UNESCO Leaders' Forum

How does UNESCO contribute to building a culture of peace and to sustainable development?

Summary of the debate

"*There is no route to peace, peace is the route*" (M. Gandhi)

On 26 and 27 October 2011, nine Heads of State and Government and 56 Ministers and Heads of Delegation participated in the UNESCO Leaders' Forum of the General Conference together with addresses by the President of the General Conference, the Chairperson of the Executive Board and the Director-General. In a lively debate, participants expressed their views, shared their countries' experiences and made recommendations on the importance of building a culture of peace and promoting sustainable development and UNESCO's role in these areas. Emphasizing the timeliness of the Leaders' Forum and the relevance of UNESCO's mandate, the speakers identified a number of relevant issues that should be taken into account when preparing the next C/4 and C/5 documents. These are summarized below along a number of cross-cutting thematic axes:

THE GLOBAL SETTING: EMERGING CHALLENGES TO PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT

An era of multiple global crises aggravated by a crisis of values

Globalization has placed humanity into a global village. It has created an unprecedented rapprochement of cultures and peoples, and has been accompanied in recent years with significant and welcome improvements. Many countries have experienced sustained growth and trade in recent decades; science, technology, and innovation have progressed apace; populations have

made giant strides towards quality education; and communications have become a driving force of globalization. However, progress remains incomplete, fragile and unequal – risking serious divides. The world is affected by a series of global crises, including the economic and financial crisis, the environmental crisis, and most notably climate change, and the food crisis. Above all, progress is hampered by the persistence of poverty, the steady growth of inequalities, the erosion of social cohesion in many countries, and the growing degradation in the world's environment. Migration of people has become a common feature of contemporary life, creating fluid cultural settings worldwide and the need to reconcile cultural diversity and social cohesion within more and more diversified societies. The rich potential of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue remains largely unexploited. In many countries, societies have witnessed the development of various forms of exclusion, discrimination and marginalization that can lead to violence and extremist acts. The world remains far from the ideal of social cohesion based on shared global ethics. Indeed, while material considerations dominate the international discourse, there is a need to acknowledge that the present crises are aggravated by a crisis of values that can be solved only if the world sets itself firmly on the path to a culture of peace and sustainable development.

Two sides of the same coin

As human-centred approaches to address current global challenges, a culture of peace and sustainable development are intrinsically linked and mutually reinforcing, peace cannot be realized lastingly without sustainable development and vice versa. Those two intertwined paths are indispensable to respond to today's complex multiple crises. They also influence good governance, neither repressive nor corrupted, based on human rights, the rule of law and democratic principles. In fact, peace must not be considered as the mere absence of war, but as an environment where human rights are observed and where every person has the possibility to realize his or her potential. For its part, sustainable development must be seen as a dynamic and complex process with immediate and long-term needs to fulfil. Both the culture of peace and sustainable development are profoundly ethical challenges. Core elements of peace and sustainable development are respect of life, human rights, dignity, freedom, stability, social harmony, duty of forgiveness, justice, tolerance, mutual respect, solidarity, gender equality, and lasting and sincere dialogue.

Peace is sacred, but cannot be taken for granted

Peace – as a right and as a duty – is a political, civic, ethical and pedagogical imperative, indeed a basis for moral solidarity of humankind. As such, it contributes to harmonious coexistence, social cohesion, and a strong sense of belonging locally and globally. But peace is always fragile. It can disappear at once, even in countries where it has a long tradition. Peace should not be taken for granted. It is an ongoing process requiring constant engineering, vigilance and active participation by all. It also encompasses a long-term vision, which necessitates a permanent and firm commitment and entails a blend of traditional and contemporary modalities to understand the roots of conflicts and the ways to mitigate violence. Peace is under threat owing to poverty, inequity and inequalities, injustice, unemployment, lack of opportunities, and young people's vulnerability, especially in urban settings. A certain "romanticization" of violence through new media and games can be a particular threat to peace for youth. Humanity will not gain peace if we are blind to future gains and only conscious of immediate benefits. The proposition by the late President of Côte d'Ivoire, Félix Houphouët-Boigny in 1971 on the situation of African countries remains valid for all regions and countries: "Peace within the African States should be based on justice, tolerance, dialogue, respect for human dignity and the respect for freedom, equality between men."

Prosperity as dignity: poverty is a violation of human rights

Poverty eradication and the promotion of equitable socio-economic growth are strategic paths on the road to a culture of peace and achieving sustainable development. People in dire economic situations are easily prey to polarization, extremism, violence and conflicts. In many developing and developed countries where young people constitute a significant proportion of the population, it

has become crucial to foster environments where people can seize economic opportunities and seek dignity through employment. At the global level, both peace and sustainable development are indispensible for nations to work towards shared prosperity.

Gender equality – an imperative for peace and sustainable development

Gender equality is a paramount foundation for peace. There is a need to foster a non-violent struggle for women's rights, empowerment and political participation at all levels. Gender equality should not be developed only at the level of national or international leadership, but also at the local level, where the most difficult challenges to women's and girls' access to basic services, such as education and health are to be found. Women and girls are still denied the same opportunities as those afforded their male counterparts. Women and girls worldwide need to be empowered to develop their full potential, as a human right, a question of social justice, and as a precondition to genuine sustainable development. Attention to gender equality means also that the situation of young men should equally be addressed, especially when they come from disadvantaged backgrounds where they are exposed to violence and criminality.

Youth – the democratic pulse of contemporary societies

Youth, the democratic pulse of today's world, must be empowered as actors for peace and inclusive sustainable development. Young women and men are agents for peace and benefit from it. Likewise, their role in development is strategic as they have a potential and energy that are near limitless. Youth want their critical voice to be heard. Too often, indeed, their potential is stifled as they bear the brunt of poverty, unemployment and exclusion. It is telling that the aspirations expressed by youth during the Arab Spring entail both a call for democracy and a claim to social dignity. Sustainability cannot be achieved when societies are unable to fulfil the socio-economic aspirations of the young women and men whom they have nonetheless educated at a huge cost. Youth education and employment should thus be given due attention – this will be one of the most pressing challenges for Africa, where 60% of the population is under 30. National strategies should prepare young people for actively participating and contributing to the improvement of their socio-economic environment in a sustainable way, notably through youth entrepreneurship skills programmes. A Special Youth Fund could also be created so as to help curb violence, discrimination and extremism through dialogue and knowledge sharing.

Pluralism, inclusive participation and social cohesion – foundations of democracy

A culture of peace and sustainable development rest on a common set of principles including democratic participation, social cohesion, the rule of law, justice, equity and human rights. Good governance is a key component of both. Supporting democratic processes and strengthening good governance require commitment from all stakeholders. To avoid social or generational conflicts, it is crucial to develop future-oriented approaches that take into account the needs and aspirations of all segments of societies, especially women, youth, and vulnerable populations. This endeavour should be supported with the development of specific indicators capturing social cohesion.

The need for sustainable global governance

While globalization offers opportunities to an increasing number of countries and individuals, a number of countries, both in the developed and the developing world, are exposed to the negative and adverse effects of unsustainable forms of development. In this context, there is a need for strategies to address the despair of peoples who find themselves isolated and without prospects for advancement, jobs and prosperity. Today's great challenge is to rethink global governance in an inclusive manner. Governance in the era of globalization should have a diverse and human face and prove capable of reducing economic, social, technological, cultural as well as knowledge and digital divides. This would be best achieved through projects arising from cooperation between developed, emerging and developing countries. As for the most vulnerable countries, that are

those most affected by the various crises, their development requires adapting the present structures and mechanisms of the multilateral system. It is a responsibility for all.

Dialogue, solidarity and creativity – a humanist approach for the twenty-first century

Despite the current context of global crises, we should look towards the future with optimism and commit to address challenges by means of genuine dialogue. The multiple crises are a symptom of the fact that we are experiencing the emergence of a new world that is more interconnected, complex and diverse. Problems must be approached from a humanist perspective based on the respect for human rights and cultural diversity and on the practice of non-violence, tolerance and dialogue. It is only with such a moral compass that the ties of solidarity between peoples and within societies can be created, and the lasting conditions for peace and sustainable development be laid. The challenge is to enlarge the common denominator of values and principles that bind us all together as human beings, while guarding against the pressures of uniformity. In that light, humanism in the twenty-first century should rest upon a broad conception of tolerance, pertaining not only to social and intercultural relations but also to openness with respect to creative ideas – affecting ethical attitudes, consumption patterns, business models and ground-breaking technologies. This humanism based on dialogue, solidarity and creativity has the potential to greatly facilitate the invention of unprecedented solutions to the current world's problems.

FOCUS FOR FUTURE ACTIONS

Participants in the Leaders' Forum reaffirmed that UNESCO's mandate and expertise in education, the sciences, culture, communication and information give the Organization the most valuable and appropriate means to enhance international cooperation and work with Member States towards building a culture of peace and ensuring sustainable development. With an intersectoral and interdisciplinary perspective that cuts across its five sectors, UNESCO can support its Member States in developing holistic strategies to strike a harmonious balance between the interrelated requirements of the economy, society and environmental stewardship:

Quality education – a key lever for peace and development

Education is perhaps the most effective lever to building a culture of peace and sustainable development. Education should be seen as a comprehensive framework resting on four pillars: learning to know, learning to do, learning to be and learning to live together. Education must be accessible to all, of high quality and relevance and must contribute to changing the way we think and behave in order to achieve a more just, peaceful and sustainable future. In that sense, peace education and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) are corollaries. Literacy is a prerequisite for peace and human, as well as socio-economic, development. In the context of the global financial crisis, special attention must be paid to the needs of the most vulnerable and marginalised populations and of countries in conflict or post-conflict and post-disaster situations. Community ownership of education could be achieved by empowering populations from the grassroots level, by reaching out to the marginalized, paying special attention to women and girls. More generally, education and lifelong learning are key to empowering youth and adults to become responsible citizens actively contributing to building a culture of peace and to sustainable development. To this effect, Member States should develop and apply guidelines, teaching and training materials, including for teachers, designed to mainstream the respect for human rights, solidarity, honesty, peace and democracy.

Education for sustainable development – a key component of values education

Progress towards the Education for All (EFA) goals and the education-related Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) must be complemented with UNESCO's strong leadership by expanding the scope and outreach of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), which focuses on the knowledge and the attitudes needed in a world marked by an array of new economic, social

and environmental challenges. Education systems and policies, school curricula, teacher education and training programmes, literacy and adult education programmes must be founded on the principles of solidarity, inclusion, respect for human rights, intercultural dialogue and cultural diversity, environmental awareness, tolerance, negotiation, entrepreneurship and creativity. The intersectoral and interdisciplinary dimensions of education for sustainable development, which has deep ties with technical and vocational training and education (TVET) is bound to engender new ways of thinking, new social and ethical attitudes, and innovative responses aimed at fostering sustainable development and low-carbon green practises. Consequently, national capacity in TVET should be reformed and strengthened in order to help young people develop relevant skills. UNESCO should support changes in lifestyles, attitudes, behaviours conducive to sustainable development and ensure coherence of the sustainable development mechanisms and policies at national, regional and international levels.

Civic education @ the crossroads of peace education and ESD

Education must provide for the acquisition of content and the transmission of values. Civic education can be seen as a means to jointly address the requirements of the culture of peace and sustainable development, which constitute essential components in the moral compass of the citizens of the next century. Learning environments must be conceived so as to foster a culture of non-violence, mutual respect and dialogue. Consideration should be given to arts education and to sport as an educational instrument fostering predispositions to dialogue, to respect for rules and to selflessness. Multilingual education, human rights and peace education, cross-border education and intercultural education at all levels, in formal and informal education, could nurture cross-fertilization of cultures, and thus bolster knowledge on cultural diversity and appreciation of other people's cultures. Comprehensive curriculum reform should be supported so as to integrate education for peace and human rights, civics and intercultural education, as well as remembrance education, also to enhance knowledge about cultural diversity and appreciation of other people's cultures. A "universal" curriculum – expressing universal values spreading across all cultures – could be designed as a cornerstone in educating for peace and tolerance.

Scientific innovation and cooperation for peace and sustainable development

Science and technology have an important role to play in providing solid responses in the peace-development context. Environmental challenges such as climate change, biodiversity losses or oceanic degradations will require increased investments into science, research and technology, especially through innovative projects, such as the use of satellite imagery to manage resources, the survey of individual ecosystems and the strengthening of the knowledge base for renewable energies, in particular solar energy. Other key aspects of sustainable development are the effective management of natural resources as well as the connection between cultural and biological diversity, largely illustrated in the rich practices of local and indigenous people on all continents. All those dimensions call for new approaches to involve cross-sectoral coordination, and integration of environmental and social concerns into all development processes. Providing science-based knowledge, building science capacities for research, training and the popularization of science in development-oriented areas, as well as sharing the transfer of scientific information, are collective and ethical responsibilites, bearing in mind, the borderless nature of the global environmental crises. The culture of peace should go hand in hand with a culture of conservation. UNESCO could support governments in the design and formulation of science, technology and innovation policies, which must also include ethical dimensions as well as be geared towards intensifying efforts in the field of disaster management and early warning systems, which are indispensable to the social and economic resilience of countries.

Sustainable development – a necessity for countries with special needs, especially in Africa

While the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Agenda 21 have been recognized as strategic ways to lay the foundations for sustainable development, the current global crises are jeopardizing the capacity of developing countries to attain those objectives. This has dire

consequences for priority groups of countries with recognized special needs, such as the least developing countries (LDCs), the small island developing States (SIDS) and most countries in Africa. For instance, Small Island Developing States face ever-increasing challenges resulting from climate change, which devastates crops, habitations and coastlines. As for Africa, its paradox is the extensive wealth of its human and natural resources on the one hand, and the extreme poverty of large parts of its population on the other. In this era of globalization, the world cannot genuinely prosper with profound inequalities between regions, which eventually threaten social justice, stability, security and peace. This is another reason why it is imperative to anchor the principles of sustainable development in all dimensions of international cooperation and collaboration. UNESCO and governments should take advantage of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD or Rio+20) to be held in Rio in 2012 to rethink policies and approaches towards sustainable development. This should include addressing issues pertaining to global ocean governance, the critical importance of water management, green economies and green societies, with particular attention to the situations of countries with priority needs.

Facilitating peace and understanding between cultures

UNESCO is the prime forum for dialogue involving a vibrant and interdependent humanity aiming at shared peace and well-being. Without intercultural and interreligious dialogues, as well as goodwill and mutual understanding, no culture of peace can emerge. Building on its work on global and regional histories or the slave route, UNESCO should encourage individuals and communities to explore their cultures as well as the cultures of other nations. Culture is a major area where society meets itself, where it discovers itself as well as where it connects with Otherness. It is apparent that issues such as cultural citizenship, cultural rights and cultural creation are deeply interlinked. Thus, a culture of peace cannot develop if one's own culture as well as the others' is not known and acknowledged or if other cultures are kept at a distance. This means, in particular, that efforts should be made to highlight the assets of the diversity of cultures that cohabit within a single country. UNESCO could assist countries in exploring what cultural resources they may hold to construct peace, notably domestic peace, on an endogenous basis in line with their past history and their aspirations. Particular attention could be paid to the teaching of wars and violent eras as a catalyst for a remembrance and reconciliation education intended to disseminate the message "No more war". Suggestions were made to consider the launching of a Decade of Common Heritage intended to promote the universal values underpinning the diversity of cultural heritages. Member States should develop capacities to translate the normative instruments related to culture into policies and cultural strategies.

Culture for development, culture for peace

The positive power of culture for development is increasingly acknowledged – but success in this area is possible only if countries can genuinely promote culture in the framework of the market economy, lest it get a mere commercial commodity swallowed by a pure logic of profit maximization. Thus, it is important to clarify the interlinkages between culture, peace and development and support initiatives to bring these to bear. The dialogue between tradition and modernity is constitutive of cultures. It calls for identifying a balance between the past, the present and the future. UNESCO should be called to support Member States in their efforts to promote contemporary art projects and emphasize the role of artistic creation for human rights, sustainable development, dialogue and tolerance. UNESCO's expertise in culture and heritage is a unique asset, notably its extensive normative action related to the different culture conventions. In the long run, the cultural component must be incorporated into national development strategies and cultural policies must be developed, together with advocacy for the inclusion of cultural dimensions in policy-making and public endeavours.

Building peace through reconciliation between and within nations

Reconciliation should be seen as a key issue that can contribute to a culture of peace between nations, particularly within regions that have been torn by conflicts. Reconciliation is also a

necessity to help societies heal the wounds of past and ongoing internecine conflicts. Finally, reconciliation as a plank to everyday peace should be envisaged as a process that goes beyond the resolution of armed conflict, as is the case, for example, when electoral processes have generated distrust in the midst of society and threaten to fragment it. Building peace democratically is a deeply ethical process, which depends on a balance of forgiveness and justice, and which may be achieved through dialogue and via platforms such as reconciliation commissions. The principles and values of reconciliation could also be disseminated through a global campaign against all forms of discrimination and exclusion at the local, national, regional and international levels.

Media and the social media – vehicle for a culture of peace and sustainable development

In an era of unprecedented interconnectedness and instantaneous information flows, the media can serve as a bridge between all cultures and societies, if they espouse the principles and values underpinning the culture of peace and sustainable development: the rejection of hateful propaganda, intolerance, discrimination, prejudice and extremism, and the promotion of dialogue, as well as balanced, evidence- and research-based information. The media, including the social media, should be harnessed as part of the education system, safeguarding the past and forging the future. In this regard, the Memory of the World programme, together with the culture-related 1972 and 2003 Conventions constitute a framework for the preservation of our heritage. The free, pluralistic and independent media are crucial in promoting good governance. Media literacy should be mainstreamed in curricula to better prepare future citizens to take an active part in the public life of their societies. The media's role is also crucial in disaster risk reduction and preparedness, as well as for national reconciliation and pluralism. UNESCO should enhance its action in the areas of the promotion of freedom of expression, free and pluralistic media, inclusive knowledge societies, the bridging of digital divides, and access to information. Initiatives should be launched jointly with the relevant stakeholders to harness the new social media.

THE WAY FORWARD FOR UNESCO – WHAT MORE CAN UNESCO AND ITS PARTNERS DO? A NEW GLOBAL COMMITMENT TO MAKE THE BEST USE OF ITS TRANSFORMATIVE POWER IN ORDER TO PROVIDE COHERENT POLITICAL RESPONSES AND RENEW GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

The quest for everyday peace

We need a human-centred approach to peace building and prevention of conflicts and violence. UNESCO should mainstream the culture of peace in all its programmes, bearing in mind that a culture of peace must also be effective in the form an everyday peace, a peace of which all the individual and collective members of society are the craftspeople. This is a new humanism, which requires participation and inclusion of all, as well as cultural and intellectual cooperation in a global community fully aware of the transformative power of education, science and culture. Living together in a globalized, complex and diverse village calls for UNESCO to strengthen such values as honesty, solidarity among peoples, mutual benefits and mutual respect.

Solidarity through partnerships for peace and sustainable development

Partnerships are strategic assets in the global efforts aimed at a culture of peace and sustainable development. These values are integrated into global agendas set by the Member States of the United Nations. Yet, they were never meant to be implemented by governments and intergovernmental organizations alone. Peace and development cannot happen exclusively from the top down: those agendas can be implemented only if they are fully owned by a wide diversity of partners, allowing for the inclusion and participation of all. Consequently, the whole UNESCO community must be mobilized – including civil society organizations, youth organizations, women's organizations, other international organizations – and public-private partnerships must be strengthened and further developed. UNESCO also is invited to use its convening power to organize events similar to the Leaders' Forum at the global and the regional levels.

Towards a new societal paradigm

The spirit of rich interventions at the Leaders' Forum could be resumed by pointing to the need for acquiring (i) "green" reflexes and attitudes constituting a global ecological consciousness in the face of unprecedented pace of climate change and environmental and ecological degradations and (ii) intercultural skills such as empathy, spontaneous solidarity and hospitality to reflect the diversity of contemporary societies in an active, honest and lasting dialogue.

There is an imperative need to adopt a holistic approach of policies regarding a culture of peace and sustainable development, best captured by the image of being the "two sides of the same coin".

Only through an integrated agenda can this relationship be translated into meaningful targets and programmes. UNESCO's fields of competence – education, the sciences, culture, and communication and information – if correctly used, are powerful vectors for human dignity, freedom, equality, mutual trust, shared responsibilities for the planet and for intercultural solidarity, values which are so ardently needed today to address humanity's preoccupations and meet its aspirations.