your desk or your chair. You can adjust the volume with the “volume” button. Please do not use the red button – which would give you the floor – except when we are in discussion time!
2. We will be using PowerPoints for some talks, so if you are at the back of the room, please try to take a seat a little bit more at the front.
3. We are also recording the whole event on video. We are not live-streaming but will post the video recording after the event on our World Good Will web-site. If anyone would feel uncomfortable about video recording, please take a seat in that corner, which will out of the field of view of the cameras.
4. Please do not bring food or drinks into this room. We will have a break and then refreshments are available at the cafeteria, which is just three levels down from here.
5. Please turn off your mobile phone.

The Lucis Trust and its division World Good Will which is organising this event is on the roster of the United Nations since May 1989 with a consultative status on the Economic and Social Council. In all these 27 years, this World Good Will Seminar 2016 is the first event ever organised by World Good Will at a United Nations venue.

It is an immense pleasure and an honour to welcome you to this event and we are particularly pleased that you have come in such large numbers that we had to ask the NGO Liaison Office for a bigger room than initially planned. They quickly found Room XI, a beautiful room offered and furnished years ago by the Dutch government. The decor and furnishings of this room are the work of Julius Maria Luthmann, the Dutch architect responsible for the office of the League of Nations Secretary-General. The work was done by Mutters of the Hague, as noted in the inscription in bronze-coloured lettering on the plaque next to the main door. The brass and macassar wood used in the beading and frames attest to the quality of the material selected and make for a harmonious ensemble. An excellent environment for fruitful and inspiring discussions.

The global theme of this seminar is *“From Intellect to Intuition”* and this afternoon we will focus more in particular on the *Ethical Responsibility of the Sustainable Development Goals* or SDGs. The SDGs are a main theme of discussion nowadays not only within the United Nations but also – and more and more – in civil society worldwide.

In the Preamble to the UNESCO Constitution we can read: *“Since wars begin in the minds of men and women, it is in the minds of men and women that the defences of peace must be constructed.”* In other words, and broadening that idea a little bit, if ever the SDGs are going to materialise, they have to be first addressed in our minds. World Good Will, through the energy of good will and the establishing of right human relations, tries to contribute its part to that process. And we hope that the discussions of this afternoon may contribute its tiny part thereto too.

In the clamour and noise of the world of today, connected by social networks functioning at the speed of light and producing political discussions of a type never seen before, there might be a quality or subject of interest also to our discussions of today – and that is: *silence*. For ideas to emerge, for thought forms to have a chance to come to our minds, silence is a prerequisite.

The United Nations HQ in New York has a so called Meditation Room dedicated to silence in the outward sense and stillness in the inner sense. The New York silent room was initiated by the second Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld, who said of this room: *“We want to bring back, in this room the stillness which we have lost in our streets, and in our conference rooms, and to bring it back in a setting in which no noise would impinge on our imagination.”* Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who will leave office at the end of this year, began his first day in

office in 2007 by visiting this Meditation Room. Here in Geneva such a room is as yet absent but for the coming project of the renovation of the Geneva United Nations compound a request has been launched to include such a silent room at Geneva HQ too.

Annual sessions of the General Assembly in New York begin with the President inviting representatives to observe one minute of silence dedicated to prayer or meditation. Thus silence is not such an unusual thing within the walls of the United Nations. May we therefore invite you to observe one minute of silence, in which you may meditate, pray or just be simply silent. You may remain seated. So let us have one minute of silence.

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Thank you.

To conclude this short introduction another thought from that extraordinary Secretary-General, Dag Hammarskjöld, of whom more will be said in the talk of Marco Toscano-Rivalta:

*"We cannot mould the world as masters of a material thing ...  
But we can influence the development of the world from within as a spiritual thing."*

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## **Good Will, Ethical Responsibility and the Sustainable Development Goals – the Challenge of this Century**

*Mintze van der Velde*

As some of you may know my background is in mathematics and theoretical physics, so when I show you the following table:

1 x 9 =	7
2 x 9 =	18
3 x 9 =	27
4 x 9 =	36
5 x 9 =	45
6 x 9 =	54
7 x 9 =	63
8 x 9 =	72
9 x 9 =	81
10 x 9 =	90

most of you will say: *"Oh boy, you don't need a PhD to see that in the first line you made a mistake."* And yes, you are right. But what you failed to do is to congratulate me with the fact that I had nine out of ten lines right! This is typically human. We tend to focus on things that don't work, rather than on the good things that do work. We do this in our society as human beings or in our family, but quite often we also do this to ourselves as individuals. Often the facts don't change but the way we look at these facts, the way we interpret them makes all of a difference.

Goodwill is one of the most basic spiritual qualities of the human being and the great untapped resource at the heart of every human community. This energy is potentially a powerful force for social change – yet its power remains largely unrecognized and underutilized. World Goodwill fosters understanding of this energy and the role it is playing in the development of a new humanity.

It is the thoughtful, planned action of networks of goodwill that is driving the response to all the problems of our age: from poverty, poisoned race relations, migration and refugees and environmental destruction through to sentimental spirituality, despair in thinking about the future, and the crises of materialism and selfishness. People of goodwill from all cultures, faiths and professions are creating, through their words and actions, a new world where sharing, cooperation and right relations are taking root and spreading. Never before in the history of the planet has goodwill been so active.

The diversity and variety of initiatives means that the people of goodwill can never be organized into one unitary movement or network. Every community has its people of goodwill. It is *goodness* and *love*, in their most basic human expressions, that are driving the momentum of change, challenging all of the habits of separative thinking and action. Recognition of the sheer abundance of goodwill action as it exists today and the countless movements drawing on the energy of goodwill changes the way we see what is happening in the world. It is empowering and it gives us grounds upon which hope and faith in the future can grow. Truly, goodwill has the potential to become the keynote of a new civilization of wholeness.

To bring in the new day and the human well-being which is our birth-right, we need a deeper sense of reality based on spiritual values, and a new perception of humanity as a unit of divine life within an ordered and purposive universe. It is difficult for modern man to conceive of a time when there will be no racial, national or separative religious consciousness present in human thinking. It was equally difficult for prehistoric man to conceive of a time when there would be national thinking and this is a good thing for us to bear in mind. The time when humanity will be able to think in universal terms still lies far ahead but the fact that we can speak of it, desire it and plan for it is surely the guarantee that it is not impossible. Humanity has always progressed from stage to stage of enlightenment and from glory to glory. We are today on our way to a far better civilisation than the world has ever known and towards conditions which will ensure a much happier humanity and which will see the end of national differences, of class distinctions (whether based on ancestry or financial status) and which will ensure a fuller and richer life for everyone.

To set the stage for this afternoons talks and discussions, let me briefly outline the historical context of how we came to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and why they are the challenge of this century. That will at the same time make clear why good will and ethical responsibilities play a pivotal role in the whole process.

The problem of sustainable development, seen from both a socioeconomic and an environmental perspective, has been triggered by the extraordinary growth of the human species (5 million people 10,000 years ago when agriculture began to 7.4 billion today, increasing to approximately 11.2 billion by the end of this century) and the simultaneous increase (by over 100 times) of the resources used by each person.

The first major signal of concern was given by the 1972 Report of the Club of Rome or Meadows report: *"The Limits to Growth."*<sup>1</sup> It caused a great sensation because of its clear message: In a basically closed system like the Earth it is impossible for the population, food production, industrialization, the exploitation of natural resources and pollution of the environment to continue to experience exponential growth without sooner or later collapsing. (The report forecast this to occur around the second half of this century.) The report concluded that to prevent this disaster, a collective commitment would be needed to curb the indiscriminate growth of the economy and achieve global equilibrium. The report was welcomed by environmentalist, but crushed by politicians and the business world. Nevertheless a 2011 study along the same lines shows that we are on the curve of "business as usual." While the report set certain limits, it did not provide policies or strategies to obtain these limits. Further confirmation of the imminent consequences of exponential growth can be found in the 2012 *Nature* paper by Elizabeth Hadly and Anthony Barnosky<sup>2</sup>. This paper confirmed the basic conclusions of the above mentioned Meadows Report and lead several policy makers to wake up.

In the development of policies to limit indiscriminate growth the concept of sustainable development goals was well defined in 1987 in the final report of the United Nations Commission on Environment and Development led by Gro Harlem Brundtland called *Our Common Future*<sup>3</sup>. It affirmed that "humanity has the possibility of making development sustainable, that is of ensuring that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. The concept of sustainable development involves limits, but not absolute ones, since they are imposed on economic resources by the present state of technology and social organization and by the capacity of the biosphere to absorb the effects of human activities. Technology and social organization can, however, be managed and improved to usher in a new era of economic growth."

In a 2015 briefing for NGO's at the UN in Geneva the Special Advisor of the Secretary General, Dr. David Nabarro, emphasised that implementation of this agenda concerns everyone: governments, businesses, academics, but also you and me. We are here talking about "*global citizenship*" as well as "*global accountability*" and please note: there is no plan B. The SDGs are not an empty set of propositions to keep a club of diplomats busy. Dr. Nabarro also conceded that the *ethical aspects* of each of the seventeen SDGs need to be taken into account.

From a certain perspective we are talking about thought form building and invocation and evocation – in practice: one of the first objectives of the UN is that about 2 billion people will know about these SDGs (hence the logos). You will find in your language packs of this Seminar (available at the entrance of this room) postcards with the 17 Sustainable Development Goals logos in different languages.

When discussing whether economic change is possible without collapse a recent report of the Club of Rome<sup>4</sup>, notes: *“So society needs to buy time. It can do this by moving towards a circular economy and by transforming the economic system gradually, by restructuring finance and business, shifting to renewable energy, reforming food production and redefining the nature of work, to generate jobs and guarantee livelihoods. The technology and understanding to make these changes already exists. It is a question of social and political will.”* This brings in the will aspect, a step further than simply *good will*.

We all know that it is not easy to change things on earth. We are told that *“Human planning today is one of the first indications of the emergence of the Will aspect.”*<sup>5</sup> This will is not the matter of one individual: When one or two persons have a good idea, the challenge is to transfer that idea to the masses of people. Two approaches are here at work at the same time, sometimes competing, sometimes cooperating:

One is the *Bottom-up* approach and this is highlighted in for example the movie *“Tomorrow”*<sup>6</sup>, which has also been published as a book. Many, very many initiatives exist including local farming, alternative money systems, energy policies, education, initiatives to make democracies work, etc. – in all of the seventeen goals of the 2030 Agenda (i.e. the SDGs) this bottom-up approach is already at work *now*.

We are often discouraged and overwhelmed by thoughts like: *“This will never happen,” “Yes, but you know those lobbies...,” “It is up to the politicians to fix this,” “This is far too small to really work,” “What do you want us to do?” “Anyway, it won’t change a bit.”* But in that way, nobody has ever changed a thing in the world. As more and more people become aware of the real challenges of this century, more and more people will open up to the energy of good will and foster right human relations – which are key to finding the right solutions. One little project may perhaps not make a big difference, but when many, very many little projects emerge, no matter where on this planet Earth, that will make a difference.

The other is the *Top-down* approach. It is here that the United Nations play a crucial role. The United Nations are one of the few places where governments and civil society (for example through the many Non-Governmental Organisations) meet, talk and try to build a better world. No one and no organisation is perfect and also the UN is not perfect. Remembering the table of multiplication I started with, it is easy to criticise. And yet, the UN is at the root of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and many subsequent resolutions and agreements, ratified and thus accepted by most countries of the world. And it is even worthwhile to keep the Charter of the United Nations in mind. In referring to *‘We the peoples of the United Nations’* the Charter is referring to the good will that is inherent in all the peoples of this planet. One of the more recent results of the Top-down approach is The Paris COP21 or United Nations conference on climate change which has been concluded and ratified by many countries in an unprecedented short time. So also governments are aware of the urgency of the issues at stake in the SDGs.

The word *ethical* comes from ethics, which has its root in the Greek word *ethos* and means the study of moral philosophy. Here questions are discussed like *“What is considered good and bad?”* or *“What is the difference between right and wrong?”* When we look at this from the point of view of the *intellect*, whole volumes have been written on the subject. Yet, when we lift it from the intellect to the *intuition*, don’t we all know what this is about? When reading the SDGs in more detail they may seem an intellectual exercise. Yet, as Dr. Nabarro acknowledged, the ethical aspects of the SDGs are also important and this gives a deeper meaning to the whole concept. It is this meaning that we will explore together this afternoon with various talks.

Change always starts as an idea. It is on that level, i.e. the world of ideas, that both ethics and good will play a crucial role. In the top-down approach governments and administrations will have to face the pressure of lobby groups trying to push decisions to a direction not necessarily in the common interest. This will require that those involved will listen to their hearts rather than their heads. Thus global change will emerge. In the bottom-up approach anyone who listens to his heart can’t help - but establish change on the local level, in his immediate environment (if not first in him or herself). When both the bottom-up and the top-down approaches work together rather than engage in conflict, the SDGs are not a fiction, but will be a real part of not only our lives but also of generations to come. If we go beyond our limitations and cleavages and define spirituality as *“anything that brings humanity a step forward”* then this whole discussion is of a deep spiritual nature.

Marco Toscano-Rivalta will address the role of ethics in international cooperation, as exemplified by Dag Hammarskjöld, Secretary-General of the UN from 1953 till his death in 1961, Vita de Waal will take a closer

look at the relationship between the SDGs and human values. Patrice Brasseur will shed his light on this from the point of view of consciousness and explore how the different levels of consciousness in mankind and in ourselves can help us understand what is happening in the world of today. A similar approach will be developed, but more in the context of the United Nations, by Judith Hegedus. We have, quite purposively, not talked much about education, which is a very important if not crucial part of the SDGs, - because we will address that topic tomorrow in the second part of this Seminar.

1. *The Limits to Growth*, 1972, Donella H. Meadows, Dennis L. Meadows, Jorgen Randers William W. Behrens III, Universe Books, ISBN 0-87663-165-0.
2. *Approaching a State Shift in Earth's Biosphere*, Nature 486, June 2012, p52-58, E. Hadly, A. Barnosky.
3. *Our Common Future*, 1978, Gro Harlem Brundtland, <http://www.un-documents.net/our-common-future.pdf>.
4. *Is Systemic Economic Change Possible without Collapse?*  
<http://www.clubofrome.org/project/systemic-economic-change-without-collapse/>
5. *Discipleship in the New Age*, 1955, Alice A. Bailey, Lucis Press, NY.
6. *Demain – Un Nouveau Monde en Marche*, 2105, Cyril Dion, Actes Sud, ISBN 978-2-330-05585-1. See also: <http://www.demain-lefilm.com>.

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## Ethical Responsibility of the Sustainable Development Goals

### Dag Hammarskjöld– Ethics in international cooperation

Marco Toscano-Rivalta<sup>1</sup>

#### 1. Purpose

Dear fellow panellists, friends and colleagues,

It is a great pleasure to be here at the Palais des Nations to share with you some personal reflections on Dag Hammarskjöld and his contribution to ethics in:

- international cooperation,
- the role of the United Nations, and
- international civil service.

It seems to me a very interesting coincidence for a number of reasons:

- We have a new Secretary-General, Mr. Antonio Guterres,
- The first UN decade on development, launched on 25 September 1961 and the precursor of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development and the SDGs, is connected to his legacy;
- The upcoming deliberations by the General Assembly on the question of Investigation into the death of Dag Hammarskjöld and colleagues;
- The revitalization of the UN Staff day, initiated by Dag Hammarskjöld in 1953, that was celebrated this week on 25 October, right after the 24<sup>th</sup> which is the UN day.

#### 2. Dag Hammarskjöld and the UN in context

Dag Hammarskjöld was elected 2<sup>nd</sup> Secretary-General of the United Nations in 1953. In the night of September 17-18 of 1961, during his efforts to secure a cease-fire in the Congo crisis, he and fifteen others perished in the line of duty in a plane crash near the border between today's Democratic Republic of the Congo and Zambia. An accident which left open many question marks, and indeed last year the General Assembly recognized that "a further inquiry or investigation would be necessary to finally establish the facts of the matter".

<sup>1</sup> Marco Toscano-Rivalta is a staff member of the United Nations. The views expressed in this paper or in its final oral delivery are personal and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the United Nations.

During Hammarskjöld's leadership from 1953 to 1961, the UN membership increased from 60 to 110 states in the wake of the decolonization. Significant developments in its functioning took place, including, the establishment of the system of Member States' permanent representations at the UN, the consolidation of the political functions of the Secretary-General and of international civil service, the creation of peacekeeping operations and of Envoys of the Secretary-General, as well the development of technical cooperation programs for countries.

These changes were made possible by the close cooperation that Hammarskjöld inspired and harnessed among some of his visionary colleagues within the UN, and outside in governments, academia, scientific institutions and civil society organizations as well as arts.

Just a month before his death, in his last Annual Report on the Work of the Organization, he asked countries to exercise a choice on which direction the UN should go, including the role of the UN Secretary-General and the political powers granted to it by the Charter; whether as pure diplomatic conference machinery or an executive instrument for peace and development. A choice that would be of significance in the relation between the organization and its Members and among the Members.

Subsequent practice seems to point to the fact that the choice was made for an executive instrument, and for the full recognition of the political powers of the Secretary-General's function.

### 3. United Nations' Evolving Governance

Since Hammarskjöld's time, the world has gone through enormous changes in social, economic, cultural, political and scientific terms. These include the increase of public, private, profit and non-profit organizations competent, committed to, and active in all fields of international cooperation, and rightfully expecting to play their role in full for the betterment of humanity and the living conditions on Earth, in cooperation with the United Nations.

As a consequence, Member States are in the increasingly challenging position of being no longer the "owners" of the United Nations, but rather the "trustees" on behalf of the "peoples of the United Nations" in the attainment of the Purposes, and the practice of the Principles, enshrined in the UN Charter.

Member States are expected to ensure that the decisions and actions taken by the UN reflect the best knowledge and shared interests, enlarge the area of common ground, constitute a powerful visionary pragmatism, are just and respect of the law, and that all those who can contribute to their formulation and implementation are enabled to do so – in other words, decisions that foster a purposeful cooperation across all stakeholders and leverage on their potential.

Depending on the issues at stake, such stakeholders change and, using a mechanical engineering terminology, today we need to speak of international cooperation with a "variable geometry".

This poses important challenges to the decision-making of the United Nations which increasingly see the participation of other stakeholders in the discussions and deliberations, while the formal final decision remains with Member States.

Such processes are more complex, at times frustrating for a sense of dilution of the real issues, loss of purpose and waste of time, while outside the world's needs increase rapidly. Yet, these processes can also be very powerful and visionary. Participants' thinking gets shaped bit by bit and at times they go beyond compromise and chart a new landscape, new common ground and a shared goal.

A very positive example is the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, adopted in 2015, which, while recognizing the primary responsibility of states to manage disaster risk, it states that this responsibility is "shared" with other stakeholders, such as business and civil society. This is a political recognition of the space and roles that other stakeholders can play, and therefore of their responsibility to step in and play their part in the one work. This will create many opportunities and will have important implications for accountability.



#### 4. The Heart of the United Nations

The United Nations was conceived to be an agent of change, endowed with the necessary agency. Not the cause of the change, which indeed rests with the growing consciousness of humanity. Rather the United Nations is “a focal point for efforts so to guide the difficult and delicate development that this progress may be achieved in peace and become a means to reinforce peace”.

Being an agent of change implies to be a model of change, and this needs to be reflected in an ongoing adjustment of how the Organization is used, including its working methods. This is a fundamental point, which far from being purely academic, has very practical implications.

Hammarhjöld’s invested a lot of time in articulating, explaining, and practicing the potential of the precepts contained in the UN Charter on the role of the United Nations and the Secretariat, and how the existing rules offered a strong basis and could be interpreted to address the ever emerging new issues and serve the peoples’ needs.

A legitimate question is whether he and his colleagues at that time unveiled everything under the Charter or there is something else to pursue. Even today, Hammarhjöld is of help.

His tireless efforts in interpreting and practicing the articles concerning the role of the Secretariat, including the Secretary-General and its political power, point us to another key provision of the UN Charter which has remained until today a bit in the shade: and that is paragraph 4 of article 1.

Art 1 is about the Purposes of the United Nations. We really enter into the heart of the UN Charter, of the vision behind the establishment of the United Nations.

Let me read it out to you:

*1.1 To maintain international peace and security, and to that end: to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace, and to bring about by peaceful means, and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law, adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations which might lead to a breach of the peace;*

*1.2 To develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, and to take other appropriate measures to strengthen universal peace;*

*1.3 To achieve international co-operation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character, and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion;*

And Article 1.4 which I want to bring to your attention:

*1.4 To be a centre for harmonizing the actions of nations in the attainment of these common ends.*

At a first reading, its content looks rather obvious, a “no-brainer”. Through the preparatory works of the San Francisco Conference, it emerges that this article was the subject of very limited discussions and amendments. It was adopted almost as it had been proposed. Also, many commentaries on the UN Charter devote very little space to this paragraph.

Such little attention indeed caught my eyes.

For me, this is the most mysterious and fundamental provision of the Charter. It contains a mighty understatement. It is the only provision that speaks of “being” rather than “doing”, and defines what the United Nations is, its nature. All the others are about what the United Nations has to do and how.

But trying to understand what something is, its nature, isn’t instrumental to better understand how it works, how to use it, how to unleash its its potential to the maximum extent?

Let me tell you a little bit more.

Art. 1.4 of the Charter seems to tell us that until and unless a centre for harmonizing actions of nations is created, it is not possible to effectively address the challenges identified in the preceding three paragraphs of the same article, including the securing of peace and security, respect for human rights, gender equality, friendly relations among states and peoples, and the achievement of international co-operation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character.

Art. 1.4 seems to indicate a “condicio sine qua non”, a necessary condition to achieve the intended results.

Therefore, the nurturing of such a centre seems to be a fundamental priority that deserves full focus and requires the best quality and skills of all human beings which constitute the peoples of the United Nations and intend to foster international cooperation and serve humanity.

Paragraph 4 seems to provide an interesting key to further imagine and materialize the work and functioning of the United Nations, its main organs, including the Secretariat and its chief, the Secretary-General, and thus realize new forms of international cooperation.

Psychological studies indicate that the will is essential to harmonize our internal parts and forces. It is also suggested that in a fully developed person the will is not only strong, but also wise and loving and goes beyond the interests of the person itself.

Reasoning by analogy, the United Nations through the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council, is a mechanism to leverage, catalyze and manifest the will which in itself acts as an “harmonizer” of the actions that nations are to take in the attainment of the common good. The United Nations is a catalyser of the will to good. Therefore, it is important to purposefully study how will operates, including through groups, and to this aim there is a very interesting book by Roberto Assagioli called “The Act of Will”.

In particular, a joint reading of the articles on the Secretariat (97-101) and article 1.4 suggests that the Secretariat, and chiefly the Secretary-General, is an instrument of this “harmonizing” of actions which are then carried out by others. And the actions are not only those of Governments, but of “nations”, i.e. the people and organizations living and operating in all States in support of peace, security, economic and social development, humanitarian relief, human rights, and right relations.

It is critical to reflect on and understand what this centre for harmonizing actions is and its characteristics; what it entails and requires; how it is supposed to work; and how the various stakeholders, like states’ representatives, NGOs and business are supposed to do; and how this conditions and defines the work of UN civil servants.

In other words: are the individuals that in different capacity engage and contribute to the work of the United Nations bound to do something specific in light of what Art. 1.4 says? When one contributes to the work of a something that is supposed to harmonize actions of nations for the common good, does she or he need to do something in particular, or in a particular way? How does she or he need to approach the work? How does she or he need to prepare, including on a personal level? What personal attitude?

Being part of such processes not only requires the best professional performance, but also poses a critical demand on the individual as a person in terms of open-mindedness and self-control over prejudices and biases.

It seems to me that this centre, while may be physically represented by the United Nations’ General Assembly, its councils, subsidiary bodies and offices, is definitely not limited to it. It must go beyond a room and a set of procedures for political consultations and negotiations. It is a psychic space.

And it is probably not by coincidence that Hammarskjöld wanted a Meditation Room at the New York Headquarters.

## 5. Dag Hammarskjöld's International Civil Service Ethics

What is the role of UN civil servants in this scenario? Their contribution to the United Nations' "act of will" and harmonizing process?

Dag Hammarskjöld throughout his 8 years in office constantly articulated and demonstrated the potentials of the United Nations' executive nature, including the functions of the Secretary-General.

His work went a long way, but it clearly is unfinished business. More work waits ahead to continue unpack the potential of the Secretary-General function for international cooperation.

Hammarskjöld was aware that UN civil servants are instrumental to the success of international cooperation and its outcomes. He affirmed the "The essential role of an international civil service in an irrevocably interdependent world".

However, UN civil servants need to be "trusted" in order to be "entrusted" with this responsibility. It is for this reason that Hammarskjöld worked hard to articulate and demonstrate the independence and neutrality of the Secretary-General and the Secretariat, and their "international responsibilities", as opposed to "intergovernmental" responsibilities. A corollary is that UN civil servants serve, and are accountable to, not only Member States, but also other stakeholders.

In some ways, Hammarskjöld not only helped define and demonstrate in practice the potential and functions of the Secretary-General, not only the potential and functions of the United Nations, but also the potential and functions of international cooperation.

It was absolutely a quiet revolution, or, better, evolution, which he and colleagues furthered with vision, determination and persistence.

To better understand Dag Hammarskjöld and his role as Secretary-General, it is very useful to cross read his personal and spiritual journal, "Markings", and his public speeches, including at the meetings of the UN General Assembly and the Security Council.

To me it was an eye opener. The ethical person of "Markings" merged with the political Secretary-General function, instrument of the "harmonizing" called for in Art. 1.4 of the UN Charter. Ethics and international civil service became to my eyes one thing: living ethics.

A very concrete example that I could try to imitate in my job.

There are a three passages which for me are a sort of summary of his guidance:

*The public servant is there in order to assist, so to say from the inside, those who make the decisions which frame history. He should - as I see it - listen, analyze and learn to understand fully the forces at work and the interests at stake, so that he will be able to give the right advice when the situation calls for it. Don't think that he takes but a passive part in the development. It is a most active one. But he is active as an instrument, a catalyst, perhaps an inspirer - he serves.*

*...the qualities it requires are just those which I feel we all need today: perseverance and patience, a firm grip on realities, careful but imaginative planning, a clear awareness of the dangers but also of the fact that fate is what we make it and that the safest climber is he who never questions his ability to overcome all difficulties.*

Moreover,

*The weight we carry ... is based solely on trust in our impartiality, our experience and knowledge, our maturity of judgment.*

Furthermore, speaking of neutrality and self-consciousness,

*The international civil servant must keep himself under the strictest observation. He is not requested to be a neuter in the sense that he has to have no sympathies or antipathies, that there are to be no interests which are close to him in his personal capacity or he is to have no ideas or ideals that matter for him. However, he is requested to be fully aware of those human reactions and meticulously check himself so that they are not permitted to influence his actions. This is not unique. Is not every judge professionally under the same obligation?*

*If the international civil servant knows himself to be free from such personal influences in his actions and guided solely by the common aims and rules laid down for, and by the organization he serves and by recognized legal principles, then he has done his duty, and then he can face the criticism which even so will be unavoidable. ... and if integrity in the sense of respect for a law and respect for the truth where to drive him into positions of conflict with this or that interest, then that conflict is a sign of his neutrality and not of his failure to observe neutrality – then it is in line, not in conflict, with his duties as an international civil servant.*

## 6. Evolving International Cooperation

Empowered by this ethics, Hammarskjöld dived into intergovernmental relations and actively worked to transform them from coexistence into international cooperation, in line with the vision and precepts of the Charter of the United Nations.

I would like to stress this: a shift from “intergovernmental relations” and “coexistence” to “international cooperation” that could be described as “relations serving a planetary plan inspired by a common purpose”. This is not a small thing. This is not something which can be taken for granted.

In 1945, it was the first time ever, at least, in recorded history, that humanity, through some visionary and pragmatic servants, made such commitment on a planetary scale: a commitment to international cooperation for development.

What this is and entails though is not a clear-cut thing and it is still work in progress. It is very important to bear in mind that the United Nations is an experiment. Doing so helps keep alight the flame of enthusiasm and research for new opportunities and potential which may not be visible at the moment.

We are in a transition toward a “constitutional system of international cooperation”. The word “constitutional” should not scare people off or induce a sense of rigidity. Indeed, “the institutional system” embodied in the Charter has already demonstrated the capacity to innovate, similarly to organic adaptation to needs and experiments. “Constitutional” as built on the rule of law in its broadest sense.

Indeed, taking the lead from the UN Charter, the development and codification of international law has dramatically contributed to define the parameters of behaviors which could facilitate a cooperative approach. The duty to cooperate is a well established principle of international law. International human rights law has defined standards for right human relations. International environmental law and disaster risk reduction are guiding humans to have a better relation with Mother Earth and its other kingdoms.

Together with the development of international law, technical cooperation programs have been developed, plan of actions adopted and initiatives undertaken with the purpose of transforming words into change for the better.

The speed and smoothness of such transition toward a “constitutional system of international cooperation” does not depend on the Charter, rather from the consciousness of humans and the capacity to fully comprehend, embrace and embody such wider dimension, which goes beyond individual, group, national and even regional’s interests. It is quite an exercise of consciousness gymnastic!

Through cooperation, the “common good” continuously acquires new content and meaning, and the SDGs are just but the latest example. And the new common good in turn requires the continuous development of forms of cooperation. A virtuous cycle!

Cooperation for the common good of humanity requires the uncompromised commitment and the best that every country can express and offer – a “new nationalism” Hammarskjöld called it.

Principles like “national interest”, “domestic jurisdiction” and “self-determination” need a new connotation and interpretation. These principles can no longer be misused to justify and perpetuate selfish behaviors and breakaways from agreed frameworks. They are fundamental to allow the growth of the potential that each nation can and need to contribute to the collective efforts toward the realizations of the common ends expressed in the UN Charter. With this meaning and intent only, they should be invoked and respected, as they are instrumental to an ever better world cooperation.

Also, the ethical dimension of international cooperation is increasingly evident – the SDGs’ “leave no one behind” is an interesting expression.

Something particularly important happened last year. Four major agreements, which are largely coherent in their sum total, were reached: the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on financing for development, the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals, and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. It is possible to argue that they are hierarchically structured, with the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs at the apex.

In my opinion this is a major milestone: unless I am wrong, this is the first time that we have such a holistic agreed plan with a planetary scope. Of course, we could discuss for hours whether they are good enough, and it is important to do so in order to introduce adjustments in the ensuing course of action. But what I would like to place emphasis on is the fact that we have been able to come up with a planetary plan, a plan of shared interest with a planetary scale.

It has never happened in human history. It is a big thing. I think that this has opened a new page in international cooperation.

The United Nations has been instrumental to countries in achieving this result. And it will remain instrumental in harmonizing the actions of nations in implementation.

It is definitely an incredible opportunity we all have to contribute to its realization.

## 7. Conclusions

Following Hammarskjöld’s example, it is important that UN Staff, delegates, civil society, business and others that in various ways participate to further international cooperation and the “harmonizing [of] the actions of nations in the attainment of the common ends” reflect upon the international service that needs to be rendered, the role of the United Nations in light of the UN Charter’s Principles, including Art. 1.4, and mostly how to prepare for it personally and professionally.

Doing so is an essential investment.

And I conclude with Hammarskjöld’s words: “Perhaps a future generation, which knows the outcome of the present efforts, will look at them with some irony. They will see where we fumbled and they will find it difficult to understand why we did not see the direction more clearly and work more consistently towards the target it indicates. So it will always be, but let us hope that they will not find any reason to criticize us because of a lack of that combination of steadfastness of purpose and flexibility of approach which alone guarantee that the possibilities which we are exploring will have been tested to the full. Working at the edge of the development of human society is to work on the brink of the unknown. Much of what is done will one day prove to have been of little avail. That is no excuse for the failure to act in accordance with our best understanding, in recognition of its limits but with faith in the ultimate result of the creative evolution in which it is our privilege to cooperate”.

Thank you.

\* \* \*

# The UN, SDGs and Human Values an evolving process

Vita de Waal

Dear Friends and Colleagues, Dear Travellers on the Path,

We just had two very inspiring presentations and I will not even try to match the excellence of our previous speakers. However, before starting, I would like to thank Lucis Trust and World Goodwill for organizing this event at the United Nations. and for having invited me to share some insights with you. I look forward to taking you on a brief journey through some areas of the United Nations system and try to recognise what is being unveiled through its work, the values that are emerging.

## The United Nations

My talk will mostly be about the United Nations' work and through that look if from this we can point to values that are being brought into our collective consciousness. I am sure that most of you know the first line of the Charter of the United Nations "We the Peoples of the United Nations determined..." Well, unfortunately, this line is not yet a reality as currently it still is "We member states of the United Nations determined..." But can we really blame nations? Are nations not the expression of the people they represent, are they not a reflection of their national collective evolution?

We are told by D.K. that... *the forces of reconstruction, set in motion in 1945, are related to the Will aspect of divinity and are channeled into the General Assembly.* The Charter of the United Nations acts like a blueprint for Humanity on which all 193 nations are working, as such the UN holds a collective Plan for Humanity.

Unfortunately, Member States working on such a Plan are far from being *united* and on agreeing on common goals; they have a multitude of political agendas, some reflecting bold new thinking while others are entrenched in outdated positions. The big challenge is to finding common ground amongst many stakeholders, to putting the good of the whole before petty interests of member states and to finding solutions that benefit all. The reality of a *united* nations is still a distant goal, with nations striving to extricate themselves from self-serving interests so that they may join the *family* of nations and contribute to forging a new and common destiny for all of humanity.

If we were to look at the United Nations as a reflection, albeit a very incomplete reflection, of a divine Plan, would we be able to understand where we as humanity are heading today? Let us attempt to do so.

## Correspondences

God / Plan	Revelation	Externalisation
One	Dual	Diversity
Father	Mother	Son
Master	Disciple	Ashram
Buddha	Teachings	Sangha
Mind	Speech	Body
Crown	Throat	Heart
Hum - Blue	Ah - Red	Om - White
Will	Love	Enlightened Activity
UN General Assembly	Core Mission Peace - SC	ECOSOC
Hierarchy	Ashrams	Disciple
UN	Member States	Governments



I have here a table of correspondences using different values though I am in no doubt that we can all come up with many more.

You will also see that sometimes one value changes position depending from which perspective it is being viewed. Those familiar with holograms will not find this concept strange. When having a moment and feeling like doodling, you might want to create your own correspondences relating it to your daily life.

### **The UN General Assembly**

From the table you can see that I positioned the General Assembly (of 193 Nations) where the decisions are adopted and sealed, under the same column of the Hierarchy of the Masters, of the Elders of the race and, of the (divinely inspired) Will. The General Assembly provides oversight and embodies the will of the nations, the authority for the work to be undertaken.

While the will to serve is there, external circumstances, such as political posturing, and power struggles will hamper the work of externalizing the original purpose for which the United Nations was created. The little wills of nations and of peoples is not yet aligned with that divine purpose that for now is still a distant goal.

On 2009 the GA decided to create an Ad Hoc Working Group on the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly (AHWG) so that the GA may become a true, universal "parliament of nations".

### **The UN Security Council**

The United Nations came into being in 1945 with one central mission: *the maintenance of international peace and security*, to make the world a safer place for all. If the conditions for peace are not there, *at this collective level*, then this will be reflected and felt in the world. The Security Council is mandated to keep the peace, non-proliferation and peace-building.

Today we are living in a reality where wars and conflicts are increasing and escalating into regional conflicts. We do not even need to believe in reincarnation to state that today we are reaping the consequences of past and present wrong-doings that require individual as well as collective solutions. With images of horror and of suffering flooding into our living rooms, it is important that our love, our compassion is not stemmed by the hold that fear has over people, a fear that restricts and isolates. We often forget in these difficult times that we are responsible for our choices. Do we allow love or fear to rule our lives? Are we being terrorized by our own fears and is the Security Council merely reflecting this? In our moments of silence we might want to reflect where we battle with our own fears and observe without judging where the struggles of power lie within our own being. For in truth, it is not the world out there but a mere reflection of our inner world?

It is sad to realise that the Security Council, which had been conceived as an arena of cooperation, has evolved into an arena of confrontation and ideology and with an outdated governance structure reflecting a mentality of 'victors' yielding all the power.

Nowhere are such power struggles more obvious than in the Security Council, composed of 15 members of which five have a veto vote. The Security Council's voting system allows one-third of the Council's members (five Member States) to basically manipulate outcomes and impose decisions on all 193 Member States, especially as under the Charter only the Security Council has the power to make decisions that all 193 Member States are obliged to accept. The Security Council also recommends to the General Assembly the appointment of the Secretary-General and the admission of new Members to the United Nations and, together with the General Assembly, the Security Council elects the judges of the International Court of Justice. The Security Council holds much power and often is too focussed on this power while forgetting that it is mandated to maintain peace, a peace often equated with the energy of Love, e.g. the Prince of Peace, and it is the foundation on which all else is built. Jimi Hendrix's quote is very apt here: "*When the power of love overcomes the love of power the world will know peace*" This reflects to the point the big test of the Security Council.

The General Assembly has proposed debates on Security Council reform that has been blocked, mainly by the core of 5 member states. As this blockage is at the very core of the UN's mandate it also hampers the wider call for reform of the UN itself.

## The Economic and Social Council, ECOSOC

We know that unresolved problems lead to conflict and one of the main priorities of the United Nations is to *"achieve international co-operation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion."*

The Economic and Social Council, ECOSOC in brief, is the central platform for fostering debate, strengthening cooperation between states, forging consensus on ways forward, and coordinating efforts to achieve internationally agreed goals. ECOSOC is responsible for the follow-up to major UN conferences and summits and can be likened to the main hub of UN activity. It is also a gateway for UN partnership and participation by the rest of the world by offering a unique global meeting point for productive dialogues among policymakers, parliamentarians, academics, foundations, businesses, youth and over 3,200 registered NGOs. Many of the decisions taken at the General Assembly are elaborated and externalised here.

In 1997 ECOSOC created the UN Development Group (UNDG) bringing together into a consortium 32 UN agencies and groups who's activities were previously encroaching on each other. The Sustainable Development Goals come under the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, which is part of this Consortium.

## The SDGs in context

The history of the SDGs can be traced to 1972 when governments met in Stockholm, Sweden, for the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment. In 1983 sustainable development finally included the concept of *"meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."* Agenda 21 was an outcome of the 1992 Rio Conference and led to the Millennium Development Goals. Rio+20 was convened in 2012 resulting in the need for measurable targets aimed at promoting sustainable development *globally*, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The SDGs are a set of seventeen ambitious "Global Goals" with 169 targets between them. Let me name them for you: 1) No Poverty 2) Zero Hunger 3) Good Health and Well-Being 4) Quality Education 5) Gender Equality 6) Clean Water and Sanitation 7) Affordable and Clean Energy 8) Decent Work and economic Growth 9) Industry Innovation and Infrastructure 10) Reduced Inequalities 11) Sustainable Cities and Communities 12) Responsible Consumption and Production 13) Climate Action 14) Life Below Water 15) Life on Land 16) Peace, justice and Strong Institutions 17) Partnerships for (attaining) the Goals.

The 192 Nations that ratified this programme also agreed to explore alternatives to GDP (Gross Domestic Product) as a measure of wealth that takes environmental and social factors into account in an effort to assess and pay for 'environmental services' provided by nature, such as carbon sequestration and habitat protection. States also reaffirmed commitments to phase out fossil fuel subsidies. The UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon admonished that there will be no alternative to the SDGs, as "there can be no Plan B, because there is no Planet B." There was also widespread consensus that progress against any and all of the SDGs will be stalled if empowerment of women and gender equality is not prioritised.

I want to mention one person who was instrumental in putting environment and sustainable development on the UN agenda. His commitment contributed much in introducing ecological values and the notion of sustainability in government practice.

What I personally love in Maurice Strong's example is that one does not need to be a perfect human, nor particularly holy one. Here we clearly have an individual with his flaws and weaknesses with a focus on what the world needed at that time. What he demonstrated is the importance of seizing the moment (of service) when the opportunity arises and this Maurice Strong did not once, but on different occasions.

Maurice Strong is in many ways a controversial figure because he was a former extractive industry executive. In 1971 he commissioned the world's first "state of the environment" report (by not less than 152 leading experts from 58 countries) on the state of the planet, *Only One Earth: The Care and Maintenance of a Small Planet*, in preparation for the first UN meeting on the environment in 1972. The Stockholm Conference established the environment as part of an international development agenda and led to the establishment in 1972 of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) which was the first UN agency to be headquartered in the third world, in Nairobi, Kenya. To put this into perspective, the world's earliest Green party, the People Party



in the UK, came into existence in 1973, changing its name to Ecology Party two years later; while Die Grünen in Germany came into existence in 1980.

In 1988, as head of UNEP, Strong together with the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) convened the first international expert group meeting on *climate change* that led to the establishment of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Following Strong's role in leading the U.N.'s famine relief program in Africa and various other U.N. advisory assignments, he was appointed Secretary General of the U.N. Conference on Environment and Development, best known as the 1992 Rio Earth Summit.

This Summit was pivotal and resulted in Agenda 21, the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, the Statement of Forest Principles, the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity and it was the start of the Kyoto Protocol.

## Human Rights

1992 was also the year that saw the creation of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) though a Commission on Human Rights existed since 1946 and individuals like Eleanor Roosevelt were part of the drafting Committee of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

In 2006 Kofi Annan elevated the Commission on Human Rights to the Human Rights Council and it moved from ECOSOC to the General Assembly. It is symbolic of a growing up and of taking on more responsibility, from it being just one of many activities under ECOSOC to it coming under the will aspect of the General Assembly, reflecting the will of nations to incorporate human rights.

Human rights are commonly understood as being fundamental rights *to which a person is inherently entitled simply for being a human* and which apply to everybody. They are also categorized as generations, a first-generation right (where protection is of life itself and right of political participation), a second-generation right refers to economic, social and cultural rights (that which is directly related to our daily needs, to stay alive) and a third-generation is a solidarity rights (collective rights related to the environment, to peace and related to the rights of future generations)

It is important to mention that sometimes it is Member States that set the pace as has been the case with *the African Charter on Human Rights and Peoples' Rights*, the *Banjul Charter*, that was ratified by all but one African states and came into effect in 1986. This Charter recognises group rights to a degree not matched by any European or Inter-American regional human rights instruments. In this sense it is more advanced, more inclusive as it recognises individual rights, collective or group rights and third-generation human rights.

This Charter does not only awards rights to individuals and peoples, but also includes *duties* incumbent upon them, e.g. harmony in the family, service to the whole, solidarity, cultural values, the moral and well-being of society.

But states are also setting new standards that transcend even third generation rights! In 2000 animals, plants and other organisms had their rights to dignity recognised by the Constitution of Switzerland (art. 120), though the implications of this disposition are still not very clear.

in 2008 Ecuador became *the first country in the world* to codify the Rights of Nature into its Constitution. Articles 10 and 71–74 recognize the *inalienable rights of ecosystems to exist and flourish*, gives people the authority to petition on the behalf of ecosystems, and requires the government to remedy violations of these rights. The articles set out a rights-based system that recognizes Nature, or *Pachamama*, as a right-bearing entity that holds value in itself, apart from human use. The ecosystem itself can be named as the defendant.

In 2010 Bolivia passed the world's first law *granting all nature equal rights to humans*. It sets forth a legal and ethical vision of the rights of the natural world. The law defines Mother Earth as "*...the dynamic living system formed by the indivisible community of all life systems and living beings whom are interrelated, interdependent, and complementary, which share a common destiny*" adding that "*Mother Earth is considered sacred in the worldview of Indigenous peoples and nations*. In this approach human beings and their communities are considered a part of Mother Earth, by being integrated in "*Life systems, complex and dynamic communities of plants, animals, micro-organisms and other beings in their environment, in which human communities and the rest of nature interact as a functional unit, under the influence of climatic, physiographic and geologic factors, as well as the productive practices and cultural diversity of Bolivians of both genders, and the world views of*

*Indigenous nations and peoples, intercultural communities and the Afro-Bolivians*". This definition can be seen as a more inclusive definition of ecosystems because it explicitly includes the social, cultural and economic dimensions of human communities.

In 2012 New Zealand's Whanganui River was legally declared a person with standing (via guardians) to bring legal actions to protect its interests.

We are seeing here that rights for nature could not have entered into constitutions (which represent a collective) unless enough members of the human family had invoked and were ready for such an expansion of responsibility. New values are now embedded within our unconscious and will be challenging our *value systems*, not just *some* values.

We can see that the next tests are already unfolding: responsibility for ecosystems so that we and other non-human living beings with whom we *share* this planet can also thrive; changes in how we feed ourselves and how we treat animals, changes in how we grow food and treat the soil and water, a drip-drip of continuous small changes.

The above examples had already happened at state level while it was only in 2012 that the Human Rights Council (HRC) created a Special Procedures mandate on the Environment while Resolution A/HRC/33/L.18 on a *Declaration on a Right to Peace* has been adopted less than a month ago. Both can be considered third generation rights and show an expansion of responsibilities at the UN.

But through the HRC we can also glimpse that "We the Peoples" is becoming more of a reality. A/HRC/33/L.28 is a Resolution on *equal participation in political and public affairs* where the Council urges all States to ensure the full, effective and equal participation of all citizens in political and public affairs, and ... to prepare concise and action-oriented draft guidelines as a set of orientations for States on the effective implementation of the right to participate in public affairs. Such participation in public affairs is also called *participative democracy*...

The SDGs' "*Leave No One Behind*" is also a wish to care for the other, to be inclusive.

One last point: what is important to remember is that values change over time and values expand; linked to values is a sense of responsibility. We are told by H. P. B. that the sense of responsibility is one of the first indications of egoic control, and as more and more of the human family come under egoic influence, conditions will be bettered slowly and steadily in every department of life.

Response-ability means being able to respond, being ready, something is being heard, something is being envisioned. As such the united nations are indeed responding to the call to help externalize that Plan that was entrusted to it.

I close by thanking you for our time together and wish you a lovely and meaningful stay in Geneva.

\* \* \*

**BREAK**

\* \* \*

## Consciousness leading to world understanding

There are two ways of approaching the history of humanity's evolution.

The first starts from a consideration of form and depicts the evolving side in society, behaviours, and so on, while seeking the proper departure point in order to reach an understanding of the mutations. Such inquiry is interesting, although it leaves great questions unanswered: Where does it lead us? Into what direction are we proceeding? Which meaning does it have? Is our society proceeding towards its own self-destruction? Or towards a superb outstanding society? Which one? Nobody knows, as in this approach there is neither vision nor direction to be found.

Secondly, we can also consider humanity's history as well as evolution from the standpoint of consciousness, starting with the evolution of the states of consciousness. Therewith, things become quite clear in relation to the present experience of humanity and its paradoxical progression leading to both better conditions of life, as well as planetary deterioration. It would also show us whereon humanity is heading...

This second approach will convey a better understanding of the prevailing obsession with economic growth, a problem on which both economists and politicians are active, but as yet contradicting each other within a stalemate. The absence of growth is often presented as the cause of all our difficulties. In order to resume growth, some observers are ready to sacrifice whole generations of workers, as well as the entire framework of planetary resources.

Economical science, however, often neglects its own nature as a human science, and therefore remains quite dependent upon the evolution of human consciousness. We truly need some clarification about the present and future states of consciousness. At present what are the different states of consciousness existing on the planet?

## Consciousness of dependency

If we observe our present humanity, we notice that human beings who have not yet developed their mind through schooling and education, who have not yet developed "the modern civilization", actually live in a state of consciousness which we could characterize as **a state of instinctual interdependency**. I say "instinctive" since it concerns an unconscious process, not thought through at all, but instead arising as a self-evidence inherited from some far away past.

Concerning these societies, nothing can stand as separated or independent. There exists an unavoidable interdependency between man and nature. Under no circumstance could they have an idea of being separated from nature, or consider oneself as superior to it. They respect nature and avoid any destruction; they feel themselves as an integral part of the environment. They represent a wisdom which we have lost, we will shortly see why.

Often we may dream about such societies, in which we can behold some lost paradise, a natural wisdom, a tranquillity of life which incites us to consider some possible return to the sources...

The drawback of such consciousness lies in the absence of individualisation. It presents neither independency, nor autonomy. The personality as well as its potentialities have not yet been developed. Each individual exists in relation to the tribe, the people and their customs. Each person exists within a dependent sort of consciousness, since a reliance on someone else is ever present: be it a leader, a tribe, a family, customs, a place, and so on. Such form of dependence is ever accepted, each one having its place, its role as well as an acceptance of submissiveness to ancestral laws, without being able to affirm any sort of individuality that could oppose such traditions.

Such state of consciousness avoids considerations about growth. The latter remains extremely weak and slow. Economy is essentially centred upon survival as well as upon a progressive growth of a minimum of comfort. Most of the time, such populations depend upon agriculture, hunting, fishing for subsistence.

## Awareness of independence

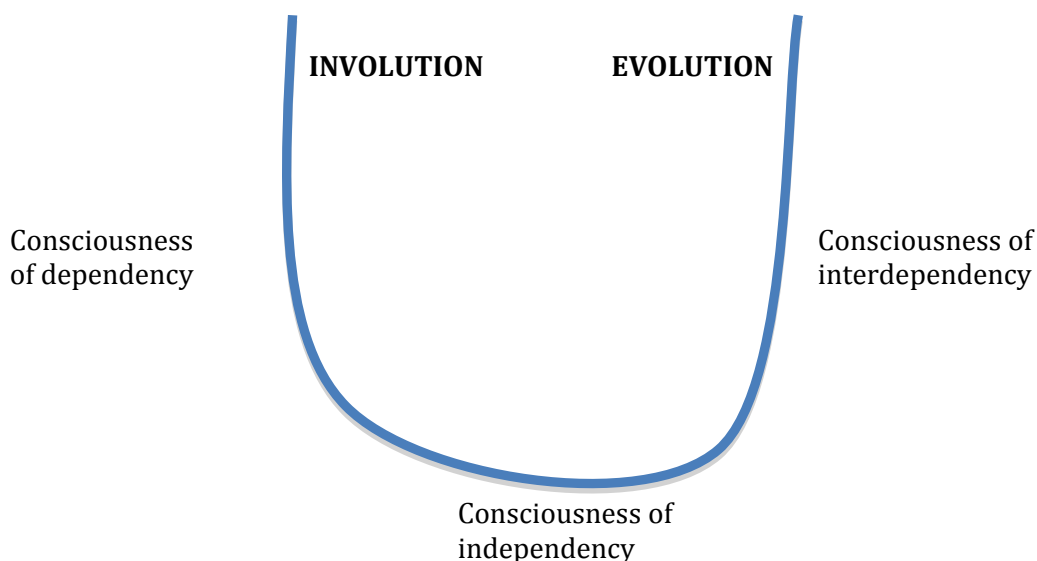
The more a society promotes - via schooling - mental development, the more individuals begin to individualise and distance themselves from traditions. Consequently instinctive interdependency with nature gives way to exploitation; from former solidarity, now each one seems to seek his or her own benefit, leading to competition; egoistic attitudes become prevalent in all ways of life. This structuration of the ME brings us

gradually towards the bottom of the curve of involution, until the state independency and conscious, fully affirmed autonomy is reached.

*"I, me, I exist, and me in my life, I do whatever I wish with what I want, whenever I will, and with no justification to give to anyone!"*

Such state of consciousness promotes the importance of oneself and its felt needs. Love of possessions, power or the emphasis given to the pleasure of consuming, all come on to the foreground. The personality is endowed with entrepreneurship; liberalism becomes the rule. The net result represents our "modern" society. An affluent society characterized by poor apportionment, additionally consuming all the time our planetary resources without discrimination. Growth becomes a fundamental dogma asking everyone to comply with it. Such is the key to our civilization! This looks like a fall as well as a degradation of society...

We could also consider this situation as an involution, or a substantiation of the personality, and a gradual shifting of collective consciousness towards an individual and individualistic consciousness.



We may trace a curve moving from the left to the right side in order to represent this movement of consciousness. The first, descending limb of the curve, represents involution. While gradually losing the consciousness of instinctive interdependency [mass-type of unitary consciousness], humanity builds itself successive bodies. Towards the bottom of the curve --the remotest point from the collective-- individualism is powerful. Thereafter on the ascending limb both evolution and global awareness are progressing.

#### **Essential distinctions between the various types of consciousness**

Individuals characterized by mass consciousness **tend to sustain traditional past values through the present**. They invariably seek to retrieve past values into the present, those values that ever existed. As a result, each child has the duty to fully learn what parents seek to transmit from their ancestors, so that later this unaltered patrimony can be further imparted.

However, it is obvious that within the consciousness of independency one would not be so concerned about the past. Indeed, **personal values of the present would be promoted** without consideration of the past. Consequently we could ask if this does not represent the end of history, the end of humanity as some predict in the short term, or the end of the planet Earth, in view of the prevailing egoism which relentlessly grows and becomes more elaborated. Whereas pioneering populations knew how to preserve nature throughout such a long time period, our present society characterized by individual consciousness proceeds with the speedy destruction of nature.

Fortunately the curve is ascending! It results from the third state of consciousness: **a perfectly conscious awareness of interdependency**. The latter has nothing to do with instinctual interdependency since it now includes an autonomous type of consciousness. It would more correct to call it **inter-independent consciousness**. Such state of consciousness gradually arises out of the variety of questions which individualism generates. The discovery of the existence of the other is its net result. This can be the other Self as such, or else other humans, other kingdoms. We gradually become conscious of one another, and of the

necessity to live together globally, in interrelationship. We realize that living as if we were alone is no longer possible. We would have to also acknowledge the existence of animals, plants, and minerals. A state of consciousness is arising which both opens us towards others, and which induces us to think and act in terms of cooperation as well. Such a state of consciousness seeks to promote within the present the anticipated values of the future.

Egoism is gradually left aside in favour of a globalized consciousness. Material growths are progressively forsaken in favour of inner growth. Consumer societies become fully re-evaluated. In all domains, from agriculture to culture, health education, from currencies to political behaviours, all become enfolded by a thought giving prominence to the collective. Such is the observed emergence within our present society. All paradigms of an individualistic society are put to the test, in the same way that such a society modified all beliefs and behaviours of the previous, dependent society.

### **Can we have confidence that the curve is now actually ascending?**

Indeed, from a planetary standpoint, we observe that a massive number of persons arise into individual consciousness. Thanks to educational progress all over the world, many emerging nations present a high level of growth; more and more individuals dream about a consumer society and reach the bottom of the curve. Would the risks of conflicts about primary resources, water scarcity and pollution and climate changes bring mankind itself in jeopardy? Would there be a threat that the curve transforms itself into an endless descent and therewith that of humanity?

About fifty years ago we could have answered:

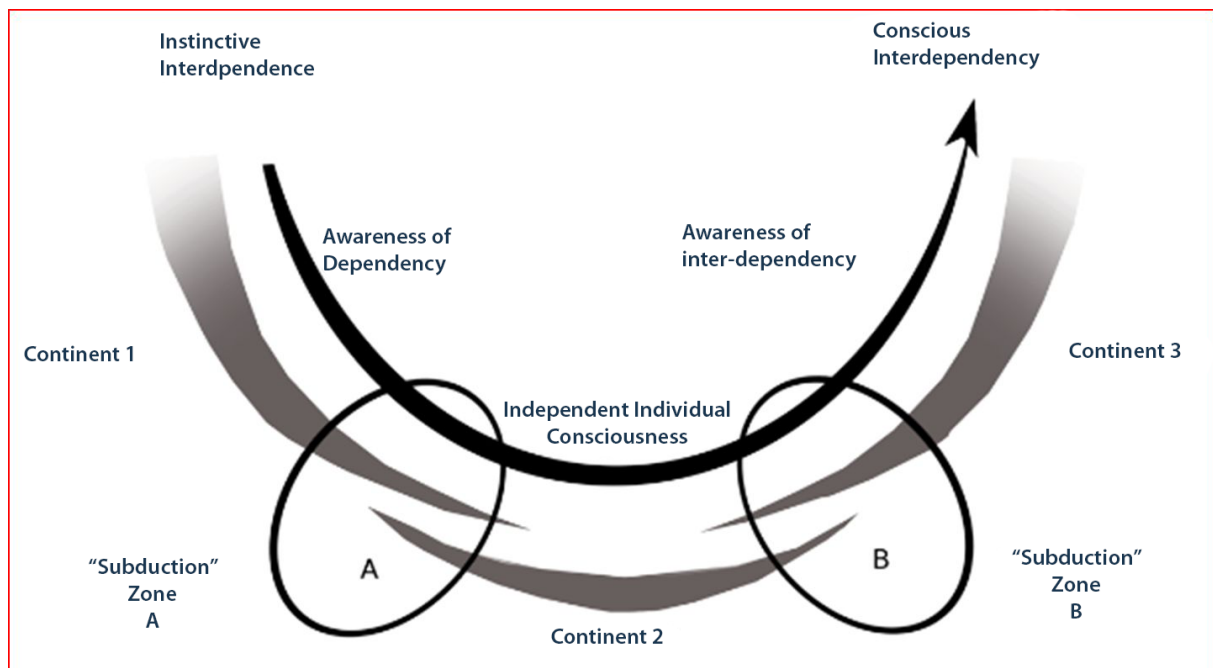
*"Wise men, philosophers, scientists, politicians are some of the numerous harbingers concerning global consciousness, interdependency; however, would humanity be ready to follow them? Nobody would have known the answer. Few are the signs that could now confirm it, and danger is effectively present".*

Today an ever growing fraction of our society comes step by step into this state of awareness of inter-dependency. Every day we behold the growing prevalence of this state of consciousness of one another manifesting on the international, societal, and ecological spheres. Every day we can observe in books or movies the first signs of a new world consciousness. Pioneers conscious of a new world become more prevalent. They indicate for us the future and point to the proper direction.

On the other hand, an overdose of egoistic society, dogma about consumption and non-egalitarian culture also are manifesting everywhere. This explains how since half a century a double development has been taking place. While more and more persons reach the bottom of the curve, developing individual consciousness --with all the implied consequences about consumption-- in parallel another portion of society is breaking off from such a state of consciousness and the implied model of civilization. Let us map then the consequences upon a threefold curve.

### **The three continents of consciousness**

Upon this curve we again find the three states of consciousness which we will compare with three continents. The first continent represents consciousness of dependency. Numerous billions of individuals live on this continent, being fully representative of this particular state of consciousness. The second continent represents full self-consciousness, individual consciousness. About one billion people live on this continent. They proceed with their lives, as well as their creativity, without being overly disturbed by existential considerations. The third continent represents global consciousness and concerns some hundreds of millions of individuals.



This diagram differs from the previous one by highlighting the sequential merging between the three continents on two important zones. These concern events in time wherein states of consciousness are mutually interfering both within ourselves, as well as within society and the world. Beginning with zone A, we have a sequential merging between mass consciousness and independent consciousness. Then in zone B the sequential merging between individual consciousness and the consciousness of inter-independency. These represent two effectively important zones on which quite a few earth dwellers find themselves.

You are aware that continents undergoing tectonic plate processes represent plates that have a tendency to plunge onto one another, leading to the so-called subduction zones, as for example along the Japanese fault. Were continents very gradually gliding relative to each other, this would lead to lesser complications under progressive sequential merging. Such, however is not actually the case, as there are frictions, rubbings, and thereafter a sudden release which on the surface manifests as an earthquake. Consequently any zone of subduction can cause earthquakes leading to destructions and the recurrence of “natural” disasters. From the point of view of consciousness the same process is present. **There are three continents of consciousness.** Within each one of these “continents” crises are not very frequent, everyone being well seated within his own norm of consciousness. On the other hand, the transfer from one another takes place as sequential merging, or true zones of subduction triggering important seisms of civilization on a world scale. These are high amplitude crises zones, both within society as well as within the individual.

### Zone A and world seisms

At present, the subduction zone A is very active in the world. It triggers the bulk of conflicts on our planet and will remain very active as long as most humans will not have found their place upon the second continent of consciousness. This concerns all the nations whose bulk of population actually seeks liberation from autocratic rule, religions, or in-egalitarian social habits, as well as from any factor opposing the freedom of expression of individual autonomy. Such nations are deeply divided between on the one hand, promoters of religious, nationalistic or social traditions, and on the other hand those encouraging individual liberty, as well as equal treatment before the law, whatever the sex or social condition may be. The complexity involved is compounded by the fact that the subduction of two continents of consciousness also has its counterpart within individuals. There ever arises a point where both tradition and modernity meet in inner conflict with each other. How could we evolve without also denying our roots? This seems not so simple to solve!

Frictions between mass consciousness and interdependent consciousness are everywhere to be seen in the world. This would include all forms of economic colonialism; the reliance of Indian farmers on the genetically modified food crop seeds by agro chemistry; multinational profits made on cheap workforce; rural migration enlarging industrial worker population, and so on.

The merging of these two continents of consciousness allows the second to produce more and more, as well as magnify an ever unsatisfied growth! The more powerful the earthquake is, the greater the resulting extent of destruction. This could lead to the end of a society, the end of a form of civilization or a state.

### **Zone B and world seisms**

This second zone of subduction takes place between persons still involved with individual consciousness and persons moving on from a broad type of consciousness to global consciousness. Such a zone deals with all the disagreements relative to the liberal society in existence now since about one century and a half within the so-called developed nations. The growing consciousness on the third continent depends upon a growth of the quality of life, in contradistinction to quantity of life; a promotion of right relations between individuals, and not some paternalism imposing an exclusive type of thought; recognition of all types of life upon Earth, and the avoidance of exploitation of, as well as cruelty towards, animals and plants.

The crisis of growth results from this mighty overthrow at work within the zone of friction. Growth concerns all individuals on the second continent of consciousness. Wherever they are predominant there will be growth. On the other hand we have to realize that wherever consciousness of inter-dependence starts to impose itself, there will remain only minimal quantitative growth! The acceptance by politicians that growth will no longer resume as previously has become an urgency. From now on it becomes vital to promote new ways of consuming, sharing as well as working.

Seisms are numerous, for example in deterioration of democracies, unemployment, the financial crisis of the year 2008. The monetary system that was barely rescued at that time represented only a small kind of warning. However the seism, the big one that rapidly approaches closer seems unavoidable. In the same way that no one could prevent a continental plate from undergoing subsidence under another plate, so nobody can prevent the new state of consciousness from developing, together with the subsequent elimination of the previous one. It is unavoidable.

### **Why would change not proceed faster?**

Because the area of pulling forces and of contradiction also involves our inner being! Indeed, one part of us seeks to think and act within the group or from a planetary perspective. We should, however, also recognize the presence of our too powerful individuality which remains dependent upon emotions... Yes, within our very being there are also contradictions, dualities that regularly cause seisms.

Observing planetary evolution from the standpoint of crises of consciousness allows one to understand the quantitative crisis of growth. This highlights the cause of all the other crises, whether political, religious, societal... including individual ones! The rather mysterious unfoldment of human history --if we look only at the events-- clarifies itself, if interpreted in terms of the evolution of consciousness. It would be good to become aware of that.

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## **The United Nations: Reflecting the World, Reflecting Ourselves**

*Judith Hegedus*

Any process to implement an idea is a complex one. How do we get from thought to action? There isn't actually that much time left before 2030. How do we ensure effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda or the Sustainable Development Goals? It is commendable that these Goals have been formulated, and this is an example of the recognition of our global interconnectedness as one humanity. It is not an easy task to implement something like this, but we can do it by creating a vertical alignment between the thoughts, the words, and the actions for individuals as well as governments. We also need a horizontal and focused alignment between individual citizens' efforts, national governments, and the United Nations. This is a task for every member of the human family, and for all responsible national governments. The United Nations is uniquely qualified as the organization leading the way for the SDG implementation and inspiring humanity. We have the thoughts and the words already in the form of the published 2030 Agenda – we just need to make sure that the proper actions follow, aligned with the thoughts and words. What roles do individual citizens, governments and the UN itself have in an effective implementation?

I worked as an internal management consultant at United Nations Headquarters in New York 10 years ago. My small unit's mandate was to help UN departments operate more efficiently in the organizational and financial sense, given

their mandates. It was a tremendous opportunity to get to know the organization, although it has taken me many years to really understand the nature of the work that I did, and how to manage the organizational challenges and find solutions to them. I must admit I encountered frustration daily at the beginning of my work at the UN. It was usually the implementation of otherwise well-designed projects that did not quite succeed, or not fast enough. With time, I realized that this simply reflected the world we live in: often individuals as well as governments have narrowly and rather selfishly defined agendas, frequently alongside more holistic aspirations based on global goodwill for humanity as a whole. Sometimes both types of motivations can be present at the same time, one weaker, the other one stronger. Which one wins out? The answer is: the side that we consciously strengthen. Every human being has a responsibility now to strengthen the ability and willingness to practice problem solving from a holistic, unselfish perspective, regardless of the economic and geographic position of the individual in life. National governments, at their level, also have a similar responsibility since they have the ability to make the SDGs actually happen through their policies.

When talking about implementing the SDGs, we focus mostly on governments, individuals and the civil sector, but corporations are very important as well. Corporations also have a responsibility to act more in the interest of the global whole in a sustainable way rather than serve the narrow purpose of increasing shareholder value to a limited number of individuals. But is there an incentive to make this happen now? Probably not yet, although we are slowly getting there. Skilled corporate leaders with goodwill and a global vision will not be enough to change the current focus, unfortunately: we need an economic system that rewards a sustainable resource allocation, and we don't have it yet. Instead, we have a global economic system that rewards only growth at any cost. I would flag this as a priority to create this New Economy as fast as we can. Often corporations have more resources at their disposal to create change than some national governments. However change is coming faster than we think: a decade ago when I was in business school it was considered a revolutionary assignment when one of my professors asked us in class to write a paper on how to run a corporation for the benefit of all stakeholders involved. This included suppliers, employees, investors, consumers, and the local community. By now with the rise of social entrepreneurship, there are strong business minds that think about this every day and establish companies that they do run for the benefit of all stakeholders. I think this is also a useful analogy for the world: we need to run our world for the benefit of all of humanity, regardless of roles and functions fulfilled by nations.

Some people might debate this point, but I think the United Nations fully lives up to its potential of being a forum where different nations can discuss their issues with each other. When issues are fought out through discussions, with words, they are much less likely to be fought with weapons, resulting in the loss of human lives, although the latter still happens. But how can the UN lead the way for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda most effectively? Should it? The UN of today is the UN of governments, primarily: often governments view it as a place to grab more political and economic influence on the world stage, at the expense of other nations. They need to all understand that this is not a zero sum game. Instead the UN provides a forum where we can all start to think differently for the sake of humanity. Again, we have both perspectives present at the same time: the UN as a place of international cooperation, or the UN as a place of fighting for pieces of a zero-sum, limited pie? I hope that my former colleagues at the UN can really strengthen the former and help the organization hold that line. The truth is that by cooperating with others and focusing for the benefits for all, we can change the outcomes, so it is really never a zero sum game. This is true on the individual, national, and global levels.

It is very important to set the expectations clearly: the UN doesn't exist to directly fix countries' problems. Actually, at first glance those problems are amplified when one takes a look at the organization, because they are out in the open for everyone to see. I attribute my initial frustration as a newcomer staff member to the UN partly to this. I remember thinking: why can't we just rework budgets, reassign roles and make things happen, the way we would in any other public or private organization? The truth is, real change can only happen bottom up in a sustainable manner, never top down. This is messy by definition because it includes the complex process of consensus building, and this of course somewhat slows down implementation. However we need the UN leading: the UN is the only worldwide organization with the mandate and the ability to really effectively lead change processes for the world. It can speed up the bottom-up change processes by putting issues in focus, sharing information, and educating others. 21<sup>st</sup> century technologies are very effective tools for this – the other side of the coin is that they can spread hate and lies just as easily. Again, it is up to us: we choose what information we would like to share with others.

The real significance of the SDGs is that this is a chance to enact bottom-up, sustainable change – we already have consensus about the goals in thought. This is the beauty of this moment: by having a mental consensus about the SDGs, and by having every country in agreement, we have a good chance of making it happen, and this change will not be premature – therefore it will be sustainable and can have a lasting impact.



If the UN reflects the world the way it is today, by definition individuals need to exhibit certain traits in their everyday lives for the UN to function better and more effectively. Maybe this is the way to start real UN reform? We actually need to reform the way we act as individuals first before we demand it from others. However, there has to be a parallel with governments: we as individuals can and should demand change in behavior but I believe only after we implement change as individuals first. Change in individual behavior is the real foundation to any lasting change in the world. As Gandhi said: "Be the change that you wish to see in the world." It is very important to make conscious choices about things we control as individual citizens. But individual change is not enough, it is only the first step: a necessary but not sufficient condition to ensure further progress and the successful implementation of the SDGs.

It is worth pondering the following questions for us individually as global citizens:

What is my motivation? Am I working for the good of humanity in the holistic sense, no matter what my position in life? Am I showing goodwill to others on a practical level? Or am I working to procure as many material possessions, or influence for myself as possible?

Do I try to achieve change by coercing others and competing, or cooperating? Do I act in the spirit of unity rather than fragmentation, looking at issues from the perspectives of all involved?

What does sharing mean on the practical level? Do we all have an obligation to share what we have with others? To what extent? Do I consciously think about what I need as an individual, and how much of it, for myself? Do I honestly believe that all my fellow human beings are entitled to economic security?

Do I have a good idea about what skills I possess that can be useful for the world? Can I take a detached look at myself to evaluate this? I think the hallmark of the era we live in is that goodwill alone is not enough to be effective, neither by individuals nor by nations. We need skills in action to deliver outcomes, in addition to goodwill. A detached attitude that examines outcomes is essential, and we would all benefit from cultivating it, as would humanity as a whole. When implementing the SDGs, it will be very important during the national reviews to ask the question: is it working? What results are we seeing?

Another important question is accountability. Do I hold myself as well as my government accountable? Do I complete what I set out to do? When I did not do something, what was the reason? How did it impact others?

I also would like to mention the role of fear in our lives as individual citizens. Often fear keeps us from changing for the better. This is true of individuals to varying degrees, but it is true of governments even more. There is certain inertia in large organizations. Established politicians are rarely natural change agents. Fear can often keep us from making the right choice. We fear losing what we already have, and having to deal with the unknown. Even if we mentally understand that the change is better, emotionally we find it hard to commit to the change. This is very natural, but do we really need fear? Isn't it holding us back? Aren't we making ourselves prisoners if we allow fear to dominate our decision making? At the same time, we have to recognize that fear is natural. There are often very strong psychological reasons for why we feel comfortable primarily with people like ourselves, for example, or within our own culture. Yet we have to overcome fear by becoming aware of the factors that create it. Responsible governments and opinion makers should help people manage their fears, not stoke them and exploit them. Could we run change management courses for citizens, the way organizations run these for their employees? This could be a wonderful task for the education sector.

The opposite feeling to fear is actually love: the kind of love that comes from the recognition that we as human species are one, and every human being shares this trait in common with every other human being on Earth, regardless of skin color or native language or culture. Can we give love a chance as opposed to fear in our daily lives as well as in political decision making as global citizens? We have a unique time now to let our voices be heard and put pressure on governments to enact policies in the spirit of the SDGs. Public opinion is alive and well, but managing it requires careful thought.

Nations can ponder the same questions as individuals. All nations have a responsibility to ensure a sustainable future of humanity as a whole. Public opinion, individual citizens' efforts and the global civil sector should aid this recognition process. With the proliferation and the strengthening of the civil sector worldwide, the need for coordination also grows. Timely and appropriate communication among those involved becomes very important. The UN can remain as the coordinating anchor, but this is essentially a bottom-up process.

I would like to mention the role of education – a key area for the successful implementation of the SDGs. Eradicating poverty, and a sustainable future for our planet, without appropriately educating future generations is not possible.

Education is the key variable that can directly lead to peace. Sustainable peace is only possible when human beings realize deep down how to conduct appropriate human relations with each other. It is not possible to legislate peace. It is also not appropriate to view peace as solely the product of negotiations. Peace is a mindset, and an approach to action. A prerequisite for lasting peace is the recognition of the fundamental oneness of humanity and the equality of all human beings. Education can and should deliver this recognition by all. This will allow much more effective problem solving by individual citizens as well as governments in the future, practically speaking.

I have been working in the international education field for the past seven years, advocating for access to university and global student mobility. We have seen tremendous advances in education over the past several decades worldwide. It is important to remember that countries' starting positions were vastly different, in some countries the focus in recent decades has been on eradicating illiteracy, in some others on expanding access to university. It is the progress from the starting position itself that matters. The proliferation of technology in the 21<sup>st</sup> century as well as the increasing ease of travel could allow education to drastically change.

Yet education on the national level is not changing as fast as it should: often national governments treat this area in the most conservative way, in order to keep a tight monopoly on creating appropriate national citizens. Often we hear about the focus being on creating productive, employable citizens – hence the focus on things like Pisa and other results of subject-specific competitions. This completely misses the point.

Education is the key to unlock individual potential. In the spirit of our interconnected world, education should be increasingly interdisciplinary, global, and it should include multiple perspectives, everywhere in the world. This is already happening. One piece of evidence is the double-digit annual increase over the past few years in the number of international schools teaching some sort of international curriculum. Another piece of evidence is the explosion in the number of International Baccalaureate (IB) schools worldwide. These schools teach a global curriculum. We also see demand growing for bi-lingual education. Because governments are relatively slow to accommodate these perspectives in their national curriculum, often for-profit or not-for-profit school providers fill the void. Global student mobility has been on the rise since the 1990's, and despite some setbacks, it continues to increase, especially at university level. More and more students cross their national boundaries at least for some educational experience in another country. This helps strengthen the identity of future generations as global citizens, so these programs are very important to keep and expand if we want to have citizens all over the world to have the understanding of why we need the SDGs implemented, and focus on a just and sustainable world beyond SDG implementation.

One great example I would like to note here is the bilingual option of the French Baccalauréat. The program is based on bilateral agreements with other nations. The structure of the program is like this: France and the partner nation essentially “borrow” each other's perspectives and language for subjects like history, geography, and literature. In the French-German program called the AbiBac, French students learn about German history in German, and German students learn French history in French. The program is available in about 70 schools in France, and roughly the same number of schools in Germany. Similar bi-national programs exist with other nations, including one with the United States. This kind of program is a great way to teach different perspectives early on. Teaching children in their early years that others can be right, and we all have our perspectives, is essential.

Another really forward-looking educational example is LEAF Academy, a new, not-for-profit secondary boarding school that just opened in Bratislava, Slovakia. The school's mission focuses on ethics, excellence, entrepreneurial leadership and the civic engagement in one's own community. There is a character and self-discovery thread woven into the international curriculum. The school focuses on the Central European region, drawing most of their students from countries from that region. A core part of the curriculum is a Central European Studies Program for all: students will learn Central European history from the perspectives of the different nations in the region. Given the historical issues of the region with ethnic problems over centuries, this is a great initiative and for sure it will help create citizens understanding and implementing right human relations in the region.

There has been a large increase in recent years in supplementary global educational programs offered by non-profit organizations. This is a welcome development and I hope it continues. Technology allows schools worldwide to utilize these programs. One great example from my work in international education is the Canadian organization [WE.org](http://WE.org), a provider of service learning programs. They have recently partnered with the College Board, the provider of the Advanced Placement courses in American high schools. Students in select courses can do a year-long service learning project. They apply classroom skills to real-world challenges. Students are expected to complete one local and one global project. This allows students to focus on tackling a challenge bottom-up in their own community as well as learn about global interconnectedness. This is a very effective combination, and exactly what the world needs. There is also an explicit focus on skills to be learned and project outcomes, so students learn practical skills-in action

and also practice accountability. The sheer potential scale of this program is worth noting: potentially this impacts the more than 2 million students who took Advanced Placement courses in about 20,000 schools in the United States and in more than 120 other countries last year.

This is what [WE.org](http://WE.org) says about themselves on their website: “We are shameless idealists who believe that there is a version of our highest selves that comes from living a life of daily legacies”. This sentence has so much: a conscious choice to apply our higher selves, and the choices that this implies; the willingness to be driven by ideals, and to implement something daily to leave an impact. A great example for us all – to practice with persistence and a sense of humor.

Thank you.

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***We heartfully thank our translators without whom  
this review would not have been possible.***

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