

Dialogue among Civilizations

Regional Summit on Inter-religious
and Inter-ethnic Dialogue

Tirana, Albania, 9 and 10 December 2004



Alfred Moisiu
Koïchiro Matsuura
Servet Pellumbi

Borislav Paravac
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Co-organized by
the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and
the Presidency of Albania

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Foreword

Foreword by the Director-General of UNESCO for the publication of the Proceedings of the Tirana Summit in the Dialogue among Civilisations series

The Regional Summit on Inter-religious and Inter-ethnic Dialogue, held in Tirana, Albania, on 9 and 10 December 2004, was a ground-breaking event in terms of addressing at the highest level the importance of inter-faith dialogue and its contribution to the broader dialogue among civilizations, cultures and peoples. Heads of State and other leaders of the region and beyond, together with representatives of the United Nations and the European Union and many respected experts, shared their

thinking and ideas on this challenging topic. It is a subject that requires much mutual respect, tact and tolerance if we are to move from mere declarations to concrete approaches and practical action at community and national levels.

The adoption of the Tirana Summit Declaration by the assembled leaders demonstrated that this is indeed possible. The Declaration emphasized that all religious leaders, like other civil society and community leaders, have the potential - as well as the responsibility - to exercise a positive moral influence on how people in society understand each other and interact. Reconciliation of religious views is an increasingly significant challenge of our age and, as the Tirana Summit Declaration underlined, religious leaders and communities must create a space where diverse religious faiths can not only coexist peacefully but also work actively together to promote a sense of social cohesion and collective purpose: 'Religion must not be part of the problem, but part of the solution'.

Education plays a fundamental role in promoting inter-religious and inter-ethnic dialogue. The renewal of curricula, the improvement and revision of educational materials, and the re-orientation of the training of teachers - in short, the promotion of quality education - will prove essential to ensuring that schools foster understanding and consideration, and that the new European generation is educated in a spirit of inclusiveness and tolerance. Cultural diversity and heritage are also important vectors of identity and tools for reconciliation. Cultural heritage - in both its tangible and intangible forms - embodies the symbolic values of cultural and religious identities and their protection should be ensured as both an ethical and a legal imperative.

In a world where intra- and inter-religious conflicts are widely perceived as increasingly serious threats to peace, and where the ignorance or misunderstanding of 'Others' spiritual traditions and cultural background can all too quickly lead to a 'clash of ignorances', the Tirana Summit drew attention to the many historical and reciprocal influences between religions and spiritual traditions and urged the need to build respect for religious and cultural pluralism.

The present publication containing the Proceedings of the Tirana Summit is the 11th edition in UNESCO's 'Dialogue' series. It contains statements from Heads of State of South-East Europe or their representatives, from other leaders and representatives of international and regional intergovernmental organizations active in the region, and from various scholars and intellectuals with expertise in aspects of inter-religious dialogue. The approaches and perspectives set out in the

publication will also be reflected in the activities of UNESCO's flagship programme "Promotion of Interfaith Dialogue" during the period 2006-2007.

I wish to express my profound gratitude to the President, the Government and the people of Albania for their cordial welcome and for the excellent organization of the Tirana Summit, which has set the stage for the achievement of constructive and tangible results benefiting South-East Europe and other regions.



A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "K. Matsuura".

Ko chiro Matsuura

*Director-General of the United Nations Educational,
Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)*

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The Tirana Summit Declaration on Inter- Religious and Inter-Ethnic Dialogue in South-East Europe

We, Heads of State and Government and other distinguished participants, hailing from all countries of South-East Europe, in the Regional Summit on «The Development of Interreligious and Inter-ethnic Dialogue – a Significant Factor for the Stability and Progress in South-East Europe», held in Tirana, Albania, on 9 and 10 December 2004, at the invitation of the President of the Republic of Albania, H.E. Mr. Alfred Moisiu, and the Director-General of UNESCO, Mr. Koïchiro Matsuura, hereby adopt the following «Tirana Summit Declaration»:

We are united by the desire for a peaceful future based on shared values. To this end, we are committed to releasing ourselves from the disputes of the past and to overcoming them by practicing a culture of dialogue within and among our countries. Peace is indivisible from dialogue. The challenge we face every single day is to replace fear with acceptance, harassment with tolerance, and hatred with respect.

We are committed to building and sustaining good mutual relations. We hold that dialogue must be conducted on a platform of democracy, the

rule of law and respect for human rights and dignity of the individual. Any form of totalitarianism is incompatible with dialogue.

Following the High-level Conference on Strengthening Cooperation in South-East Europe, convened by UNESCO in Paris in April 2002, the Regional Forum on Dialogue among Civilizations, held at Presidential level in Ohrid on 29 and 30 August 2003, was a significant event. It set the stage for concrete dialogue actions in education, science and culture, designed to deepen mutual understanding and trust in the region.

The Tirana Summit is a further step in that process highlighting the intrinsic value of the religious and ethnic dimensions of the dialogue in South-East Europe. Both dimensions are interlinked and help create a spirit favoring social cohesion beyond the sphere of verbal declarations into everyday living. Without an open dialogue there can be no true reconciliation. Celebrating, protecting and safeguarding the cultural heritage and exercising the freedom of religion, of speaking one's own language and of respecting traditions are among the basic rights of every human being.

South-East Europe has suffered from the ravages of the last wars of the 20th century in Europe, also as a consequence of inter-ethnic and inter-religious tension, hatred and violence. Today, the region is rebounding, leaving the wounds of the past behind and responding to the desire of its peoples for reconciliation, exchange and cooperation, especially among the youth. Ensuring freedom of movement in the region will be an important practical step. In the present post-conflict period, there is an undeniable need to face up to the truth of the past as the region is not yet free from the seeds of divisions and confrontations of a religious or ethnic nature.

The experience of the region has demonstrated that the matrix of values and the underlying ethical, cultural and spiritual foundations are a major determining factor for the resilience of the social fabric and the vibrancy of each society.

We salute the accomplishments of our host country, Albania, which has succeeded in establishing a multiparty democracy. The country also offers a valuable experience in terms of successful inter-religious co-existence, which manifests itself in harmony among people adhering to different religious groups under one societal roof.

Our commitment to dialogue among cultures and civilizations is also a commitment against terrorism, reinforcing our determination to cope with new vulnerabilities in an era of globalisation. We realise that no religion preaches terror, nor are there national interests or reasons that would justify terror. Terror rests always and everywhere upon prejudices, intolerance, exclusion and, above all, on the rejection of any dialogue.

We reaffirm that mutual respect, rooted in open dialogue and nourished by multi-ethnicity, multi-culturality and multi-religiosity is indispensable for the preservation of peace, stability and the resolution of conflicts.

In a world, where no country is entirely homogenous, demands for recognition and accommodation of different ethnicities, religions, languages and values are increasingly arising. There is an urgency of developing a sense of respect for the Other that will provide a basis for mutual reference, friendship and learning. Minorities can constitute bridges of connection and understanding between peoples and countries. If left unattended, struggles over cultural identity may quickly deteriorate into a source of instability both within states and between them.

Cultural diversity and heritage are vectors of identity and tools for reconciliation. Cultural heritage – in both its tangible and intangible forms – is indivisible and embodies the symbolic values of cultural identities. The protection of heritage, and its preservation, presentation and transmission to future generations, are not only ethical, but equally legal imperatives. States need to find ways of forging national unity amid ethnic and religious diversity, while individuals must be prepared to shed rigid identities if they are to become part of diverse societies. We therefore welcome the Regional Forum on Cultural Corridors which President Georgi Parvanov will convene together with the Director-General of UNESCO at summit level in Varna in May 2005.

Relations among religious communities in the region have often been strained causing grievances and tensions. Religion must not be part of the problem, but part of the solution. Preserving space for diverse religious faiths is one of the preconditions for enjoying cultural diversity.

We recognize the need to protect the right to freedom of religion for all citizens. Religion is of profound importance to people's identities, but religious differences should never be seen as insurmountable. There exists an underlying thread of unity connecting the great religious traditions. They each propound basic spiritual truths and standards of behaviour that constitute the very basis of social cohesion and collective purpose. The religions should, therefore, be able to dialogue and contribute to societal dialogue in an effort that honours their deepest truths and holds promise for humanity. Indeed, dialogue must be at the core of continued inter-religious cooperation and collaboration in the region.

All faiths convey a message of peace, justice and human solidarity. All religious leaders, like other civil society and community leaders, have the potential to exercise a moral and positive influence on how people in

society understand each other and interact. Reconciliation of religious views is an increasingly significant challenge of our age. This also entails the need to create more awareness among peoples and government authorities about the need to respect the traditions of the use of religious symbols, images and expressions.

We recognize that religious beliefs and practices as well as ethnic values and traditions have a fundamental influence and impact on education systems and their quality. Thus, we commit ourselves to the education of a new European generation in the spirit of inclusiveness, instilling a feeling of forgiveness instead of hatred, promoting tolerance, understanding and coexistence rather than conflict and violence, reinforcing civic education and observing human rights. We are committed that our schools foster respect, understanding and consideration for Others. We are committed to ensure that our schools foster a sense of community and solidarity. We are committed to teach our children to cross ethnic and religious barriers.

Learning to live together again requires that we undertake a renewal of curricula, improve and revise educational materials, organise youth fora as well as re-orient the training of our teachers – in short, we are committed to promoting quality education.

Advances in information and communication technologies (ICTs) have an unprecedented ability to bring together diverse communities, cultures, civilizations and different faiths. We must capitalize on ICTs and their innate potential to advance freedom of expression, which is the cornerstone of any democratic society and has its corollary in the freedom of the press.

The overarching goal of all countries in the region is to secure integration into Euro-Atlantic structures in a unified Europe, which for 60 million people holds the promise of stability and prosperity free of interreligious and inter-ethnic conflicts.

Regional co-operation is becoming the natural way to tackle shared problems and to move towards progress. International and regional organisations, including the organisations of the United Nations system, the European Union and the Stability Pact, should consider it their responsibility to continue assisting the countries in the region.

We express our sincere appreciation to President Alfred Moisiu and to the Director-General of UNESCO, Mr. Koïchiro Matsuura, for having convened this important Summit. We thank the Government and the people of Albania for their generous hospitality and contribution. We also are grateful for the valuable support extended by the Governments of

Germany, Italy, Japan, Norway and the United Kingdom, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

* * *

We all are committed to making use of dialogue as the only way to achieve full stability and overall progress in South-East Europe, leading to a successful completion of the European integration process in the entire region.

*Adopted by the Regional Summit on
Inter-religious and Inter-ethnic Dialogue
Tirana, Albania, 10 December 2004*



Group photo of the participating Presidents from South-East Europe, the Prime Minister of Norway, and the Director-General of UNESCO, Mr Ko chiro Matsuura.

PART I

Statements



Servet Pellumbi

Speaker of the Albanian Parliament

It is a special pleasure to open the proceedings of the Tirana Summit, to greet you on behalf of the Parliament of the Republic of Albania, and to wish all the friends from the countries in the region a warm welcome and success.

Summits like this one assume special relevance both on account of their subject theme, and of the fact that senior representatives are present here from the countries of one of the European regions that has suffered, to a large extent indeed, the consequences of the inter-ethnic and inter-religious tensions and conflicts.

Similar events are evidence of the desire of our peoples to reach out for dialogue, cooperation and understanding, leaving the wounds of the past behind.

Albania takes pride in the fact that it offers a valuable experience in terms of the inter-religious and inter-ethnic dialogue. Indicative of the indisputable values is the cohabitation of three different religions in Albania: Muslim, Orthodox and Catholic, as well as several other religious communities, with their relationships not being upset by any worrying problems whatsoever.

Albanian history does not know of any case of tensions or clashes among different religious-based groups. The emblem of all Albanians, irrespective of their religious affiliation, has been: "The Albanians' religion is the love for Albania," as the Albanian Renaissance patriot Pashko Vasa articulated it 130 years ago.

Albanian history, on the other hand, knows of another significant fact: the latest official census to identify religions in Albania was conducted in the years 1929-1931. Ever since, no one else has required another census to be carried out to identify religious affiliation, given the conviction that it is not just the numerical counts of a particular religion but its values what keeps religious beliefs alive.

Albanians' tolerance towards the ethnic minorities living in Albania is another universal quality that distinguishes our people. We have never been witnesses to a single case of confrontations underlined by ethnic reasons. The minorities that have lived, and are living in Albania, may have suffered under economic poverty, or the denial of certain fundamental human rights, as the whole of the Albanian people have also suffered, especially under the communist regime. However, minorities have never been discriminated against on account of their ethnic belonging.

Not long ago we adopted the law for the “Memory Day”, devoted to the victims of the Nazi holocaust and other victims of genocide and ethnocide. During the Second World War, not a single Jew, at the time in Albania, was delivered to the Nazi occupiers, whereas hundreds of Jews coming from the other countries in the region were sheltered in Albania.

Following the capitulation of fascism, thousands of Italian soldiers, who came here as occupiers, found shelter among the Albanian families. At the time of the Kosovo crisis, about five hundred thousand persons displaced from Kosovo were accommodated in Albania. Such occurrences pinpoint to the fact that humanism and tolerance constitute unalienable values of the Albanian people.

The communist regime set major limitations to the religious beliefs in Albania. Religious rites were forbidden to be exercised for a period of over twenty years. However, this forced banning did not affect the essentially human nature of these beliefs, which revived over the years of democracy, featuring the same dialogue, tolerance and understanding as before.

The values of inter-religious and inter-ethnic tolerance, understanding and dialogue are not relics of the past, worthy of being exhibited in the museum stands. Instead, they deserve to be highlighted, receive recognition and be propagated, as the world is not yet free of threats of different confrontations of a religious, ethnic or other nature. Moreover, this holds true today, when international terrorism and other forms of intolerance are set to use religious beliefs as the rear base for their actions.

We are here today to show one another that dialogue, friendship, cooperation and tolerance are irreplaceable universal values, possible to be achieved.

Alfred Moisiu

President of Albania

Allow me to welcome and to warmly thank the participation in this Summit the Heads of States of the region, the Norwegian Prime Minister, the envoys of the presidents of the respective countries and also the guests from different countries of the world and those from the Albanian world. I would like to specially thank UNESCO and Director-General Koïchiro Matsuura for the fruitful cooperation, for organizing and holding this very important event.

This Summit is being held after the Conference organized a year ago in Tirana on inter-religious tolerance and harmony in Albania. That Conference was an academic-scientific one, which treated the historic development of the inter-religious relations in Albania by evidencing the tolerance and harmony among the three main faiths, as a major value of the Albanian society cultivated in centuries and brought intact to our present days.

This political Summit at the level of heads of states of the region uplifts this topic at a new height, by adding the ethnic dimension to the religious one. As such, these two dimensions are linked by an interdependent relationship and as proven by the history of the development of our region, plays an important role in the safeguarding of social and national cohesion.

Albania views the holding of this Summit as an excellent opportunity to reflect upon and to analyze those events, developments and problems that are of specific significance and that convey important messages to face the realities through a new spirit that incites the culture of dialogue and tolerance in order to achieve that inter-religious and inter-ethnic understanding and coexistence, which is needed by the region.

It is known that in some countries of South Eastern Europe there exist three main monotheistic religions: Christian Orthodoxy, Catholicism and Islam. We ought to admit with a feeling of pride that our region has not been involved in clashes or wars of genuine religious motives. However, we cannot claim that it is free of problems and grievances tied to the relations among the religious communities. We cannot yet admit that in our societies we have naturally achieved the acceptance of the different faith; moreover, being different has often been viewed as an expression of division, as an indicator of the non acceptance of the other, which at times has been stretched to stigmatizing the other.

Not wanting to paint the realities in dark colours, we find it important to not underestimate or sidestep the negative phenomena that are related to them. The case of Albania where the presence of three different faiths has not caused the rise of social tensions or conflicts, not even questioned the social and national cohesion, represents a positive value that deserves to be evidenced.

In this context we consider it necessary to point out that in the place where the religious communities practice tolerance and have achieved an exemplary harmony, such as in the case of the Albanian nation, it would have been a unforgiving mistake for anybody that attempts to threaten or destroy this religious equilibrium, by intervening in the tradition of our nation with religious forms and symbols that are contrary to this tradition. I express my conviction that the state, the religious communities and the entire Albanian society will know with wisdom and maturity to face situations such as these ones that go against the western civilization.

At our times, when peace, prosperity and security have been also shaken by negative developments, such as the international terrorism, we judge that the religious diversity and the example of tolerance, of well understanding and religious coexistence, which also does not lack in our societies, transmit messages of peace that oppose any tendency to use religion as contravention within a society or among nations, states and civilizations.

Albania, from its historical and actual experience, judges that our continent which is moving towards a new integrating unity, such as the European Union, will have a lot to gain if it will observe the presence of populations or countries with diversity of beliefs as a value that deserves to be respected and to be promoted as a part that makes up the cultural and religious mosaic of our old continent.

By viewing this reality as part of its cultural diversity, the Europe of the values of freedom and democracy will become more capable to strongly oppose the influence and infiltration of the Islamic fundamentalism, which aims to politicize the religion and to manipulate with the feelings of the Muslim believers everywhere, and why not, also the Muslim population of our region, which in the profoundness of its cultural and spiritual constitution has the European identity.

History has brought about, for the peoples and ethnicities in South Eastern Europe, to be mixed with each other. The societies of our countries, even if they might not be genuinely multi-ethnic, have in their make up ethnic minorities and communities or linguistic and ethno-cultural groups. The truth is that in our region the clashes and wars of

ethnic character have not been lacking, the same as there have also been present the inter-ethnic tensions and conflicts within the same state. Without needing to refer to ancient history, only the history of the last decade offers examples where wars have been the order of the day to ensure national or ethnic supremacy over the others. The fall of the Berlin Wall that also marked the falling of an ideology and system was followed by the disintegration of multi-ethnic states and the vivification of the extreme nationalism. The latter one chose as the way of resolving the problems that of the use of the forces of arms and as a consequence, the region got to know for about a decade, wars and blood spilling that went all the way to ethnic cleansing. They had a high cost of human lives and material loses, furthermore they regressed the region a lot.

What is worse is that these conflicts and wars sowed the seed of divisions and hatred among the ethnicities and religious that got involved in them. Actually we are at the post-conflict period in the Balkans where there are not missing also the efforts to cure the inflicted wounds. Let us be conscious that in order to achieve this, it is needed a lot of work and struggle with our self to be able to also beg forgiveness for the injustices and crimes done and to sincerely reconcile with each other.

We believe that the inter-ethnic dialogue within each society will contribute to the social cohesion and to the development of relations among the states and the peoples of the region at the political and economic levels. It will also make for healthier relations among the ethnicities and nations and will overcome old and new hatred and grudges in South Eastern Europe.

Our challenge is the education and upbringing of a new European generation that does not reconcile with old mentalities that keep the spirit of exclusion and the notion of “the hostile neighbour” alive, but one that is capable of building a new spirit that accepts and respects the Other, their differences along with the culture of dialogue and understanding. That is why schools and the entire society have an irreplaceable role in the education of young generations with the spirit of acceptance and not that of exclusion, with the feeling of forgiveness and not that of the hatred, of tolerance, understanding and coexistence. Regardless of the nationality, ethnicity or religious faith we might belong, we all recognize and appreciate the great advice of all the holy books: “Love thy neighbor, love the other as yourself!”

There have been extremists and there will always be; our merit is that through the strengthening of democracy and culture of dialogue, the encouragement of tolerance and understanding, to make possible

their isolation and the reduction of the chances to find support from society.

The successful example of the political and military cooperation among Croatia, Albania and Macedonia, three countries of the Adriatic 3 Chart, which from the religious pertinence represent the main three faiths in our region, is significant and proves that the integration unites values and countries regardless of the religious belief and ethnic pertinence.

The existence of different ethnic groups within the territory of another country should not be allowed to incite the maintaining alive of the spirit of division, of the no acceptance of the other and of the hostage. We will make a good service to our peoples, to peace and tranquility among us if we will not use the sincere interest about the state of the ethno-cultural groups or minorities that are present at each other to instrumentalize them for other aims. Such a thing will sow disbelief, doubt and hatred. We should look to the minorities and turn them into bridges of connection, of friendship and approaching among the peoples and countries of the region.

May this Summit be used as a great and powerful incitement for facing with the necessary courage and good willingness of the problems and worries that still do accompany the inter-ethnic and inter-religious relations. This way we can strengthen the understanding, the trust and coexistence inside the societies and also among our countries. It is important to transmit this new spirit of dialogue and well understanding to every level and link of the state and society. We strongly believe that the successful implementation of the democratic reforms and processes, and also the achievement of our major objectives of the integration in the Euro-Atlantic structures are important premises that will help us to also successfully face the wide problematic of the inter-ethnic and inter-religious coexistence. The Euro-Atlantic integration composes our historic chance to be part of the spaces of freedom and democracy, an integral part of the new European reality.

Who would have thought it a few years ago that the presidents of our region will gather and discuss these issues with the worry of finding an appropriate resolution. Such things are the best proof of the changes that have happened and should happen.

It is important to have good willingness. It is important for this understanding and trust to descent all the way to the various confines of the state and society.

Therefore, we have a great motive, which should call upon us and encourage us to move ahead.

Ko chiro Matsuura

Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Being with you today on the occasion of the Regional Summit on “The Development of Inter-religious and Inter-ethnic Dialogue”, is not only an honour for me but also a source of satisfaction to the head of an organization that was set up to promote “collaboration among the nations ... in order to further universal respect for justice, for the rule of law and for the human rights and fundamental freedoms which are affirmed ... by the Charter of the United Nations”, as stated in the UNESCO Constitution.

I am grateful to President Alfred Moisiu, who took the initiative, more than a year ago, to organize this important event jointly with UNESCO. When listening to him, I immediately pledged UNESCO’s full support for his proposal. Apart from the generosity and the idealistic motivation of the offer to host this meeting in Albania, it appeared to me as the right initiative, the right place and the right time. But, above all, I felt that it had the potential to convey a significant and powerful message.

Throughout its long history, which many historians trace back to the Illyrians and even beyond, Albania has been shaped by the cultural traditions and influences of the Greek, Roman, Byzantine, Venetian and Ottoman periods, while its lands were claimed wholly or in part by virtually each of its neighbours as part of their historical territories. During all these centuries, the Albanian people remained where they were, patiently keeping alive their language and traditions as their most important heritage, which conveyed a sense of their proud identity to all invaders, occupants and foreign rulers.

When the modern Albanian state came into being in 1912, its population was made up of Muslims and Orthodox and Catholic Christians; the silent stone monuments that were spread all over its territory bore eloquent witness to rich and diversified cultural traditions.

Let me close this short historical digression by concluding that I consider our gathering here today as not merely coincidental or inspired by an ephemeral political convenience, but as the result of political determination and historical consciousness.

President Moisiu, you and your country are to be commended for both.

The presence of several Heads of State and Government from the region and beyond as well as many Government representatives is a clear sign that the theme of this Regional Summit attracts interest at the highest level. It also testifies to the broad-based political commitment to

constructive dialogue among countries, among peoples and ethnic groups and among religious leaders. The need felt for dialogue is growing in this region and advantage should be taken of this promising opportunity.

In recent years, UNESCO has made a determined effort to respond to a United Nations initiative that is timely, relevant and innovative. I refer, of course, to the proclamation of the year 2001 as the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations and the adoption by the United Nations General Assembly of the “Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations”, on 21 November 2001.

Both the UN International Year and the Global Agenda conferred considerable responsibilities – and expectations - on UNESCO, focusing on the ethical and intellectual dimensions of its mandate. In the immediate aftermath of 11 September 2001, the UNESCO General Conference unanimously adopted a far-reaching resolution on the fight against terrorism, placing strong emphasis on the role of the dialogue among cultures and civilizations. A series of global, regional and sub-regional conferences ensued, organized by UNESCO, which culminated in a resolution by UNESCO’s General Conference in 2003 on the Organization’s activities regarding the dialogue among civilizations.

UNESCO has sought to fulfil its lead role in respect to the dialogue vigorously and creatively. In particular, we have focused on promoting dialogue and related activities at regional and sub-regional levels. This is again the case at this summit event in Tirana and, as Director-General of UNESCO, I am truly pleased by this evolution.

The precursor to today’s Tirana summit was the Regional Summit Forum on Dialogue among Civilizations, held in Ohrid in The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in August 2003. It is significant indeed that several of the Heads of State present here today also participated in the Ohrid event. The Ohrid Forum was unquestionably an epochal event, which succeeded in defining concrete action in the fields of education, culture and science. Action in these domains is essential for a deepening of mutual understanding and a strengthening of commonly shared values such as tolerance, through the medium of the dialogue.

Recalling Ohrid also means paying tribute to President Boris Trajkovski, who so tragically passed away earlier this year. A man of vision, commitment, courage and action, he made a seminal contribution to inter-cultural and inter-state dialogue as well as to the strengthening of peace in the region, anchored in a re-building of mutual trust among its leaders. Meeting in Tirana, we salute him and his legacy, while welcoming most warmly in our midst his distinguished successor, President Branko

Crvenkovski. When serving as Prime Minister of his country, he was intimately involved in the preparations and conduct of the Ohrid summit. This first-hand knowledge and exposure augur well for a continuation of the dialogue process set in motion in Ohrid. Indeed, the desire for a more peaceful future unites us all here – and serves as inspiration for designing initiatives and practical action in the South- East Europe region – and beyond.

The Ohrid experience provided impetus to other regional dialogue processes, such as in the Arab world (where UNESCO sponsored a colloquium on the Dialogue among Cultures and Civilizations in Sana'a, Yemen, in February 2004) and in the Eurasia region (where an International Conference on “Eurasia in the 21st Century – Dialogue of Cultures or Conflict of Civilizations?” was held in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, in June 2004).

In all regional activities, UNESCO has underlined one key point: what matters most is not the fact of holding a Summit, conference or colloquium in itself, nor is it only the joint agreement on a final text or declaration at a given moment. Rather, in the final analysis, what counts are the concrete action and practical follow-up arising as a result of dialogue and agreements reached. It is against our capacity to implement the dialogue in the real world – and in the real life of the region - that our success must be measured.

The main objective of the Tirana Summit is to pay special attention to the role of inter-religious and multi-ethnic dialogue in building and reinforcing stability and progress in the South East-Europe region, drawing also on conclusions from Ohrid.

The main underlying vision that unites us today was clearly spelled out in key passages of the “Message from Ohrid”. It stated, in particular, that “Mutual respect of traditions and people will be possible when the matrix of values and the underlying spiritual and ethical foundations can influence education systems in different societies”. Undoubtedly, religious beliefs and practices as well as ethnic values and traditions have a fundamental influence and impact on education systems and their quality, including curricula.

Everywhere, inter-religious and inter-ethnic dialogue represents a significant feature of social cohesion and stability. In South-East Europe, such dialogue carries particular importance both historically and in current political contexts, drawing as it does on deep-rooted moral, ethical and spiritual values. They have affected the formation of societies and formed the peoples inhabiting them.

Over centuries, the countries of the South-East Europe region have gone through military, economic, and political crises, conflicts and even war. The most recent tragedies of the 1990s are still vivid in our memory – and they motivate, if not compel, us to take all possible action to prevent a recurrence. Internal and external shocks have dislocated neighbours, ethnic groups and religious communities who before have lived together in peace. In the process, ethnic cleansing, flows of refugees, trade and commercial disruptions and economic decline in a once prosperous region damaged the social fabric of the region. However, building on the progress of the last few years, especially the resumption of economic growth and social development, the strengthening of democratic institutions and the emergence of effective governance mechanisms, South-East Europe is clearly rebounding. “Never again” should be the motto in this region, too. Leaders in all walks of life – and here especially in communities bridging religious and ethnic differences – have a special responsibility in that regard. Clearly, the experience of the past years offers hope, as we have learned about the power of faith- and people-based contacts and initiatives.

The presence among us of the Grand Mufti of Bosnia underlines the power of interfaith dialogue, tolerance and peace in that regard. I am pleased to note that, for his role and contribution, the Grand Mufti recently received the 2003 Felix Houphouet-Boigny Prize, awarded by UNESCO, together with Cardinal Roger Etchegaray, President Emeritus of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace. Likewise, the experience of Albania, our host country, is most encouraging indeed, benefiting from peaceful engagement and cooperation among people adhering to different religious groups and faiths under one societal roof.

For all countries, the capacity and willingness to generate – and sustain – dialogue across ethnic and religious boundaries are decisive for advancing further on the road to peace, democracy, stability and sustainable development.

Religion is of profound importance to people’s identities, but religious differences should never be seen as insurmountable. There exists an underlying thread of unity connecting the great religious traditions. They each propound basic spiritual truths and standards of behaviour that constitute the very basis of social cohesion and collective purpose. The religions, therefore, should be able to dialogue in an effort that honours their deepest truths and holds promise for humanity.

This is no small challenge; there is much to do. UNESCO’s Member States have requested me to identify practical steps that could be taken or

initiated by the Organization to bring about concrete changes through dialogue-related action in our domains – education, the sciences, culture, and communication and information. Those measures include work with youth and women as well as the mobilization and involvement of civil society, ethnic and faith-based organizations. Invariably, this involves intensive networking.

One thing is abundantly clear. We must all place the dialogue at the core of educational efforts, in particular the pursuit of the six Education for All (EFA) goals and the promotion of quality education at all levels. Putting the notion of “learning to live together” throughout life into effect requires that we engage with the renewal of curricula, the improvement of educational materials and the enhancement of teaching/learning processes, focusing on peace, tolerance, mutual understanding and multilingual education.

In this context, let me give an example. I am pleased to note that the first phase of the joint UNESCO-Ministry of Education project to promote “Human Rights and Intercultural Education in Albania” has attained its objectives and that the Government of Italy has already approved the funds for a second phase. The project is focused on the integration of human rights and democracy education in the school curriculum; the implementation of the national in-service training curriculum for human rights education; and the large-scale training of teachers.

Advances in information and communication technologies (ICTs) also create the conditions for an extension of dialogue practices. These technologies have the potential of bringing together diverse communities, cultures and civilizations – including different faiths – in different modes. The digital divide is not only an impediment to development as a whole; it also constitutes a barrier to intercultural exchange. We must capitalize on ICTs and their innate potential to advance freedom of expression and cultural diversity. The promotion of inter-ethnic understanding and harmony is an essential part of sustaining cultural diversity.

The World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002 in Johannesburg acknowledged that cultural diversity is inseparable from economic, social and ecological concerns, echoing the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001) which defines it as “one of the roots of development, understood not simply in terms of economic growth, but also as a means to achieve a more satisfactory intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual existence” (Article 3).

This idea also found expression when the restored Old Bridge at Mostar was opened on 23 July this year. The Mostar Declaration recalled

the Message from Ohrid and the necessity of “associating cultural heritage with development policies and demonstrating how much this powerful symbol of a people’s identity can become a unifying factor for national and regional reconciliation”.

The challenges confronting us are manifold and we should seize the opportunity to promote effective dialogue.

As we do so, we should bear carefully in mind that all faiths convey a message of peace, justice and human solidarity and that religious leaders, like all other community leaders, have the potential to exercise a positive influence on how people in society understand each other and interact. Reconciliation of religious views is an increasingly significant challenge of our age. This also entails the need to create more awareness among peoples and government authorities about the need to respect the diversity of cultures, in particular with regard to the use of religious symbols, images and expressions.

We also know that ignorance and mistrust of the “other” can lead to extremist attitudes, ranging from entrenched and exclusive identities to the rejection of the “other” and even to open fanaticism based on the idea that one’s own religious beliefs embody the sole truth.

All these considerations lead us to examine during this Summit:

The South-East European experience of inter-religious and inter-ethnic relations;

The need to raise public awareness of the positive impact of ethnic and religious co-existence, understanding and harmony;

The promotion of inter-ethnic dialogue among the peoples in South-East Europe as a tool to further mutual understanding and resolve existing problems;

Efforts to counter intolerance, discrimination and extremism, which are destabilizing factors as far as peace, security and stability in the region are concerned.

The Tirana Summit is a most timely occasion to focus on how religion and multi-ethnicity can contribute positively to a dialogue among civilizations and cultures. As I suggested at the outset, this can only further stability and progress in the region as a whole, which not only shares common challenges but also has to cope with their cross-border dimensions. Regional co-operation, therefore, must go hand-in-hand with further development within individual countries.

In conclusion, let me assure you that UNESCO stands ready to sustain the regional dialogue in progress in South-East Europe. In this regard, I am looking forward to participating in the forthcoming Regional

Forum on Cultural Corridors which is being hosted by one of today's eminent participants, President Parvanov of Bulgaria, in Varna on 20-21 May 2005. I look forward to seeing you all again on that occasion, when we shall be seeking to highlight the importance of understanding the region's shared cultural past as a way of rebuilding trust and mapping out together the path to the future.



Adoption of the Tirana Summit Declaration

Borislav Paravac

Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina

Allow me to express my sincere gratitude to the President of Albania, H.E. Mr. Alfred Moisiu and the Director-General of UNESCO, Mr. Koïchiro Matsuura, for the invitation to participate at this Summit.

I am truly confident that the dialogue among peoples and religions in this region is the key factor thus contributing the everlasting peace, stability and progress. The tragic event Bosnia and Herzegovina has experienced in the past decade is yet another proof for that.

Inter-ethnic and inter-religious dialogue has to be a permanent process which will be beyond the sphere of verbal, contemplations and adopted declarations acknowledged into the everyday living. Without an open dialogue there is no true reconciliation.

All peoples and cultures want to enjoy real freedom, equality and harmony. Cherishing protecting and safeguarding cultural heritage, as well as the freedom to practice the religion, to speak languages and respect traditions are basic rights of every human being.

Cultural diversities are enriching our reality. The more we accept and respect it the better it will be for our stability, happiness and prosperity. There should not be created the sense or the atmosphere where any of the ethnicities or the religions will be put to the moral suspect or culpability.

We have to faster release ourselves of the disputes from the past and overcome it through a dialogue between the nations, religions and states, especially that we are all strongly committed to peace, stability, progress and access the Euro-Atlantic integrations.

Our major determinant will be to show the readiness to uphold and sustain mutual dialogue across a range of issues resolving them we advance further to the road of peace, democracy, security and stabilization in the region.

We must build coexistence fully recognizing mutual diversities. We will better respect our culture and religion if we understand others.

People of Bosnia and Herzegovina are really aware that there is no prosperous future without a true reconciliation, tolerance, mutual respect and understanding. It could only be achieved through a dialogue which will fully be recognizing the identities of all the peoples living in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The best example that the dialogue is possible is the nearly passing of the law on freedom of religion and legitimacy of churches and religious societies in Bosnia and Herzegovina. For a country in the Balkans that, just

a decade ago, went out of war, it represented tremendous progress. Every human being is guaranteed the full enjoyment of freedom of expression and practicing a religion according to the best human rights standards encompassed in the international charters and conventions.

Theologians, religious dignitaries, believers and citizens, are the ones contributing in a legal manner to the spiritual background as a principle Bosnia and Herzegovina is functioning. Without the crucial background there is neither a vivid word, nor a proper dialogue such as Bosnia and Herzegovina.

As a fruit of the dialogue is the restoration of the cultural heritage, I would specially like to emphasize the reconstruction of the Old Bridge – Stari most – in Mostar, with the immense support of UNESCO. I would also like to use the presence of the Director-General of UNESCO, Mr. Koïchiro Matsuura to express on behalf of Bosnia and Herzegovina sincere gratitude.

We are aware that in the oncoming period we must work more decisively on promotion of the dialogue in order to prepare the young generations to live in tolerance fully recognizing all national and cultural identities.

Progress in information and communication technologies, network exchange, is crucial for building and contributing the greater understanding and respect of the different ethnic, cultural and religious knowledge and creativity especially amongst the young generations.

We are affirmative of building a praiseworthy society, with the highest ethical norms. Only in such a society we could create a genuine culture of living and dialogue.

Sincere and open dialogue between the people, national minorities and confessions, based on equality, human rights protection and guarantees for freedom of expression beliefs, rule of law, recognition and respect for cultural diversity will be the grounds on which we are going to build and develop true reconciliation and coexistence in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

I am hopeful that the constructive exchange of views at the Tirana Summit will contribute to the better understanding between our peoples and cultures of this region and further improvement of the relationships between our countries.

I am optimistic in a belief that the results of the Summit will symbolize a clear signal to the international community about the readiness of the countries of South-East Europe, through an intensified dialogue, to further promote peace, stability and prosperity, not only in this part of Europe but much broadly.

Georgi Parvanov

President of Bulgaria

A year after the Dialogue among Civilizations regional forum in Ohrid, today we are turning again to the major subject of religions and civilizations and the potential and desirable dialogue among them.

This very fact is a proof of the long-term and unquestionable significance and relevance of these issues for all of us here in the Balkans. Precisely for this reason I wish to pay tribute to our hosts and especially to President Moisiu for having organized this forum, and also to UNESCO Director General Mr. Matsuura who has invested a huge effort in promoting such a dialogue worldwide.

I believe that the capital of the Republic of Albania is a suitable venue for discussing the dialogue among religions and civilizations, notably in the countries of South East Europe, because we are well familiar with this country's track record of religious tolerance.

Addressing the problems among the ethnic and religious communities by way of dialogue is the best possible approach for a region like ours, where relations are too complicated as a result of the cultural diversity and the historical legacy. However, in order to have a meaningful dialogue we have to be conscious of the social and cultural problems that can be resolved through dialogue and also the latter's parameters if it is to be effective.

Like most countries in our region Bulgaria is characterized by a considerable ethnic and religious diversity. Turks, Roma, representatives of other ethnic groups, Christianity, Islam and other religions have lived together in our land for centuries.

It is generally acknowledged that the relations among the ethnic and religious communities in Bulgaria have been tolerant. This good tradition has survived a number of trials, in more distant as well as in more recent times. We believe that it will survive the dynamics of the social and cultural process of the 21st century, especially in view of Bulgaria's European integration.

The first condition is the modern legislative framework. There are provisions guaranteeing the protection of universal human rights and the cultural rights of citizens depending on their ethnic and religious identity enshrined in the Constitution, the international conventions and other instruments ratified by our country as well as in the relevant national legislation.

The "Bulgarian ethno-political model" is often referred to when speaking of the relations among ethnic or religious minorities in a single

national culture. I will dwell briefly on some of its elements that have a direct bearing on the subject of the interethnic and inter-religious dialogue.

The main feature of the model is integration of the ethnic and religious minorities, harmonization of the relations among identities without infringing upon the cultural identity of the communities but also without fragmenting the cultural and social life of the country.

The political dimension of the ethnic and religious diversity of our society is of particular interest in this model. There are political parties in Bulgaria that purport to defend the interests of minorities without excluding from their activities the representatives of the majority. Protecting the minorities politically is regarded as a common cause by all Bulgarians, rather than as a way of self-defense of the individual communities. This is the way for the public relations, refracted through the cultural diversity, to attain equality in all forms of participation and representation in public life.

Nonetheless, there are still serious problems of the social cost of the transition, given the limited resources for social manifestation available to the individual ethnic communities. The social inequalities thus created could increase the conflict potential in the relations among them. This could lead to a conversion of the social problems into ethnic ones, which in turn could be exploited for political or corporative purposes.

In order to perform its functions the interethnic and inter-religious dialogue should meet certain requirements.

First, it must be public. Only then, can it be independent of the political set-up and free of the vicissitudes of political life.

Second, it must be targeting sustainable results, rather than compromise without principle;

Third, a successful dialogue implies a positive motivation of those involved, a motivation of cooperation that may only be based on an objective and clear mutual benefit.

I have mentioned earlier that the Bulgarian ethnic model presumes a respect for the identity of minorities. This means not only a recognition of the right of ethnic and religious minorities to manifest and keep alive their cultural originality but also to provide the necessary conditions for that, including the material resource.

In respect of the motivation of the participants in the dialogue, Bulgaria's process of accession to the European organizations (NATO and EU) has been particularly beneficial. This process opens up a positive prospect for all ethnic and religious communities, in the sense that any of

them can benefit from its cooperation with the others much more than from a confrontation.

Maintaining an active cooperation in our region could be instrumental in this respect. By pooling together their efforts the countries of South East Europe can cope successfully with the regional challenges.

This is why at the Ohrid forum last year I presented a publication by scholars from all ten countries of South East Europe. By charting a common map of the cultural and historical heritage of the whole region, they discover that for centuries our nations have been bound strongly together by clearly defined cultural corridors that are the best material evidence of the dialogue among nations and civilizations.

Leaning on this study, I proposed to host a summit of all heads of state of the countries of South East Europe, where in an informal dialogue we can discuss and adopt a political declaration committing all countries of the region to identifying, conserving, using effectively and promoting the cultural corridors in South East Europe.

As it became clear from the presentation of Professor Matsuura, my proposal to this effect went into the Final Document of the Ohrid Forum and had the personal approval and support of the UNESCO Director General Mr. Koïchiro Matsuura, who agreed to be the co-patron together with me, and his organization to act as co-organizer of the Summit. Subsequently the same commitment was made by the Council of Europe Secretary General Mr. Terry Davis. So, in 2005 the city of Varna in Bulgaria will host the regional forum on Cultural Corridors in South East Europe – a shared past and a key to a future partnership.

I believe that the goals thus formulated will turn the Varna forum as well as today's meeting into a specific follow-up of the Ohrid Summit, or, rather into a concrete practical step and a contribution to the dialogue among civilizations.

I shall be happy to welcome you all as my guests in Varna next year!

Stjepan Mesić

President of the Republic of Croatia

We have assembled here in Tirana around the idea that has been catching the attention not only of those of us who come from this region, but practically of the whole world, and especially so in these first years of the new century and millennium.

I will not remind of chronology, I will not state dates or individual initiatives but I will say one thing which – I think – suffices: If we wish to ensure peace in the world we live in, then we have to understand that peace cannot be separated and is unseparable from dialogue. Dialogue implies tolerance, respect for others and those different from us, readiness to perceive diversity as richness rather than a reason for discrimination of any sort. We live in an area that has, in the not so distant past, justifiably been termed “powder keg”.

We live in a region where the spark of the last wars of the 20th century in Europe was ignited. For this reason, dialogue for us and right now is something that is necessarily linked to our path towards the common goal, which we shall achieve – indeed on an individual basis – and this is integration into a united Europe.

The topic of our meeting is inter-religious and inter-ethnic dialogue. Is there anything more indispensable in a region that, at the sunset of one and the dawn of another century and millennium, had to witness insane ravages of war, inconceivable atrocities, destruction of existence or basis for existence of thousands, tens of thousands and hundreds of thousands of people? Indeed – is there anything more indispensable – especially if we bear in mind that the wars that were raging in a part of the territory of the former Yugoslavia had both the elements of ethnic and of religious conflicts?

When I refer to this I, of course, do not forget where the wars originated, for what purpose they were initiated and on which side lies the biggest and primary responsibility for them. However, I do not forget and neither can nor will forget and keep silent on the fact that crimes were also committed on the side of those who defended themselves as well.

I have always said that it is better to negotiate for ten years than to make a war for one day. Still, we were at war. Now, I am urging again that dialogue be a means for overcoming the burdens of war, a means of rebuilding mutual trust and a means for different sides to get acquainted.

However, for dialogue to make any sense, for it to bear fruit and progress, for it to help transform our region into an area of peace and

security, it has to start from the truth, it has to start from our courage of facing up to the truth, whatever it may be. Only then can dialogue serve in the process of eliminating animosities among members of individual peoples or faiths that were partially amassed through history and largely consciously ignited not so long ago.

From this meeting we have to send a clear message taking the idea of dialogue among civilizations as a starting point and accepting ideas and messages of regional meetings dealing with the issues of co-operation among states of the region. Our message should be that we are sincerely committed to building good mutual relations; that we accept dialogue on the platform of democracy, state based on the rule of law and respect for and promotion and protection of human rights as the only type of communication among our countries. Finally, our message should be that we reject all forms of totalitarianism – because it is incompatible with dialogue – as well as condemn all attempts at revising history for the purpose of rehabilitating defeated and rejected ideas and ideologies.

However, let my reflections go a step or two outside this region. After all, we are a part of Europe and Europe is part of the world. We live in the era of globalisation and an all the more observable interdependence and mutual conditionality. It is therefore impossible to promote something, however valuable and precious it may be, in one part of the world if that same thing does not take root elsewhere, in fact – everywhere. The fact of the matter is that we in Southeast Europe after the recent tragic wars needed the assistance from the international community in order to return to the path of dialogue and peaceful conflict resolution. However, this does not exclude the possibility that we today give an impetus that could be beneficial to the entire international community.

Unfortunately, we live in a world that is marked by the phenomenon of global terrorism. It is not stated without reason that terrorism is blind. As a rule, it strikes at innocent victims. If terrorism is then linked to a specific ethnic group or a specific religion, have we not reached the very threshold of preaching and also of practicing unselective hostility towards all members of that ethnic group or that religion? There are more than just enough elements to answer affirmatively to that question.

I firmly believe that we must not let that happen. First and foremost, we should never get tired of emphasising that terrorism has neither national nor religious colours nor motives. It is true that some try to paint it as such expecting that this national or religious mask would attract more blinded followers. However, this is a lie.

There is no such religion that would preach terror and there are no national interests or reasons that would justify terror – either that perpetrated by individuals, by this or that organisation or states.

Terror rests always and everywhere upon prejudices, intolerance, exclusion and, above all, on rejection of any dialogue. I am confident that you share my view that readiness to accept and defend common values, respect for diversities, acceptance and practice of multiethnicity, multiculturalism and multireligiosity are those foundations that should be exploited as the basis for a long-term concept of not only the fight against terrorism but also of the creation of a truly new world order where deeper roots of terrorism would be eliminated.

The enormous responsibility for promoting such a concept rests upon us, politicians, as well as on those who work in educational systems and in the media. It is not a matter of amending some legislation. No, what this is about is to change the way of thinking, to eradicate deep-rooted prejudices and animosities, to learn to accept not just those that are similar to us, but also those who are different or unlike us. This cannot be achieved by passing decrees or imposing something in any way. I am referring here to a long-term concept that can be realised only through dedicated work throughout the years. In this context, I consider this meeting as a small step on a long path.

Each step made on the path towards a goal is important and irreplaceable. Therefore, this meeting here in Tirana is important and irreplaceable. Initiatives for dialogue in the region as well as initiatives for dialogue on a global basis should come from us and should not and cannot be imposed from outside. I shall be quite clear: I plead that we accept all well-intended incentives regardless of their origin, but I also call upon taking key steps by ourselves, at our own initiative. In doing so we shall always bear in mind the activities of the United Nations and their specialised organisations or – to put it simpler – the basic goals stated in the Charter of the world organisation. One of them is, let me remind you, the goal of “saving succeeding generations from the scourge of war”.

We in Southeast Europe had a very close encounter with the horrors of war. It may be that for this reason we are so sensitive when it comes to resolve this or that conflict by means of war, wherever in the world it may be. We are nevertheless unfortunately aware of the fact that the use of military force cannot sometimes be avoided. However, this then has to be an action of the international community under the blue flag of the United Nations, this has to be a war waged in order to have no more wars. For this purpose only, and no other.

At this moment I see dialogue and in particular inter-ethnic and inter-religious dialogue in the region to have a double function. On the one hand, it can assist in creating conditions for the further democratisation of each of our countries and for the further normalisation and development of relations among them. On the other hand, this dialogue assists in creating prerequisites for our approach to the European Union and for, finally, our integration. There is no alternative either to the former or to the latter. We tread on the same path and aspire to the same goal. Let us help one another.

But above all – let us discuss matters on which we agree and matters on which we disagree; matters that make us similar and about matters that make us different. Only through dialogue can we open the door to the future. I hope and believe that this meeting will make this door a bit more ajar.

Branko Crvenkovski

President of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

I am very pleased and indeed honoured to participate to this important Summit, which deals with an essential topic, a topic whose realization should be seen as a strategic goal of all the countries in the region and wider.

The relation between ethnicity, religion and society is one of the most important and most sensitive issues of modern global politics. Responsible leaders, intellectuals, religious authorities, citizens throughout the world endeavour to overcome the prejudice that violence is due to difference and to create major awareness about the importance of respecting world cultures and religions.

Nevertheless, in our region, the region of South East Europe, this issue has certainly additional implications, certain particularities and seen as a whole, it is a complex set of circumstances.

Namely, the discontinuity in terms of free approach to freedom in contemporary countries in transition, pertaining to this part of the world, has resulted with a series of specific problems, and in psychological terms it is sometimes one of the reasons for the radicalization of the situation; there is also a traditional connection of a given ethnicity with a religion as a direct consequence of identifying ethnicity with religion, which sometimes brings to absurd and extremely dangerous unifications.

In order to overcome prejudices and uproot stereotypes and achieve the objectives and standards of modern civilized societies, there is only one way of acting both here and throughout the world. Dialogue.

Even when we have entirely different starting points in our communication and diametrically opposed views, we must talk. We must search for a common starting point to be able to find it at all. Different and diverging views that we have do not liberate us from the responsibility of being unable to establish communication.

Dialogue makes us listen each other. Dialogue is the only guarantee we have to formulate exactly what we have to say. Dialogue is an opportunity to understand. And understanding makes people humane and civilized.

The spirit of most religions and the fundamental laws of faith are mostly based on the essential human values supporting the most important processes in our societies and the overall way of life. These universal values are the principals of all laws that regulate the system of a modern and prosperous state. The concept of a modern, civil state in our world implies

also the separation of the state from the church, but also the responsibility the state has in terms of ensuring freedom of religion and equality among religious communities and nurturing religious traditions.

It is necessary to reach a wide consensus – both within each country and at regional and global level – in relation to the basic principals of interethnic and inter-religious tolerance and cohabitation being the basic prerequisites to peace, stability, security and prosperity of the citizens, regardless of the religious community they belong to. All must enjoy equal rights and have the same duties and responsibilities in view of the common prosperity and future. Therefore, developing different, ethnic, cultural and religious values should be exclusively based upon the principals of dialogue, tolerance and mutual respect.

The Republic of Macedonia has demonstrated that it knows how to use and nurture dialogue not only as a way of resolving problems but also as a way of harmonizing and respecting differences, as the only way to reach prosperity and progress in the country and wider in the region. I am confident that our common goal, “Europeanization of the Balkans”, depends on the strength of our mutual trust and understanding. This is something we ought to nurture patiently among us, as statesmen and among all the entities of our societies. As I said before, the recent past has proved that there is no other alternative than dialogue and tolerance in achieving the goals we have set. I may assure you that the Republic of Macedonia is strongly determined to pursue that path.

This is essential to the promotion of a peaceful and harmonious development of civil societies and to achieving closer and more integrated relations among the countries of our region and within the international community, especially in terms of the European integrations.

Tolerance is the fundamental attribute of contemporary civilized societies. Therefore our integration in international processes and in the wider international community directly depends upon dialogue and the level of respect for the rights of the Other. No one will accept us unless we accept each other’s virtues and weaknesses. It is also true that tolerance does not imply that we always have to agree with the way the other views life and world. Tolerance is a possibility to ensure good cohabitation of different cultures, nations and religions, regardless of our personal view or approach to certain issues. We need to be able to offer the same understanding to the others that we expect for ourselves.

However, we must never forget that dialogue requires reason and pure heart. Before we start talking to the others, very often we should first say something to ourselves. We often search in vein for prejudices in the

others while they live in our mind. We fall asleep and wake with them. The battle we have to win is hard only because it starts within ourselves. We must never forget what our ancestors taught us. They used to say: We must be brave if needed – but we must be humane even if it is not needed. It has always been more difficult to protect the other from ourselves than ourselves from the other; more difficult but at the same time more noble. This is exactly the reason why on the Balkans, regardless of the religion, language, nation; regardless of divisions and sufferings, regardless of time - it has always been clear who is and who is not humane.

This world is only a place to live. Like it or not, we have to accept that we are one family and only visitors in our common home. Therefore, only people of virtue not violence will deserve eternity.

I am confident that the nations of Europe are proud of their national identities and histories, but they are also resolved to create a common future, be “united in diversity”.

I profoundly believe that the world has existed and will exist only for this kind of people.

Svetozar Marovic

President of Serbia and Montenegro

I am taking part in our today's conference with great pleasure and a feeling of responsibility, as I perceive its agenda as well as the presence of my dear friends – the leaders of the countries of our region, as the essence of the current and future relations in Southeast Europe.

I thank the UNESCO and the Government of Albania for having recognized the fact that the stability and development of Southeast Europe depend on the development of inter-religious and inter-ethnic dialogue and for having arranged this conference precisely on that topic. Serbia and Montenegro as multi-ethnic and multi-confessional republics are strongly interested in the development of such a dialogue for they see in this the only way leading to association with the European family.

All of us who represent the citizens of our respective countries here, together with the United Nations and particularly the UNESCO, are taking part in the promotion of universal values of civilization. Our duty is to win recognition for these values in our environment, particularly in the fields of education, science and technology, culture and media and communications. It is likewise our duty to recognize in that process the specific qualities of our region, so rich in diversity, which we must consider an advantage rather than a limiting factor in the 21st century.

I can, therefore, confidently make two points. First, the national, religious, cultural differences that are so much in evidence in the region we belong to are, by themselves, a great value and we are duty-bound to preserve them. Present-day Europe and the modern world do not recognize autarchic, isolated areas that do not communicate with their neighbours and seek to ensure that their internal differences are obliterated. Second, the only way for us to maintain and stimulate diversity is through dialogue - everyday, well-meaning and tolerant dialogue without setting any preliminary conditions or imposition of ready-made solutions.

I am confident that my friends, the Presidents of the states in the region, share my satisfaction at the fact that by following precisely this mentioned principle, we have managed over the past period to create a new spirit of mutual confidence, dialogue and tolerance in the Balkan region. Evident progress in our mutual relations in all fields is the result precisely of our shared willingness to discuss everything, at all levels and on all occasions. Understandably, we cannot reach agreement on all issues of relevance to the citizens of our respective countries but this fact does not

discourage anybody among us in our efforts to continue our search for solutions. Our vision must be turned, just as it has been to date, to the prosperity of the entire southeast part of Europe, we are all committed to that and we have to exhibit this commitment of ours on a daily basis.

First, we have to do it through democracy, by showing our readiness to defend the fundamental values of civilized societies without any intolerance – freedom and the right of every citizen to freely choose his place of residence, enjoy freedom of movement, the right to employment. The Western Balkans must not be the only place in Europe where there are still parts from which people have been expelled, their churches torn down, their right of return insecure and uncertain. Second, we have to show solidarity and support one another in addressing the issues on which another country has made more progress. We should rejoice at the success of the other country as at our shared success. I myself have often spoken about this having in mind Croatia and its success in the process of association with the European Union. It is on the readiness of us, the leaders in this region to take on responsibility that largely depends whether issues related to our future will be addressed through negotiation in the Western Balkans rather than on the basis of intolerance and unilateral approaches. Everything that concerns our neighbour has to do with ourselves, too. Everything that is his problem is at the same time a request for our help and cooperation.

The dialogue with the past must reflect the full strength of our belief in the importance of multi-ethnic life. Dealing with the past requires the strength to face up not only to the good aspects but also the bad aspects within ourselves and our nations. Criminal liability knows no nationality. All those that have committed crimes against other people, against the peace and security must answer, regardless of whether they are Serbs, Montenegrins, Albanians, Croats, Bosniaks... The victory over the past will at the same time mark a defeat of the concepts of great mono-ethnic states, the state for one single nation, the state of one nation ruling other nations. One cannot build the future of a multiethnic Balkan region on mythical stories about great nations, the ideas of territorial and ethnic conquests. In this way, one cannot settle fairly and durably any single of the outstanding issues that our fate is vitally linked to. We have to be forward-looking and recognize that we cannot move forward if we judge only the past for in such a case we shall be judged by the future.

It is therefore important also for our economic relations that our common market with almost 60 million people becomes completed. Not a single democratic achievement will be able to leave its full imprint unless

there are economic conditions guaranteeing autonomy to every individual in making political choices.

It is our duty to show, through our partnership with Europe, that we do not only demand and expect something from Europe, but also to tell Europe that there are here competent people and elites that know how to negotiate and come to good, European solutions. We have to show that also when it comes to the solutions for Kosovo.

Kosovo is one of those issues that are possible to settle only in a European way. Kosovo is becoming a symbol by which we shall prove that it is possible to reach agreement between the majority and the minority, that such an agreement will not pose a threat to anyone in the region nor give protection to anybody who has committed a crime at any time in the past. Justice is the pivotal virtue among human values. I think that Aristotle wrote somewhere that what is just is what is equal in equal situations.

Kosovo is today, and I am confident that this will be so in the near future as well, an issue that we all in the region are interested to see settled in a European way. It is only partly an issue between Belgrade and Pristina. Kosovo is an issue for which answer must be sought primarily by those who are living in Kosovo – Albanians, Serbs, Montenegrins and the other communities. Their mutual dialogue is the essential first step in achieving the European standards and establishing the European prospect. As I have mentioned, dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina is necessary, necessary is a dialogue with all those concerned for the future of Kosovo – you who represent the countries of the region as well as the representatives of Europe and the wider international community.

The European solution for Kosovo, which Serbia and Montenegro favour, is possible to identify only through a patient and tolerant dialogue among all those I have mentioned. The aim of that dialogue can be only those solutions that give the citizens of Kosovo, regardless of their nationality or religion, a European prospect, full security, higher standards, new jobs. Present-day Kosovo, or the Kosovo we remember from some the past does not constitute such solutions. Present-day Europe does not accept killings and violence against people, their homes and cultural heritage as a lifestyle. Present-day Europe, however, does not accept any refusal to take part in democratic processes and institutions either. Finally, present-day Europe does not accept the fact that in one of its parts, in this case in Kosovo, two-thirds of people have no jobs and that tens of thousands of people still cannot return to their homes.

Such serious problems call for a strong commitment and a great deal of responsibility. But they first of all call for openness and willingness to

engage in a dialogue. Should there be such willingness among all those concerned for the European future of Kosovo, a major step forward would be made. I am convinced that there will be such willingness on all sides. Kosovo today is the litmus test of our readiness to show in deed our commitment to European values and the values of modern civilization.

Our today's conference, the presence of all regional leaders and our shared openness and readiness to continue making use of dialogue as the only way to achieve full stability and overall progress in our region instills in me the optimistic hope in the success of the European integration process in the entire region. Therefore, dialogue is a word that must not hide our differences, that must not inflame passions but stimulate reasonable thinking and lead to compromise-based solutions. This is a message that associates the Balkans with Europe. This is a message for the future of 60 million people. For that reason, we shall not close our eyes before any problem. By working together and extending a hand to each other we are holding firmly the hand of our European future.

Kjell Magne Bondevik

Prime Minister of Norway

The termination of violence is the first, indispensable step towards lasting peace.

Then the hardest part starts: building sustainable political solutions based on democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law.

To quote John F. Kennedy: "Peace is a daily, a weekly, a monthly process, gradually changing opinions, slowly eroding barriers, quietly building new structures."

In recent years Norway has played an important role as a facilitator in a number of peace processes. We have been involved in various ways in peace and reconciliation processes in South Africa, Colombia, Ethiopia/Eritrea, the Philippines, Guatemala, Haiti, Cyprus, the Middle East, Sri Lanka and the Sudan. As you know, Norway has also supported reconciliation efforts in South-East Europe.

Building peace means promoting fundamental values.

Without respect for human dignity, reconciliation is impossible.

Thus, promoting mutual trust and respect is essential to building peace. It is essential to inspiring hope for the future. The challenge is to replace fear with acceptance, harassment with tolerance, and hate with respect. In other words, to love one's neighbour.

As many of you may know, in addition to being prime minister, I am an ordained Lutheran pastor. I firmly believe that inter-cultural and inter-religious contacts are vital if we are to succeed in reducing tension and building mutual trust and confidence between people. This holds true not only in South-East Europe, but also in very many other parts of the world.

I have made it a priority to fight racism and discrimination against Muslims and other religious minorities in my country. To show my respect for Islam, I have visited mosques in Norway and on visits to Muslim countries.

Religion is a strong force in today's world. It has played an important and at times violent role throughout history.

Few know better than you how religion can be abused to stir up mistrust and hate. Few know better than you how religion can be abused to breed conflict and war. Too often, religious leaders have allowed themselves to become pawns used by political leaders in their struggle for power. In times of conflict religious symbols are often attacked, and this in turn inflames the tension and discord. The recent history of this region is a case in point.

Remarkable progress has been made in South-East Europe in recent years, thanks not least to your responsible leadership. We fully support you in your ambition to become further integrated into Euro-Atlantic structures. Our common wish for greater integration is based on the standards and values we share. Together we must commit ourselves to staying the course. We want your efforts to prevail.

The violent incidents in Kosovo last March were a clear demonstration that peace must be promoted every single day. They were a stark reminder of the potential for extremists to mobilise support for ethnic violence, and the vulnerability of minorities. This was emphasised by the Norwegian NATO ambassador, Mr Eide, in his report to the UN Secretary General.

Political leaders need to deal with the past and plan for the future in a constructive and responsible manner.

We all have a duty to ensure that those suspected of war crimes are brought to justice, including those indicted by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. This is an essential step in paving the way for a genuine reconciliation process.

In many conflicts religion is considered to be part of the problem. In my view, it should be the other way around. Religion must become part of the solution. As leaders, we must take responsibility for encouraging dialogue between religions. Inter-religious dialogue does not mean giving up your own faith. We must focus on our common values such as respect for the sacred, human dignity and reconciliation.

To focus on the future, we must build on the values that unite us.

We must stop thinking in terms of “us and them”.

We must learn from history, and not let the forces of the past dictate our future.

Our children are our future. Educating our children is the key to achieve concrete improvements in our societies.

Let us teach our children that we stand for harmony, not conflict. Let us ensure that our schools foster respect, understanding and consideration for others. Let us ensure that our schools foster a sense of community and solidarity. Let us teach our children to cross ethnic and religious barriers.

I believe that such an approach can lay the foundations for co-operation and co-existence, instead of alienation and hostility.

Many children in South-East Europe have spent years of their childhood in conflict and war. Their wounds are deep. Although people are learning to live together again, there are still some places where youngsters have few opportunities to meet and get to know their peers from the other

side. Their parents and community leaders discourage these contacts. This will prevent their wounds from healing. It may well prove to be the most long-standing threat to a common future.

Our challenge – and let me underline that it is a joint one – is to build an inclusive society. This was a core message in a speech I made three months ago to political leaders from other European countries in the Hague, on the politics of European values.

We need to focus on what unites people – on creating bonds, on paving the way for joint, positive experiences. What does this mean here in your region? It means making sure that different ethnic groups attend the same schools, share the same water, electricity and telephone systems, the same police service, the same postal service, the same hospitals and the same fire departments.

These practical measures are essential if progress is to be made where it counts – at the local level.

But not only at the local level. Any viable political and economic strategy has to facilitate regional co-operation, development and trade. Such a regional, European-oriented strategy is important to the objective of a wider European economic and political integration.

We must repudiate the violent history of Europe and the Balkans. We must demonstrate, not only to ourselves, but to the rest of the world, that Europe is a continent of peace.

Thomas Mayr-Harting

Ambassador, Representative of the Federal President of the Republic of Austria

The Federal President of Austria, Dr. Heinz Fischer has asked me to convey to you his very best wishes for this important meeting taking place here in Tirana. He believes that this is a very timely initiative. You also know how strong the interest and involvement of Austria is in South Eastern Europe. President Fischer therefore regrets that he has not been able to join you here today.

During these past years, Albania has been an important and reliable advocate of inter-ethnic dialogue and cooperation – your message and your attitude have been particularly useful in the wider regional context.

Albania is also a good place to talk about inter-religious dialogue. The former communist rulers of this country tried to eradicate religion. Today democratic Albania again provides us with an impressive example of a society in which people of different creeds and convictions live together in a spirit of tolerance and mutual understanding.

One of the subjects that this Conference will undoubtedly wish to discuss is the potential for a dialogue between Christians and Muslims. My country has a long experience in this field – and this experience is also due to our long-standing relations with South Eastern Europe.

The Islamic Community of Austria has had an official status in my country since 1912. On this basis, young Muslims are entitled to receive religious instruction in State-run schools on the same basis as young Catholics, Protestants, Orthodox Christians or Jews; the teachers who provide this instruction are chosen by the respective religious community and paid by the State.

The leaders of the Islamic Community of Austria have always defended the position that Islam can and must have its rightful place in a pluralistic society. Together with our good friends from Bosnia – and with the support of the Austrian Foreign Ministry – they organized a conference of the “Heads of Islamic Centers and Imams in Europe” in Graz in June of last year. This conference underlined that Muslims share common standards and values with other religious communities and philosophies. The participants of this meeting explicitly rejected all forms of extremism and fanaticism.

As I am the first representative of a European Union Member State to take the floor today I should probably also say a word on the subject of future relations of Turkey and the Union, insofar as this is relevant for our conference.

Next week the Heads of State and Government of the European Union will have to decide whether and the Union should start negotiations with Turkey – and on which terms this might be done.

They will take this decision on the basis of clear political and economic criteria; they will also have to judge whether the Union has the capacity to absorb a candidate of the size of Turkey – but the fact that the majority of the Turkish population are Muslims will not be relevant.

The European Union is no “Christian club” and should not be considered as such. As Austrians, we would not be prepared to accept this kind of reasoning – in view of the status of Muslims in our own country, but also because this argument would create an unacceptable obstacle for important parts of South Eastern Europe on their way towards our common European structures.

We follow a different logic: we see the European perspective of the countries of South Eastern Europe that we agreed upon in Thessaloniki as one of the most important means to finally overcome interethnic strife in this part of our continent.

At the same time this conference is also an impressive example of the positive effects of regional cooperation – a goal to which the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe under its Special Coordinator Erhard Busek has made so many important contributions.

I also believe that this meeting can send an important message beyond Europe. For this reason we are particularly grateful to UNESCO and its Director-General Mr. Koïchiro Matsuura for being on of the driving forces and chief organizers of this and other important ventures in the area of the dialogue of civilizations.

Let me end on a more personal note to our Chairman: many Austrians know that you, Mr. President, are the grand nephew of one of the greatest artists in the history of Austrian theatre, Albanian actor Alexander Moissi, the undisputed star of the Vienna Burgtheater in the first decades of the 20th century.

This way your own family history, Mr. President, bears witness to the cultural and civilizational links that are so important for our common Europe and for this conference.

Petros Tatoulis

Deputy Minister of Culture, Representative of the Prime Minister of Greece

Honorable Members of the Regional Summit on “The Development of Inter-ethnic and Inter-religious Dialogue for the Stability and Progress of South-East Europe”,

On behalf of the Greek government and the Greek Prime Minister Mr. Kostas Karamanlis, I would like to express my content for the aforementioned summit. Any kind of dialogue on such important matters can only resolve any possible misunderstanding or existing stereotypes that the 20th century inherited to the South- Eastern European societies.

It is a historical fact that the 20th century was an epoch of ethnic rivalries and excessive antagonism among different nations, social classes and/or religious groups. Our main concern should be to prevent any reappearance of such animosities in the new era that the 21st century signifies for humanity, in general, and for our region, in particular.

Greece, as a member of the European Union and a champion of liberal democracy, will contribute with all its efforts towards this direction. It is important to proceed in the 21st century not only through our historical memories, recollections of our past, but with the hope and the determination to create a better world for ourselves and for our children.

Freedom of religious worship, speech and cultural communication will be the key elements for the realization of our common objectives. South-East Europe has the capacity to adopt the role as one of the leading regions in the globe. This is the Greek aspiration and we are striving in order to succeed it, with the co-operation of all the nation-states of the region.

The Olympic Games of 2004 in Athens grant to all of us a significant message. That we, the states of the South-East Europe can achieve and fulfill even the most complex tasks that stretch out in front of us. We have the moral capability and the cultural infrastructure to play an important role in the global politics of the new era. Culture will be the vehicle for progress and evolution in the 21st century. However, in order to reach to such a high point and safeguard this *modus vivendi*, it is important to put behind us the past and build a better and safer geopolitical environment for the citizens of our region.

Greece is a modern state that has proven to the rest of the world its respect and will to protect the civil and religious rights of our citizens. We welcome cultural and educational co-operation with our neighbor nations and we are ready to aid and support all the states of our region in areas such

as archaeological excavations, maintenance of archaeological monuments and cultural exchanges in every area of modern arts.

The future should and will be a better reality for our region. Cultural respect and protection of free religious practice are the main instruments for the future. Greece will continue to play its positive role towards this track, because these are the foundations for every modern democratic regime of the 21st century.

I would like to thank all the participants of this summit, the Albanian government for its initiative and UNESCO for its constructive role towards the creation of a better future for our region, based upon cultural and religious understanding and open dialogue.

Viktor Opaschi

Representative of the President of Romania

I would like to address a sincere and warm greeting to the President of Albania, Mr. Alfred Moisiu, and to the General-Director of UNESCO, Mr. Koïchiro Matsuura, the organizers of this extremely opportune summit regarding inter-religious dialogue – a key factor of stability in the Balkans.

Furthermore, I would like to address my best thoughts to other colleagues and friends present here at this reunion: Borislav Paravac, Giorgi Parvanov, Stjepan Mesic, Branko Crvenkovski and Svetozar Marovic, as well as to all participants, expressing at the same time my most sincere regret that I could not attend the works of this conference, which I am persuaded will be extremely useful for the stability and the development in this part of the world.

The Summit is placed in the spirit of promoting dialogue among cultures and civilizations, a main component of UNESCO's mission and activities, a dialogue having a deep political dimension deeply rooted in the present. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Culture Organization strives to extend the area of this dialogue and adapt it better to the increasingly numerous challenges of our contemporary world, by identifying the obstacles we are confronted with, among which ignorance and prejudice may trigger new socio- economic and cultural fractures, new conflicts which may jeopardize the very future of humanity.

The dialogue between cultures and civilizations is and always has to be based on knowledge and understanding of each other, on tolerance and respect of the other, constantly calling for reconciliation.

The message of this Summit must be one of hope and cooperation in the common attempt for having a stable and durable peace in South-East Europe, in Europe and throughout the world. The tragic events of these past decades have to strengthen our will and to urge us to follow on the irreversible path of the construction we all aspire to, a construction which all our peoples need.

By the process of reunification of Europe, our continent has been regaining its initial outline affected by the divisions caused by the Cold War. The new geo-strategic reality, comprising a much larger space, between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea including the countries of the Caucasus - Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan - requires a new perspective on common projects on the part of the leaders and political executives.

Concerned with the evolution of the situation in the Balkans over the last decade, Romania has initiated and has participated, from a

political, military, humanitarian and economic perspective to different projects that had in view the resolution of the issues that countries in our region were confronted with. We have supported both the process of economic and social development, the efforts of affirmation and consolidation of democracy, as well as their efforts of achieving an extensive and solid cooperation. We believe that the current challenges our region is faced with have their appropriate answer only in the decisive consolidation of positive tendencies that have developed over the last years.

It is obvious that no country is absolutely protected and no one can fight on their own against the new dangers following the period after September 11 2001. To this extent, Romania has proposed, and has in view adopting an anti-terrorist Solidarity Chart among the countries in South-Central Europe and those in the region of the Black Sea. The last years that have passed since the terrorist attacks against the USA has proved the need for drafting and enforcing a comprehensive, multi-national policy which would comprise along the classic spheres of building and enhancing confidence among the states, the mobilization of a new important domain, that of the inter-religious dialogue.

I honestly believe, and the debate over the process of the reunification of the European continent strengthens this belief, that without a "Europe of the European soul" we shall be condemned yet again to a sad ending if not a disastrous utopia, one that unfortunately our continent has been forced upon once too many times.

Starting from the significant importance religion places upon human values, it becomes imperative that in attaining constructive objectives one could generate those objectives that are constructive and that can involve the most important energies in this field having profound significance for all nations. Taking into account the important role played by religion in defining the identity of the individual and human communities, but also social mechanisms, it appears obvious to have as priority the building of a bridge and a dialogue between confessions at the institutional level, and also among communities living with each other for centuries. Churches and religious institutions are increasingly more integrated and active in civil society, contributing to the consolidation of mechanisms of national and social solidarity, as well as the strengthening of democracy.

The Romanian experience reunites the entire European religious spectrum, alongside the Orthodox Church, which represents the majority of the population, there are two other major Christian religions: Catholicism and Protestantism. Furthermore, there is also a small but

active Mosaic community as well as a Muslim one. The State encourages cooperation between religious communities in a spirit of tolerance and common respect, so that they would contribute, as privileged partners of State authorities, to the study, discussion and solving of the great problems that society has to deal with in our modern day and age.

We have to oppose religious violence and radicalism with a new system of values based on tolerance, dialogue among cultures and civilizations, and the development of democratic culture. A system of cooperative security has to include the larger level of cooperation and dialogue, but also the level of protecting religious identity within the projects of national reconstruction in those countries that have suffered as a consequence of conflicts such as those in the Balkans.

Inter-faith dialogue also has a practical dimension, associated to the idea of good governance, one of social inclusion and convergence in attaining certain major objectives. We have witnessed over the past years to the development of a regional calendar of cooperation and dialogue in the domains of religion and culture. As emphasized by the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, Europe has to grow just like a cathedral “with strong foundations in the ground and an immense impetus towards the sky”.

We are ready to bring along, for this project of a united Europe, our long history and unique experience as a model of multi-faith living together. In this context, I would like to emphasize once more, the firm commitment Romania has to the objectives and the programme of UNESCO, together with all our friends, the Member States. I would also like to express my belief that the presence of Mr. Koïchiro Matsuura, with whom I had the pleasure of meeting and collaborating over these past years, as the head of the Organization, is a token of the success of giving life to these humanist ideals UNESCO defends and promotes in a consistent manner.

I am persuaded that the availability and the interest manifested by all the countries in the region for living together in a united Europe is due to this significant spiritual and cultural component that is inter-religious dialogue.

Itztok Simoniti

Representative of the President of Slovenia

I am honoured to convey to you the greetings of the President of Slovenia, Dr. Drnovsek, who is unable to attend this distinguished meeting, and his best wishes for our conference.

We are of the opinion that these kinds of gatherings are of high importance, and must become part of daily political culture in all relevant issues of international community.

Dialogue is the most important instrument of modern communication and has no viable alternative. There is good proof to support this idea: the most advanced Western society was created through dialogue - that is the European Union and NATO. There is also the regrettable proof that the inability or inexistence of dialogue in the region has always lead to conflicts and wars.

Dialogue is only a synonym for the capacity to resolve problems in a peaceful way. Dialogue implies the need for the presence of the other. The other is not an enemy, but a crucial partner in the process.

We Slovenes can say so on the basis of our experience: firstly, because we have negotiated, that is to say that we have dialogued for ten years to become a member state of the European Union and NATO; secondly, because we wish that those with whom we had lived together for the past 70 years also become members of the Euro-Atlantic organizations through the same process of dialogue; and thirdly, in Slovenia's becoming a member state of these organizations, an important precedent has been established: we have initiated the process of dismantling the famous Balkan powder keg that can only be resolved piece by piece so that the other countries in the region can follow and start the process of negotiating with the EU. We sincerely believe that all countries from this part of the world should have a clear Euro-Atlantic perspective, if they wish so, of course.

We can say, on the basis of European experiences, that dialogue among democratic and secular political entities or States is successful. Unfortunately, it is less successful among different religions and their institutions since they are lagging behind the actual need of modern international political life. I firmly believe it is high time that religious institutions assume their share of responsibility together with democratic political entities for resolving the burning issues of the region and the world.

Europe is full of complex historical, political and religious issues. This part of the world has always been influenced by the pulsation of big powers; states have emerged and disappeared through centuries.

This region is in fact a kind of experimental laboratory of how to establish a successful dialogue between different nations, religions, historical consciousness and different identities. Different religions are native to this part of the world: Roman Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox and Islamic. All known mistakes, primarily owing to a lack of dialogue, cannot and must not be repeated.

The EU expects all countries of this region to contribute to its stabilization, hence resolving its problems through dialogue. In May 2004, 55 million people from different Slavic nations entered the EU and NATO, and in 2007, Bulgaria and Romania will join as well. Croatia will begin negotiations within the next year and all other countries, including Albania, will follow it in due time.

Pope John Paul II said that Europe must breathe with both parts of its lungs. The Balkan countries are an integral part of these European lungs. Religions, and their institutions, are therefore not less responsible for maintaining the dialogue between nations, religions and cultures than political institutions.

In conclusion, I should like to draw your attention to one person – well known to all throughout the world - Nobel Prize winner Mother Theresa. It is irrelevant if she was of Albanian, Macedonian or other origin. She belongs to the noblest humanist tradition that is easily recognisable all over the world. She was a perfect example of how an individual can devote her energies to helping people of completely different cultures and religions. I met her twice, some 15 years ago in Rome on her way to India. She told me there was no point in attempting to amalgamate different religions, but in finding the reasons for helping others in our own beliefs. The second time I met her was in Ljubljana, our capital, in 1993. She told me she was nothing but a pencil in the hand of God, that is, doing good deeds is an ethical imperative of all known gods.

I mentioned the example of an individual, but now the religious and political institutions must contribute to dialogue. It is self-evident that the fashionable thesis of the clash of civilizations must be replaced by dialogue among them.

Erhard Busek

Special Coordinator, of the Stability Pact for South-East Europe

From its very beginning, the Stability Pact has underlined the significance of inter-religious and inter-ethnic dialogue in promoting reconciliation and cooperation and in building stability and development in South-East Europe. I will avoid to present what the Stability pact has done in the past or to underline once more the need of the inter-ethnic and inter-religious dialogue. I will focus on the difficulties, problems, real challenges and, more concretely, on next steps to be taken.

Despite the increasing dialogue between religious leaders in the region, statements promoting peace and reconciliation and declarations being adopted, it is crystal clear that a more active involvement in the dialogue of local communities and youth is needed. Young people, with a special emphasis on women and youth organizations, interested in religious matters should be included in the process of the inter-religious dialogue. In addition, local communities, through their official representatives but also through civil society, can undeniably contribute to strengthening the communication among different religious and ethnic groups, on a more long-term basis. A brilliant example is the yearly ecumenical youth meeting organised by the community of Taizé, that brings together thousands of young adults from all around Europe. It makes no sense to have only meetings at the top level; we also have to involve the local communities, the parishes, as well as the NGOs in these matters. We will not be able to achieve any positive developments, if we do not involve the people themselves.

We are today inaugurating a monument to Mother Teresa; this is also an incentive to have a closer cooperation of those religions and institutions that are involved in social issues as Caritas, Diaconia, the social funds of the Orthodox Church and Muslims.

The participation of different communities and civil society must be combined with a political leadership that strongly believes in the values of cooperation, dialogue and peaceful co-existence that inspires people to initiate and participate in community life, regardless of ethnicities and religious faiths. This gathering today is proof that this political will exists and can bring together political and religious leaders in a common effort to bridge differences, to reconcile and to lead towards a prosperous future based on development and stability.

Inter-governmental cooperation on youth dialogue can lead, in the future, to a “regional youth exchange treaty”, that institutionalizes youth

cooperation and commits the responsible ministers in the region to enhance youth mobility programmes, strengthening youth dialogue across borders, between different ethnic and religious groups. The Stability Pact for South East Europe is, of course, strongly in favour of youth exchange because we all know the great success story of the German-French Youth Cooperation, the so-called “Deutsch-Französisches Jugendwerk”. The work done in this forum was crucial in overcoming the differences that were created by wars throughout three centuries between France and Germany, leading to a very close cooperation between the two countries today. Better to say between the two nations.

Despite our efforts, ethnic and religious division lines are still very strong. Those divisions are characteristic not only for South-East Europe. It is painfully proven that they are not even a characteristic of a post-conflict environment. Friction points among ethnic and religious groups can appear wherever insecurity, underdevelopment, violation of human and civic rights appear. Lack of citizenship education, marginalization of ethnic and religious groups, lack of social cohesion and stagnating economies are elements that make tension flourish, not only in South East Europe, but all around the world. This I am mentioning not to blame the region, we still have difficulties for example in Northern Ireland and also in Spain. We can learn from these examples. The question of education should also not be underestimated in this respect; history books in the region are an issue of great concern. The Center of Democracy and Reconciliation in South East Europe (CDRSEE) in Thessaloniki is trying to improve this situation. Personally I am born in Greater Germany in 1941. Judging by this experience it becomes obvious that questions of Greater Albania, Greater Romania, Greater Bulgaria, Greater Serbia and so are far from the actual problems of the region and not helpful at all. Do not forget that history books are instrumental for education.

Nowadays we face an enormous challenge: We have to realize, to prepare ourselves and the region alike, that South Eastern Europe is transforming from a post-conflict area into a potential European Region. Therefore, my task as one of the representatives of international community, and of all of us here today is heavy and challenging. The Stability Pact for South East Europe is supporting the work of the so-called Euro-regions. We have three prime examples; the region between Dubrovnik/Trebinje/Herceg-Novi is a good sign of necessary cooperation between Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro. The Euro-region of Novi-Sad/Subotica/Szeged/Timisoara is also very important, especially if you are looking to the minorities. We also tried to do a Euro-

region around the Ohrid and Prespa Lake but is still stalled due to the name question of the one participating state. The recent formal inauguration had to be cancelled because of this. Nevertheless, it is necessary because substantial problems of the citizens living there can only be solved in a cross-border fashion, looking at issues such as water management, ecology, disaster preparedness tourism, to name a few.

Activities on education, sciences and technology, cultural diversity, media and communication technology are necessary, but they must be part of a well-structured and long-term strategy. We have to examine the role of media in particular. Arranging meetings of journalists of different camps would be an important step, since the language of hatred is an obvious and continuing problem. We have to confront the journalists with their own language they are using in order to promote better mutual understanding and not confrontation.

The next important activity is the expansion of mobility program of the EU like Socrates, Erasmus, etc to the region. This is essential in building a better mutual understanding of the younger generation and in fighting brain drain, a huge problem in South East Europe. Bringing together the universities is also promoting better understanding.

I want to assure you that the Stability Pact will continue to support inter-religious and inter-ethnic dialogue in the region.

The message from our side is clear: access and openness to citizens, especially young people and women, creating or strengthening the existing inter-ethnic and inter-religious networks, involving the communities in activities which really change peoples' perspective, view and quality of everyday life.

Lawrence Rossin

*Principal Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General in Kosovo,
United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK)*

I am very pleased to attend this conference on inter-ethnic and inter-religious dialogue. Allow me to convey the best regards of Mr. Søren Jessen-Petersen, the Special Representative for Kosovo of the United Nations Secretary-General, who could not be present today due to previously scheduled travel elsewhere outside Kosovo.

Kosovo has experienced significant ethnic conflict over the last decade, which has divided its communities along ethnic lines. Rebuilding inter-ethnic relations poses a great challenge, not only for the stability of Kosovo but also for the surrounding region. For this reason, the encouragement of inter-ethnic dialogue and the improvement of inter-ethnic relations is one of the key goals of UNMIK's work in Kosovo. I note the continuing eagerness of both UNMIK and Kosovo's Provisional Institutions of Self-Government for participation of all Kosovo's ethnic and religious community leaders in such dialogue. I certainly appreciate the strong words just reiterated by President Marovic in support of active inclusive measures for all of Kosovo's ethnic communities in building a stable multi-ethnic future for Kosovo. The existing Working Groups on such key issues as decentralization, security and missing persons would benefit by direct participation of Kosovo's Serb leaders. I hope the authorities in Belgrade will encourage such participation, in active ways that they have not done until now. That will give concrete significance to the President's words, and also open better perspectives for Kosovo's Serb community.

As you are aware, the Kosovo conflict is characterized primarily by ethnic, not religious, divides. That said, there is an important need for inter-religious dialogue as well. As such, the work done by UNESCO to develop inter-ethnic and inter-religious dialogue is extremely important for Kosovo.

I will not repeat the many valid theoretical observations made by the distinguished Heads of State who spoke before me. I would like to inform you of some of the practical efforts being made by the international community in Kosovo to encourage inter-religious and inter-ethnic dialogue, to put these important ideas into action.

As one prominent example, the NGO "Norwegian Church Aid" has been facilitating dialogue between the senior religious leaders of Kosovo since late 2001, including obtaining their endorsement for an action plan

for the promotion of dialogue and reconciliation. UNMIK has actively supported this initiative. However, the progress of this plan has been marred by internal disagreements and insufficient commitment by the religious leaders. Indeed, this process came to a complete halt in 2003, with no contact at all occurring between the two major religious communities of Kosovo between March and November 2004.

However, during the conference of the European Council of Religious Leaders (ECRL), held last month in Brussels, there were some positive developments in this regard. ECRL issued a special communiqué calling for the re-establishment of cooperation between all communities and parties in Kosovo. We hope to build on these developments in the coming period.

We do not allow ourselves to be discouraged by short-term setbacks in the high-level dialogue between major religious groups. Sometimes prominent religious leaders take their positions based on prevailing political lines in the region. This has been apparent in Kosovo during the recent elections period, and also in problems encountered in our efforts, jointly with the Provisional Institutions of Self-Governance and the Council of Europe, to rebuild religious monuments damaged during the ethnic riots last March. We hope for a changed approach in these areas from the Serbian Orthodox religious leaders who hold the key to any possibilities for renewed progress in that important endeavor.

It is necessary for us to build closer and lasting inter-ethnic and inter-religious relationships at the grassroots level. It is with this perspective that UNMIK and the Provisional Institutions of Self Government are working very hard to build dialogue at the individual and community level. That dialogue need not always be a debate or discussion on religion and politics per se. Often it is better that communities talk to each other through activities not directly related to either religion or politics. Therefore, UNMIK and the Provisional Institutions of Self Government are focusing on activities that bring together the different communities through intercultural and sporting events.

Cultural activities engage individuals and communities in an open exchange of experience, foster innovative approaches for meeting the challenges of a transforming society, and enhance mutual understanding. The arts, in particular, work on a non-verbal, visceral level, bypassing political and language divisions. Such activities are ever more frequent on the community level.

Sport is another medium that offers enormous opportunity to foster communication between the people. I am glad to report to you that Kosovo

Albanians, Turks, Roma and Bosniaks are now playing together in many sports. There are also an encouraging few instances of Serbs playing in Kosovo sports leagues. For example, a Kosovo Serb team from Lipljan is playing in the Kosovo volleyball league. We would like to see this kind of integration take place on much larger scale.

In Kosovo, youth activities are particularly important, because Kosovo has the youngest population in Europe. Accordingly, we are paying serious attention to teaching young people to interact across ethnic and religious lines, and are participating in several major initiatives in the youth sector to promote inter-community dialogue. I had a privilege to speak last weekend at the Congress of the Kosovo Youth Network, a large umbrella organization of young Kosovars of all ethnicities working together to improve the lives of youth in their communities. These volunteers show the positive way forward for all of Kosovo's people and especially its next generation.

In closing, permit me to express the SRSG's and UNMIK's sincere appreciation to the Government of Albania for inviting UNMIK to this conference, and to UNESCO for its continued concrete commitment to the improvement of religious and ethnic relations in Kosovo and the region.

Claudia Luciani

Directorate General of Political Affairs, Council of Europe

With all the countries of South East Europe now fully-fledged members of the Council of Europe, a privileged forum for dialogue and co-operation, based on the values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law, is available to the region.

Within the Council of Europe the countries of the region participate on an equal footing to the development of European standards, to the implementation of cultural activities and to a vast number of initiatives aimed at increased dialogue and co-operation. However, membership in the Organisation comes also with a number of commitments and obligations entered into upon accession. Such commitments, which derive from the fundamental values of the Council of Europe, help to provide a clear path in the march towards further European integration and constitute the very basis for all action in inter-cultural dialogue.

Since the adoption of the “Thessaloniki” agenda by the European Union in 2003, offering the perspective of future membership for the Western Balkan countries, a fundamentally new political framework has emerged in the region. Within such framework, the Council of Europe is fully committed to assisting the countries of the region to meet the “Copenhagen criteria”¹ as pre-requisite for EU membership. Our common objective is indeed to ensure peace and stability to the region and the integration of South East European countries into European co-operation structures as a powerful antidote to prevent conflict and guarantee a more prosperous future to its citizens.

Dialogue within the Council of Europe has many shapes and depths. It takes place within a considerable number inter-governmental committees, where experts from the capitals discuss, negotiate and propose European-inspired standards in the fields of culture, education, heritage, etc. Such work is not only underpinned by the 50-year old “European Cultural Convention”, but progresses on the basis of experience by the member states, by constantly trying to adapt to the changing needs and complexity of our societies. More recently, following the 9/11 attacks and the increased need to use multilateral institutions, as fora for dialogue, the Council of Europe has elaborated the “Opatija declaration” which serves as a useful tool in the shaping of policies in this area at the governmental level. Furthermore, this paper will outline some of the specific activities that the Council of Europe has been supporting in the region involving mainly civil society and local government actors.

The “Opatija declaration” was adopted by the Ministers responsible for cultural affairs of all member states of the Council of Europe following an in-depth reflection on the implications of the 9/11 attacks and the great deficit of dialogue that seemed to persist in our continent. It is a blueprint for action, which gives ministers clear guidelines to implement dialogue based on the following four-prong approach.

Respect for cultural diversity by ensuring freedom of expression, protection of cultural heritage and by opposing all forms of discrimination. Europe should continue to take steps for strengthening cultural distinction and diversity by, for instance, language policy protection, regulation of media ownership, by film co-production, etc.

Favouring inter-cultural dialogue at various levels, across borders, as well as within societies – for instance between the host and the immigrant community - between religions. In order to encourage such dialogue, a combination of incentives can be used, such as the prospect of rapprochement with the EU, which can act as a powerful catalyst in this direction. However, the basic condition for dialogue is the creation of an open public space, allowing for the expression of disagreement, which is both an integral part of a functioning democracy and its ultimate guarantor.

Value cultural diversity by working with government institutions, private sector and civil society in a pro-active way – as these are both actors and producers of culture. Governments should provide the public space that can build bridges and open doors between segregated communities, favouring a multicultural setting with conditions for cohesiveness. The private sector has a key role in ensuring investments in cultural infrastructure and activities serving to bring artists and audiences from different communities closer together.

Work through inter-ministerial public policies in particular in the field of education, in arts and history in order to favour dialogue in other sectors than culture and in particular through cultural and artistic exhibits.

As the need of testing through concrete action the above guidelines arose, a series of practical and experimental projects such as the “shared cities” and “peace cradles” have been initiated. The first, in particular, looked at a number of case studies (Mitrovica, Belfast, Nicosia amongst others) trying to identify the essential ingredients of communal peace in divided cities by analysing key indicators such as: the quality and openness of public space, the number of civic networks, the degree of integrated education, the percentage of mixed marriages, etc. The lessons learned from the projects point to the need for an urban environment to foster and

protect the diversity of its inhabitants, whilst ensuring that all enjoy access to the range of services and activities, which constitute the best of urban life. A multiplicity of identities, a sense of interdependence and a spirit of tolerance are the prerequisites of success.

Given the intrinsic complexity of the region and its considerable cultural diversity, the Council of Europe has, in the last decade, made particular efforts in order to foster and implement initiatives designed to involve different partners across the borders or within a country in projects of common interest. Below are a few examples.

- a. Confidence-building measures: The first such initiative is the confidence-building measures programme (CBMs), begun in the early 1990s in order to diffuse tensions between majority-minorities or between different communities². The programme was largely based on the results of a series of Council of Europe's projects carried out throughout the 80s in the field on inter-cultural learning involving migrant communities in European countries. Successful examples of CBMs adapted to South East Europe are: the "Alternative Information Network" (AIN) created during the conflict and operating through all the former Yugoslav space by providing electronically professional editorials in all the languages of the region or the setting up of "Local Democracy Agencies" in towns particularly affected by the wars, providing an external support –from other European towns- aiming at fostering inter-ethnic dialogue and co-operation at the local level.
- b. Transborder co-operation : Co-operation across borders in South-East Europe is one of the biggest challenges and a pre-requisite for peace and dialogue. The Council of Europe has developed an important arsenal of legal standards and recommendations providing the basis for trans-border co-operation, including the "Madrid Convention", a framework convention designed to assist local and central governments in the setting-up trans border co-operation. An example is the triangle "Nis-Sofia –Skopje Euroregion", where the Council of Europe and the East-West Institute have been supporting a project in the Gjilan/Gnjilane-Presevo-Kumanovo-Trgoviste (GPTK) area marred with instability and cross-border crime, socio-economic isolation and underdevelopment of the three parts of this once vibrant market region. The project's overarching aim is thus to further societal reform, inter-communal stability and economic development by tackling local problems via common transfrontier solutions and by facilitating the removal of the major obstacles to

legitimate commercial and social cooperation. Working groups on education, youth, gender-related issues and media have been established involving the active participation of local NGOs in activities that address the problems and needs of the local population. For example: the youth group works on mediation and changing mind-sets, joint advocacy to ensure better representation of youth in local and national decision-making.

- c. Democratic Leadership Programme: Another important tool for dialogue amongst young leaders in the region is the Democratic Leadership Programme (DLP) aiming at strengthening the political competence and skills of young (aged 18 to 27) politicians, journalists and NGO leaders and at building trust between young leaders from different societies and ethnic communities. A strong network, created by their personal relations and co-operation in the organisation of joint projects, is encouraged by the Council of Europe through follow-up training courses and support. Such network of young leaders operates in South East Europe covering a variety of topical issues in their regular dialogue. A recent initiative has taken, for instance, young leaders from the region for a series of round table talks in the Hague concerning the functioning and rationale of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia

Far from being an exhaustive list of all the Council of Europe's relevant activities, the examples above show nevertheless the great potential that exists in the region for dialogue and how this can be generated in very practical terms.

To conclude, I should like to highlight some of the fundamental conditions necessary for dialogue:

The first is clearly that dialogue needs a "safe place" within which it can take place. All sectors, public and private must cooperate in order to provide for such safe places. The multiplicity of actors, each with its distinct role to play, is key in guaranteeing the appropriate conditions for dialogue and in helping to sustain it. Central, local governments, civil society, the private sector, the artists' community should interact according to clear guidelines – here the "Opatija declaration" offers an interesting tool for action, at least for the authorities.

Multiplicity of areas: inter-cultural dialogue is best pursued and practised when it is about "something else", hence the importance of engaging partners in very concrete co-operation efforts in different fields: from environment, to education, media, youth, etc. in order to have them

experience dialogue through shared interests, rather than “administer” dialogue as a remedy for possible conflict/misunderstanding.

However, none of the above is possible unless human rights are respected and implemented in all circumstances, including conflict situations. This requires a constant focus on the core values of important legal norms, which must be repeatedly discussed and elucidated thus preparing the basic foundations, which should underpin inter-cultural dialogue.

Finally, we should take the spell of idealism away from “dialogue” and make it a concrete, daily and tangible reality in the region.

Notes

1. The “Copenhagen criteria” cover: stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities.
2. The projects are proposed to the Council of Europe by NGOs or and are selected according to a clear set of requirements.

Anna-Kristina Stjarnerklint

United Nations Resident Co-ordinator in Albania

On behalf of the United Nations system agencies and the UN country team based in Albania, let me briefly elaborate on our contribution to the issue of dialogue, communication and information in support of peace, security and development in this country.

According to the Secretary-General's reform agenda, the UN country team has initiated the process of formulating a United Nations Development Assistance Framework – or UNDAF. The first step in this exercise – called the Common Country Assessment – identified limited access to information, poor quality data and analysis, lack of participation in local planning and prioritization and lack of a performance-based management culture as the main root causes hindering overall development.

Consequently, the UNDAF has retained as outcomes governance, participation and implementation of regional and local development strategies. The first draft of the UNDAF will be finalized before the end of the year.

The UN country team, has for the past two years supported the Albanian government in its commitment to the Millennium Compact, that is to include the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in the long-term plans, in particular the national strategy on socio-economic development, to develop a progress monitoring mechanism and to allocate funds in guaranteeing the linkages between the budget and the National Strategy for Socio-Economic Development (NSSED).

Of particular importance is the ongoing exercise of localizing the MDGs at the regional level. So far seven regional development strategies aligned with the MDGs, the NSSED and the EU stabilization and accession agenda have been launched. The UN country team will now support the implementation of at least two of these regional strategies. This will be done in cooperation with the pilot implementation of the NSSED in the same regions.

In addition to focusing on substantive programmes as contained in the MDG regional development strategies, UNDP will continue working on participation and capacity building. Participation will include support to the implementation of the national ICT strategy. And, as concerns capacity building, I would like to mention leadership training based on the concept of social artistry that takes into consideration the local culture.



Inauguration of the Mother Teresa Monument at Mother Teresa Square

PART II

Papers presented



The Flexible Use of Languages as a Contribution to Inter-ethnic Dialogue

Alajdin Abazi

Rector of the South East European University (SEEU), Tetovo, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

The South East-European University (SEEU) in Tetovo, Macedonia, was founded in 2001 with the financial support of the European Union and the United States of America. The mission of the University is to contribute to the implementation of the Albanian language in higher education, to promote inter-ethnic understanding and to ensure a multicultural and multilingual approach to teaching and research. Over 5000 students are presently enrolled at SEEU; 80% of them speak Albanian as their first language; 20% belong to Macedonian and other ethnic groups.

The language policy of SEEU is defined as a “flexible use of languages” which allows equitable access to higher education for all ethnic groups in the Republic of Macedonia. The implementation of the language policy is a challenge for the management and the resources of the university, because every student is not only studying Albanian and Macedonian but also English and other European languages. Therefore inter-ethnic dialogue is already realized in the classrooms of the university.

This language policy has been a core issue right from the start of SEEU and is closely linked to its mission. After a thorough analysis of higher education in the Republic of Macedonia with the emphasis on the access of Albanians to higher education and the right to use the Albanian language, the mission statement gave priority to that objective. Since then, and as the political and educational climate has changed, numerous different views have been expressed, e.g. that all students – independently of the field of study - must achieve a high level of English in order to graduate and that most of those graduating in business and IT disciplines must have sufficient competence in English to start working life. It should be mentioned that major donors and contributors to the SEEU project have

stressed the role of English over the role of local languages. Thus, in 2002, the intention of the University to provide all students with a basic understanding of the two local languages - with a view to promoting inter-ethnic understanding and flexibility - was subordinated to the building up of English as the medium of instruction. However, this initiative has not been pursued systematically and it has been a challenge for the University management to balance the different views and opinions on this issue, especially particularly as major funding is at stake. The University has maintained its policy that all students should learn the second local language - whether Albanian or Macedonian - and it seems that the right balance has now been achieved.

English is the third language of instruction at the SEEU. The Basic Skills Programme for English has to provide the students with a basic knowledge of English and to qualify them to continue advanced studies in English in their special fields of study. Independently of the adopted language policy, the curriculum must pass the scrutiny of the “Licensing and Accreditation Board” of the Republic of Macedonia, since course diplomas which do not promote the required professional competences would otherwise not be recognized. Up to now, a successful final degree in higher education in the Republic of Macedonia (as in other neighbouring countries) depends on the ability to learn facts by heart and to be able to reproduce them in a written examination, and not on the acquisition of competences including language competences. As the University’s key mission is to deal with the under-representation of Albanian native speakers in higher education in the Republic of Macedonia, the first years focussed primarily on teaching in Albanian. In 2001-2002, special arrangements were made for the very few non-Albanian speakers and gradually the University recruited both non-Albanian speaking students and staff competent to teach in Macedonian.

The mission of the SEE University

The SEEU was established in October 2001 with the following main aims, confirmed by its Board in the Statute of September 2002:

- to contribute to solve the problem of the Albanian language in higher education;

- to promote inter-ethnic understanding;

- to ensure a multilingual and multicultural approach to teaching and research;

- to develop a teaching programme in a broad international and European perspective.

There is no doubt that the four aims have been achieved:

Since the foundation of the State, access to higher education has been limited to students who wished to study in Albanian. With a few exceptions, state universities only provided higher education only in the Macedonian. Teaching and learning in Albanian was a highly sensitive political issue and not possible until the adoption of the law on Higher Education in 2000, after which it was allowed only in the so-called private Universities. Since its establishment, the SEE University - funded by some 40 million Euros from OSCE member states - has more than doubled the age participation rate (APR) of members of Albanian ethnic origin in higher education (from 4.9% to 9.2%). If the SEEU maintains the targets of its Strategic Plan 2004-2008 – and despite the fact that a third State University was opened in Tetova in 2004 with Albanian as its working language - there will be a significant reduction of the gap in APR between the different population groups.

The SEEU will not be a 'purely Albanian' University, however. The SEEU's contribution to inter-ethnic understanding is based on a steady increase - about 20% - of the number of students from other ethnic groups than Albanian. The SEEU has also hosted a number of conferences and seminars on this topic, including two national conferences organized by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, and the University continues to increase its academic involvement in this area.

By offering this flexible approach to the use of language, students have been encouraged to learn how to communicate effectively in the two local languages as well as in English and/or other international languages. A significant number of students are able to use the English media and to study in English from their third academic year onwards – or even earlier. To be able to communicate in one or more international languages is a vital tool of successful communication in international business and management fields, in communication sciences and technologies, in international trade, human rights and in legal and other areas related to the accession to the EU. This language policy is a key issue for the SEE University and for future developments. It requires the provision of an important budget envelope.

The number of international cooperation projects is growing. The SEE University is involved in ten institutionalised cooperation projects, e.g. with Universities in Indiana, Tirana, Prishtina, Gazi, Nantes, Rennes, Angers, St Gallen, Vienna and Pittsburg etc. Individual faculties of Macedonian State Universities, the Maastricht School of Management are involved in several such projects as well. The projects cover a wide range of topics including curriculum development, staff development and

exchange. All of them operate in the framework of a multi-ethnic and multi-lingual approach. Unfortunately, they are often not adequately funded. To function efficiently they need national and international financial support.

The summary of a recent OECD/IMHE Feasibility Study Report states:

Specifically, SEEU has met, indeed exceeded, its stated aims of contributing significantly to the solution of the problem of Albanian language higher education, providing a carefully chosen range of teaching programmes in a broad international and European perspective and ensuring a multi-cultural approach to teaching. The University has already shown national and regional leadership in its design of curricula, adoption of small group teaching and active learning modes and in the rapid creation of an attractive greenfield campus with highly functional teaching spaces appropriate to its preferred modes of teaching and learning (our emphasis).

In fact, the mission of the SEEU does not specifically address the issue of the regional dimension, partly because 'the region' is difficult to define. The EU terminology, is it the Polog region of Macedonia, the Republic of Macedonia, the Albanian-speaking border regions and territories, the Western Balkans or the SEE region? Most European studies on the regional impact of universities are concerned with national regions, or trans-national borderless regions, as in Scandinavia, France/Germany, etc. Macedonia is a landlocked country with national land borders, passport and customs controls, and in one instance (Greece) very strict visa control. It is not easy to organize regional academic activities within the mobility frameworks underlined by the Bologna process. For the purposes of the University's planning, the 'region' is defined as the Republic of Macedonia and its immediate neighbouring states.

As discussed in the OECD/IMHE Report the SEE University has two broad options for a future strategy:

to maintain its original mission as mentioned above and to continue as described, keeping costs and fees on a reasonable level; to develop a

high-quality regional institution with relatively high costs and specialized in modern socio-economic sciences including Business Administration, Communication and Computing Sciences backed up by a relevant programme of legal studies, management and administration, training for public and private sectors, including teacher training for secondary schools in the main faculty disciplines.

These two options do not exclude each other. The SEE University has never intended to be the only source for solving the gap of APR in higher education between the Macedonian, Albanian and other ethnic groups. A medium-long term solution might propose that more courses are taught in Albanian in the existing State universities. As already stated, the SEEU has more than doubled the APR for the Albanian ethnic group. By admitting a significant number of ethnic groups, SEEU has certainly promoted inter-ethnic understanding. By offering a flexible use of languages multilingual and multicultural approaches to teaching and research have been adopted. Through collaborating with other universities in Europe and in the US a teaching programme with a broad international perspective has been developed.

Language policy : Development of the 'flexible use of languages'

When the University started its third academic year in October 2003, its language policy was still not entirely clarified. Keeping in mind the sensitivity of this question, the strategy of 'flexible use of languages' was implemented without any further explanations and without knowing its exact consequences in terms of financial, academic, social and psychological impact on declared goals. The common conclusion in all debates on this topic was that the University should define the strategy concerning the use of languages in a clear and transparent way, which paved the way for a more substantial analysis and the definition of a vision for the future development of the institution.

Local languages

Given the objectives of the Common European Framework (see below), the SEEU now requests students to have a solid knowledge of Albanian and Macedonian languages. A framework to make local languages stronger has been established in the context of the University's multilingual mission. This will support the integration process of students and

consolidate linguistic and cultural diversity; one of the greatest strengths and most important characteristics of the SEEU.

The admission procedure is based on tests as in the case of English and other languages. Any first year student without language capabilities in Albanian or Macedonian is obliged to acquire proficiency before the third year of enrolment. Failing this, the basic mission of the University to provide a multilingual education is undermined.

According to the test, students should be ascribed to the following linguistic levels: beginners - 8 hours a week; pre-intermediate - 6 hours a week; intermediate - 4 hours a week; advanced - 2 hours a week. The credits for the courses in Albanian and Macedonian are given at the end of the second year. An important factor is the introduction of the Bologna process. When the university adapts successfully to the system of studies prescribed by the Bologna process, the first year is considered preparatory and includes a phase of language preparation.

International languages

It is widely recognised that success depends on proficiency in an international language related to the given field of study. The European Union holds the view that learning to communicate in common languages helps to tackle xenophobia and ultra-nationalist backlashes as a primary obstacle to European mobility and integration, and in a larger sense to European stability and democracy. Therefore, about 20% of the SEEU's staff budget has been spent on developing the competence of students in English (or French, German and Italian) and one of the priorities for 2003-2004 was to build a Language Centre. This enabled the University to economize space, to create common services and to set up teacher training in modern languages.

This engagement also embodies the recommendations of the Council of Europe as expressed in the Common European Framework, which was discussed by the Rector, the Dean of the Faculty of BA and the Secretary-General, together with a number of experts in Strasbourg in 2002-2003, and which provided the basis for a new approach to language learning at the University. The Common European Framework provides a common basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses of instruction, curriculum guidelines, examinations, textbooks, etc. across Europe. It describes in a comprehensive way what language learners have to learn in order to use a language for communication and what knowledge and skills they have to acquire. The description also covers the cultural context as a basis of the language and

defines levels of proficiency that allow learners' progress to be measured at each stage of learning and on a life-long basis. Its purposes are:

to maintain and further develop the richness and diversity of European cultural life through greater mutual knowledge of national and regional languages, including those less widely taught;

to meet the needs of a multilingual and multicultural Europe by appreciably developing the ability of Europeans to communicate with each other across linguistic and cultural boundaries, which requires a sustained, lifelong effort to be encouraged, put on an organised footing and financed at all levels of education by the competent bodies;

to avert the dangers that might result from the marginalisation of those lacking the skills necessary to communicate in an interactive Europe.

from this perspective, the aim of language education is profoundly modified. It is no longer seen as simply to achieve 'mastery' of one or two, or even three languages, each taken in isolation, with the 'ideal native speaker' as the ultimate model. Instead, the aim is to develop a linguistic repertory, in which all linguistic abilities have a place. This implies, of course, that the languages offered in educational institutions should be diversified and students given the opportunity to develop a plurilingual competence.

The policy of the SEEU is to assist students in BA and CST (computing) to reach at least the level of "B2 independent user". However, this achievement is not based only on the number of lessons. Many students arrive at the SEE University with level A1 or A2. It is not only the responsibility of the University to provide language learning within the Common Framework. It is necessary for common language learning to be encouraged, financed and organised at all levels of education by the competent institutions. This means that the State also has a responsibility to encourage and finance language learning at all levels. The SEE University can support this - with government financial support - by providing well-trained teachers to Albanian-language schools.

The Bologna process

We seek to define our language policy in terms of the three 'Bologna' cycles (see below). In the first cycle, the use of languages for undergraduate studies is defined. This actually concerns the first four years of studies as defined by the Law on Higher Education of the Republic of Macedonia. After the adoption of the Bologna Declaration this concerns the language policy up to the BA degree. In the second cycle, the language policy for graduated studies (MA) is defined and in the third cycle it is defined for PhD studies. The structure of the University is designed in such a way that the definition of the language policy can be implemented successfully if there is a separate approach to each field of study or group of studies.

Admission

All students have to pass the TOEFL exam (Pre-TOEFL) and the results are part of the points required for admission. A score of 300 points is required (Pre-TOEFL has a maximum score of 500 points). In addition, the results of the TOEFL score will be used to place students in the appropriate English course. The Pre-TOEFL exam is organized at the same time as the SEEU Admission Exam and is evaluated by the "Educational Testing Services" in the Netherlands.

The first and second cycle

During the first and second year of undergraduate studies in all Faculties except the Faculty of Pedagogical Methodology and Training (PMT), the strategy of the "flexible use of languages" is applied, which means that Albanian, Macedonian and English is offered as a medium of instruction. Business Administration (BA) and Communication Sciences and Technologies (CST) studies can be treated as one common block so that the same language policy is proposed for all cycles:

- In the third and fourth year of studies Albanian and English is offered as medium of instruction;
- For graduate (MA) students English or Albanian is offered as a medium of instruction;

In Law and Public Administration (PA) studies the medium of instruction for all undergraduate studies is offered through the "flexible use of languages" approach with the exception of the fourth year of studies in Law where studies in Private and Public Law will be offered only in English. During the second cycle of the Law Faculty, English and Albanian

is offered as a medium of teaching. During the second cycle for the PA Faculty the “flexible use of languages” is again being offered.

In the Faculty of Pedagogical Methodology and Training (PMT), teaching is offered only in Albanian and English because its purpose is to train teachers for the secondary schools in the Albanian language. French, German, Italian and other languages can be added. Graduate (MA) studies may be offered in foreign languages. This continues to be an issue for further discussion.

The Basic Skills English (BSE) Programme is for all students. It is offered on five different levels, from 0 (absolute beginner) to 4 (high-intermediate English).

English for Specific Purposes (ESP). In BA and CST there are a series of ESP courses, required for all students. Business English and English for Communications are taught from the 5th semester onwards and can be studied only after having finished level 4 of the BSE.

Any student who enters the SEE University with advanced English skills is not obliged to follow the Basic Skills English Programme. Such students have to select specific English courses in the field of their study. For some of these courses students can choose subjects that are taught in English.

The third cycle

In all disciplines of studies (except PMT described above) English is only offered as a language of instruction and research.

Pre-Bologna diagram

The following table illustrates the policy before the adoption of the “Bologna-changes” in 2004-2005.

Post-Bologna diagram

The first table illustrates the situation after the “Bologna changes”. The SEE University was perhaps the first University in the Republic of Macedonia to adopt them.

Other international languages

In addition to the English section there are also French, Italian and German sections in the Language Centre, which are responsible for the foreign language training in all Faculties.

Third Cycle (PhD)		English	English	English	English	
Second Cycle (MA)		English and Albanian	English and Albanian	English and Albanian	Flexible use of Languages	Albanian, Macedonian, English, French, German
First Cycle (BA)	IV year	Albanian or English	Albanian or English	Flexible use of Languages (English in Private and Public International law in Years 3&4)	Flexible use of Languages	Albanian, Macedonian, English,
	III year					
	II year I year	Flexible use of Languages	Flexible use of Languages			
		BA	CST	LAW	PA	PMT

Third Cycle (PhD)		English	English	English	English	
Second Cycle (MA)		English or Albanian	English or Albanian	English or Albanian	Flexible use of Languages	Albanian, Macedonian, English, French, German
First Cycle (BA)	IV year	Albanian English	Albanian English	Flexible use of Languages (English in Private and Public International law in Years 3&4)	Flexible use of Languages	Flexible use of Languages
	III year					
	II year preparatory year	Flexible use of Languages	Flexible use of Languages			
		BA	CST	LAW	PA	PMT

During the second semester of 2003-2004, the French section disposed of 3 teachers and 200 students, the Italian section 3 teachers and 460 students and the German section 4 teachers and 343 students. The Language Centre organizes language courses that are part of the foreign language programme integrated in the curricula of the different Faculties. It is possible to complete one level per semester (30h, 4 credits). The Centre also offers - as options - language courses for specific purposes (LSP) (30 h, 4 credits).

The foreign language courses are divided into six levels: introductory 1 and 2, pre-intermediary 1 and 2 and intermediary 1 and 2. There is not yet any advanced level available in these languages. The assignment to the different levels depends on a test, organized on a similar basis as the English language test.

A certification of competence in French is obtainable through the Alliance Française in Tetova, e.g. the DELF (official international certificate: Diplôme Elementaire de Langue française). The SEE University is seeking to acquire licences to be able to offer the official German certificates (Zertifikat Deutsch als Fremdsprache, Zentrale Mittelstufenprüfung, Das Kleine Deutsche Sprachdiplom, Das Grosse Deutsche Sprachdiplom) as well as the Italian certificate (CLIS) through official channels. Official certificates makes it easier for students to be mobile within the European Higher Education Area for postgraduate studies, whether in English, French, German or Italian.

A very useful instrument is the European Language Portfolio (ELP) for young people and adults, which supports the transparency of language proficiency. It consists of a "Passport", a "Language Biography" and a "Dossier" containing information on the experiences and achievements of the students. The adoption of the ELP would be a great help for the development and coherence of language learning at the SEE University.

Staffing

To offer English as a medium of instruction has consequences for the University's academic staff and the simple view is that the staff just needs to be fluent in academic English. A more reflected view bears in mind the possibility of teaching English-based courses within the 'flexible use of languages' module, i.e. in a combination of English and Albanian. It is clear that some subtle distinctions in business and legal English have no equivalent in Albanian. In this regard, the publication in 2004 of a trilingual legal dictionary under the NDI auspices, has been of

great help. The first priority of a staff development policy must be the linguistic training of academic staff not yet competent to teach in English or to work in Faculties with English based courses - this relates in particular to the Faculties of BA and CST. In order to ensure that teaching can take place with an increasing use of the English language, the SEE University now prefers to recruit only junior staff with good capacities in English. They are assisted to achieve as a minimum the levels required by the TOEFL and are subsequently integrating advanced training programmes in English-speaking countries or programmes in other European countries with English as the medium of instruction. The SEEU also intends to initiate a senior staff development programme in English for the faculties of BA and CST with a view to developing an English based offer from 2004 – 2005 onwards. The situation is expected to improve further in 2005-2006, when both students and academic staff have achieved competencies in English and the first group of students has passed the language tests for admission. The programme is expected to function fully in 2006-2007; at the same time as the post-Bologna framework will be adopted. The University is also seeking recognition as a centre which can grant English certificates (and certificates in other modern languages).

Providing teaching in Albanian and Macedonian for at least the first two years of the first cycle is costly in terms of academic staff. Teaching in the two languages has to take place in a parallel fashion. Although all locally recruited staff is competent in Macedonian and although most of the students holding Macedonian citizenship are able to study in Macedonian, not all local staff is capable of using Albanian as a medium of instruction. Moreover, non-Macedonian students generally do not speak Macedonian. The University's remuneration policy provides incentives for staff members who are willing - and able - to teach in both languages.

Students

The directorate of the SEE University has carefully considered the balance to be achieved between the institution's key objectives and the demand, the academic staff and the language policy. It has been proposed that the University should admit about 80% Albanian-speaking students and about 20% from other groups in 2004. The optimal group size for interactive teaching has been fixed at 25. It is important to note that this is not a 'quota' in the sense of defining

access for specific ethnic groups, but a decision based on a realistic estimation of available resources.

The inter-ethnic dialogue

Bringing students together in English classes to enhance gradually the use of English as a medium of teaching and to promote an open campus environment contribute to inter-ethnic dialogue. The enlargement of the University in the outskirts of Tetovo has created a new 'village', employing many local people and contributing to the local economy in a significant way. The community can see that it is possible for people from different backgrounds to work and study together in complete equality. The efforts invested in language training not only in English but also in the local languages underline the importance of these languages and their associated cultures.

In this sense the SEE University is very different from an English language institution, whether derived from the US or from the UK. Such institutions do not include the vital mission of promoting inter-ethnic relations and multilingualism. The strength of the alternative approach is that it is undoubtedly easier to manage. Teaching in one language is always going to be easier than teaching in three. It may be possible to offer high quality programmes for a high price in small institutions with specific programmes, but the SEE University can offer high quality education with reasonable costs in a modern environment of a viable size.

As has been said in a number of articles and books commenting on the growth and potential of the SEE University, SEEU can be considered as a role model for education among mixed ethnicities around the world. SEEU offers to the world community the opportunity to be associated with this exciting challenge.

The Contribution of Inter-religious, Inter-cultural and Inter-ethnic Dialogue in South-East Europe

Dr. Mustafa Cerić

Grand Mufti of Bosnia

I am honored to be invited to the Conference in the state of Albania where Hafiz Sabri Koçi, lived my friend and a good example to be followed not only by the Albanian Muslims, but also by all Muslims in the South-East Europe. Hafiz Sabri Koçi has demonstrated by his life the patience and tolerance which all of us need to demonstrate nowadays. He was imprisoned by the regime of Enver Hoxha for 21 (twenty one) years because of his beliefs and conscience. But Hafiz Sabri Koçi has never shown a sign of hate or revenge. On the contrary, Hafiz Sabri Koçi was a man of reconciliation of the Albanian people regardless of their faith and beliefs. He was a man of great spiritual strength and unusual patience. Hafiz Sabri Koçi was born in Albania, he was imprisoned in Albania, he lived for the peace and reconciliation in Albania and he was and still is a great symbol of tolerance, a good practical example of an Islamic ethics that all religions are striving for. It is because of these and other noble tenets of genuine teachings of Islam which are recognizable in the life of Hafiz Sabri Koçi that should be brought to the attention of the world so that Muslims in Europe might feel proud of their figurehead of Hafiz Sabri Koçi in the way as Christians are proud of their Mother Theresa.

Here is a short Curriculum Vita of Hafiz Sabri Koçi:

Hafiz Sabri Koçi was born on the fourteenth of May 1921 in the vilage Orenja, Librazhd.

In 1932 he moved with his family to Shkodra where he received his basic education and became recognized by religious teacher Hafiz Muhamet Kastrati.

Later on he was sent to study in a private school by Hajji Muhamed Bekteshi. At the same time, he learned from the scholars Hafiz Sabri Beg Bushati and Sheikh Qazim Hoxha.

After 15 years of studying, in 1951, he received his graduation in 1951 from the prominent scholar Hafiz Muhamed Bekteshi.

Due to his good school record and good reputation among the people, Hafiz Sabri Koçi was appointed in 1954 as a vice – Mufti of Kruja.

Two years later (1956) he was promoted to the office of the Mufti of Kavaja.

However, his religious activities and his reputation among the people did not please Enver Hoxha's regime. In June 1966 he was arrested by the charge of antiregime agitation and propaganda. In September of the year (1966) he was sentenced to 22 years of prison, the confiscation of property and the deprivation from the electoral right for 5 years. He was under the accusations:

1. Economical saboteur Article 72
2. Treason against the country Articles 64, 14, 10
3. Agitation and propaganda Article 73/1

Thus, the sufferings of Hafiz in several prisons and lastly in the prison of Spaç, had began. During his prison years Hafiz Sabriu is distinguished for his manful attitude. He soon became an example of patience and faith, conserving in his conscience the high qualities. His readiness to help others, the practice of religious obligations in secrecy and the sincere relationships with personalities of other religions, made Hafiz Sabri become a well-known person.

He was discharged in 1986 after 21 years of prison. Having no right of pension, in 1987 he was obligated to work in a fabric in Shkodra.

On April 1991 Hafiz Sabri Koçi was elected as the Mufti of Albania.

On May 1993, in the assembly of the General Council, Hafiz Sabri Koçi was reelected as the Leader of the Islamic Community of Albania. He held the post of the Mufti of Albania until December 2003, time when he gave the resignation, as a result of the old age and the problems with his health.

He was committed to religious dialogue and reconciliation.

Hafiz Sabri Koçi died on 18th of July, 2004 in Tirana and was buried in a Public Cemetery in Tirana without any special mark on his grave.

I believe that Hafiz Sabri Koçi deserves better not memory not only by Albanian Muslims, but also by the world Community.

I recommend, therefore, that UNESCO find a proper way of honoring Hafiz Sabri Koçi as a sigh of respect for a man who stood in the face of tyranny of Enver Hoxha.

★★★★★★★

I believe that the UNESCO High-Level Conference on Strengthening Co-operation in South-East Europe held in Paris 2002, then followed up in Ohrid 2003 by the idea of the Regional Forum for Dialogue among Civilizations, and now confirmed by the Regional Summit in Tirana towards a Development of Inter-ethnic and Inter-religious Dialogue as an Important Factor for the Stability and Progress of South-East Europe – aims at opening up the minds and hearts of the peoples and states of the South-East Europe to take up the opportunity for religious, cultural and ethnical dialogue as the right way toward a common future.

Sure, we might add more attributes to the word dialogue , but the organizer is right: the necessity for a religious, cultural and ethnic dialogue comes – it seems - at the front of all other dialogues, not only in the South-East Europe but also all around the world. Why religion, culture and ethnicity are so important in human lives? Why now and why in such an aggressive way?

It seems that the current drama of war and peace in the name of religion is not in religion itself. This drama is in the soul of human heart and in the reason of human mind.

It is obvious that neither the human soul can live alone nor the human mind can stay out of touch of the eternal law.

The blame should not be put on the faith of the religion, but on the reason of the mind which deviates from the eternal law that is common to us all.

The way to peace goes neither by religion without faith, nor by reason without mind.

It seems, however, that ours is the time both of the religion without faith and the reason without mind.

The manner people introduce religion today is not in the way of sincere faith, but in the way of military power.

And the way people use reason today is not in the light of eternal law, but in the way of personal pleasure.

I am trying to say that instead of asking what is the role of religion in the life of man it is more appropriate to ask what is the role of man in religious or moral life?

This somewhat adverse question should not confuse us if we accept the premise that religion is more than a religious hierarchy or bureaucracy.

After all, religion is faith and morality; it is human life and dignity; religion is both personal feeling of life and collective sharing of destiny.

Indeed - the personal feeling of life and the collective sharing of destiny of the South-East Europe may lead us to a common conclusion that the South-East Europe – perhaps more than any other region in the world – has to overcome two difficulties of its mindset and to face two problems of its soul-searching.

The two difficulties are two perceptions that occupy the mind of the South-East Europe: one - the perception of history as mythology and two - history as an obsession.

The way out from the history as mythology is the way of truth as the sound state of mind and the way out from the history as an obsession is the way to the knowledge that the past cannot be changed, but the future can be influenced to be better than the past.

As to the two problems that the South-East Europe must face nowadays, they are the problem of freedom and the problem of tolerance.

The South-East Europe is yet to face the real challenge of freedom that must come from its own experience and not as a borrowed commodity from somewhere.

I found Glenn Smith's¹ twofold definition of freedom as “freedom to will” and “freedom to experience” to be fitting to my purpose here. He tells us that the idea of “freedom to will” may lead to the idea of will of the Might of the strong to rule over the Right of the weak, whereas the idea of “freedom to experience” may promote the idea of the freedom for all.

I believe that the “freedom to experience” should be the freedom of choice of the South-East Europe, not the “freedom to will” of some to rule over the rest because history has shown that the South-East Europe cannot afford but equality in a uniquely dense religious, cultural, ethnical and lingual diversity.

And let me conclude by saying that the problem of religious, cultural and ethnic tolerance that the South-East Europe has to face is one of the most challenging problems of the time. I am saying that both as a Muslim of European mind and as a European of a Muslim faith because I want to know whether is possible for Auschwitz and Srebrenica to happen again?

It is possible if Europe does not appreciate the principle of diversity of faiths; and it is possible if we do not realize that tolerance is the sign of strength, while intolerance is the sign of weakness.

I pray by my heat for the strength of the South-East Europe and that is for the tolerance of and for my people and my country of Bosnia.

Note

1. Glenn Smith, *The Politics of Deceit*, 2004

The Philosophy and History of Religions for Peace

Emily Coffman Kronic

Regional Director, South East Europe, World Conference of Religions for Peace

Religions for Peace was founded in 1970, when the leaders of the world's great religions met in Tokyo and decided to forge a worldwide coalition of believers to take common action to promote peace, reconciliation and stability. Respecting cultural differences while celebrating our common humanity, Religions for Peace helps these leaders take common action in areas such as conflict transformation, children, disarmament, peace education, and women's participation. Religions for Peace consists of an extensive network of religious communities and enjoys the active participation of senior religious representatives from around the world. It has 51 affiliated inter-religious councils (IRCs) or national chapters and three regional councils for Africa, Asia and Europe.

More directly, Religions for Peace assists religious communities around the world: to identify deeply held and widely shared moral commitments; to mobilize their moral strengths and social resources in multireligious partnerships; and to forge collaborative action to overcome shared problems. On a practical level, Religions for Peace provides a neutral forum for discussion and cooperative action, as well as providing logistical and other support.

Religion is an essential element of any civil society. Of the world's six billion people, five billion identify themselves as members of religious communities. These communities are the largest and best-organized civil institutions in the world, each with its own unique message and meaning, all sharing a commitment to the pursuit of peace and justice and to the well-being of humankind. Religious communities have a long history of social action and have made tremendous contributions in fields such as social welfare, health, education, publishing, and the arts. Religious communities are key actors in building indigenous support for peace and reconciliation, reconstruction and development, and in contributing to the

process of social reconstruction. Furthermore, religions hold a wealth of social assets that – if properly mobilized – can contribute greatly to conflict transformation, reconstruction, reconciliation and development. These include: institutional presence at all levels of society and links with international religious structures; long experience in organizing social initiatives and providing social welfare; and legitimacy in speaking out in crisis situations and on social issues.

In South East Europe over the past decade, religious communities have made a strong re-emergence, clearly demonstrating their resilience. Now the challenge before them is to utilize their assets to prove their relevance in addressing the pressing needs facing the people in their societies. Religions for Peace believes that the most effective way to address these needs is through multi-religious cooperation and the establishment of inter-religious advocacy bodies.

Religions for Peace has been active in South East Europe since 1996 when the regional office was established in Sarajevo. During this time, Religions for Peace has developed programs in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo where inter-religious councils have been formed. Regional links have also been forged with the religious leaders in Macedonia, Albania, Serbia and Montenegro and throughout the region.

The established councils in Bosnia and Kosovo have made important contributions to the peace process, drafting a new law on religious freedom (which was mentioned earlier in the conference), issuing joint advocacy statements for peace, educating civil society through radio programs that span the region, publishing papers that promote societal cohesion, and facilitating inter-religious dialogues for reconciliation that include women, youth, and religious leaders.

The Inter-religious Council in Bosnia has been successfully registered as a local non-governmental organization and has obtained office space from the local authorities. Currently, Religions for Peace is providing additional technical support and capacity building training to the religious communities in order for them to take over the operational responsibilities of the IRC and secure their long term sustainability.

The members of the Inter-religious Council of Bosnia-Herzegovina also played a key role in the establishment of the Inter-religious Council of Kosovo. By first hosting their counterparts from Kosovo in February of 2000, and then visiting them in April, the Inter-religious Council of Bosnia-Herzegovina demonstrated their strong commitment to multi-religious dialogue and peace. At the conclusion of the joint gathering, the religious leaders of Kosovo signed a “Statement of Shared Moral

Commitment” and formally established the Interreligious Council of Kosovo. Without the unified and direct involvement of the Inter-religious Council of Bosnia-Herzegovina, it is unlikely the religious leaders of Kosovo would have come together and agreed to begin a process of inter-religious dialogue and cooperation.

Religions for Peace began working with the religious communities from Albania at the 7th World Assembly in Amman, Jordan in November 1999. A working committee was established and convened several times in order to set priorities and target common interests. Due to the Kosovo crises, Religions for Peace was unable to remain fully engaged in the dialogue process in Albania at that time. With the support and initiative of the German Embassy in Tirana however, Religions for Peace has re-engaged in the work of inter-religious cooperation and dialogue in Albania. At the request of the religious communities, a working committee has been actively involved over the past year in picking up where they left off in 1999. All religious communities have expressed an interest in further dialogue and possibly setting up a multi-religious structure so they will have a platform to advocate together on issues such as humanitarian projects, legal reform, religious education, property issues. From this platform, they will also be able to jointly speak out against injustices and human rights violations.

Though Albania does not currently face the threat of armed conflict, there are religious tensions within its society. The situation presents an important opportunity to build inter-religious mechanisms that actively promote tolerance and prevent conflict. Given their long history of peaceful co-existence, the religious communities in Albania have an excellent opportunity to promote inter-religious dialogue and cooperation throughout the whole of South East Europe, which will contribute to the stability and prosperity of the region.

Due to the nature of the conflict within the area, it is imperative that South East Europe’s religious leaders collaborate for long-term regional stability and prosperity. Religions for Peace continues to broaden the regional peace building network by engaging religious leaders throughout the region. In 2000, Religions for Peace facilitated the first Forum of the European Council of Religious Leaders (ECRL), held in Oslo. Through discussion and debate, the 25 participants established principles and priorities for multi-religious collaboration that have served as a guide for the region. The second ECRL meeting was held in Sarajevo, Bosnia in September 2003 and they most recently gathered this past November in Belgium, where they focused on regional stability in South East Europe,

particularly in Kosovo, due to the violence in March 2004. The establishment of the ECRL not only strengthens regional ties but also links the Southeast Europe's leaders to their counterparts throughout Europe.

Through the Southeast Europe Women of Faith Network, Religions for Peace is establishing a regional community of religious women who play an important role in the peace process. With the start of the Network in 2003, women throughout Southeast Europe have been convening, engaging in dialogue and training, and finding common links and connections. The Southeast Europe Women of Faith Network is committed to building and strengthening relationships among religious women in the region and promoting their role as advocates for peace.

As the countries of South East Europe continue to be plagued with economic problems and social tensions, Religions for Peace tries to strengthen the role of religious leaders and their communities in order to provide a moral voice for reconciliation and stability. While the religious communities in the region continue to define their place in society in the post-socialist era, Religions for Peace provides assistance, guidance and a global network of support.

As Dr William Vendley, Secretary General of Religions for Peace, so eloquently explains, "when religions unite out of shared moral commitment, divisions once believed insurmountable can be bridged. Moreover, religions working together can accomplish more. Religious communities were not originally formed to serve as mediators of conflict, to care for millions of orphaned and vulnerable children, or to fill the void of leadership in failed or ineffective states; but when coalitions of tolerant and committed religious leaders come together to take on these challenges, the results are extraordinary."

Religious Communities and Reconciliation, Cooperation and Stability in South East Europe: Achievements and Dilemmas

Silvo Devetak

Director of ECERS of the University of Maribor

Chairman of the ISCOMET Network for Democracy, Human Rights and Protection of Ethnic and Religious Minorities in South East Europe

The collapse of communism has given religious institutions in central and Eastern Europe an opportunity if not responsibility to renew their social potential and focus on their basic, historical tasks (e.g. the spiritual education of the individual, the ethical improvement of society, and charitable, cultural, educational and other projects).

Various solutions could be found as to the legal status of Churches and religious communities, the procedures for their registration, the financing of their activities, the respect of religious freedoms, the protection of religious minorities and the similar

On the one hand, religious institutions have played a major part in the non-violent demolition of totalitarian regimes, and in the development of civil society. On the other, religion in some countries has been used, or has actively helped, to mobilise public support for military aggression, and stoke the fires of nationalism and chauvinism, which have destabilized certain parts of Europe.

Generally speaking, there is, in Central and Eastern Europe, an increasing trend away from “national” to “free choice” religion.

The churches in the region are not prepared to accept or engage in free competition with other religious traditions, are very sensitive to the activities of new religious movements (NRMs) and sects, and are often extreme in their reactions.

This has provoked a number of incidents and is creating a whole series of problems. Some countries have adopted repressive approaches to

solving them – with human rights violations and outbreaks of xenophobia and religious intolerance as the consequence.

The laws on registration in a number of countries, such as Romania originate from the Communist era, which was marked by a clear suspicion towards religion. In Greece many of these laws originate from the pre-war Metaxas dictatorship.

The emergence of independent states has encouraged certain national Orthodox churches to seek independence, in some countries have the Orthodox Church split in two or more fractions, and even more frequent are conflicts between the Orthodox Churches. This has led to a worsening of relations between Churches and, in some cases, Governments.

Due to its activities ISCOMET has been requested by the coordinators of the Stability Pact to prepare a project entitled “Maribor Initiative – Contribution of Religious Communities to Reconciliation, Respect of Diversity, Democracy, Human Rights, Protection of Minorities, Cooperation and Stability in South East Europe”.

The ISCOMET Network has been a way of bringing together members of all religious communities and different ethnic and social groups from the countries of the South East European area.

In this regard, I should like to posit five considerations and five corresponding observations to these considerations.

Reconciliation - a conditio sine qua non for the Stabilisation of the Region

- The effective reconciliation process is a starting point for obtaining stability and progress
- Positive examples as are the regret expressed by politicians for the bad deeds that “their nation” has done to the others have been only accidental pragmatic political events
- Reconciliation process must develop spontaneously and include the largest possible number of people, in particular the youth
- Recognition of responsibility and regret for all atrocities that were committed by one ethnic or religious group on another
- Fair and just solution of all problems of people that occurred as a consequence of hostilities among groups
- Elimination of the sources of further conflict
- Experience of building Franco-German relations (not mentioning other examples) should be taken into consideration

- Reconciliation could and should be supported as a corner stone of the EU policy towards the Western Balkans

Second consideration

- *Pluralistic Society – a Frame for Genuine Freedoms of Faith and Religion Creation* of an adequate constitutional and legal frame
- Securing of a genuine freedom of religious choices / the time is ripe for the re-definition of proselytism
- Ambiguous procedures and standards for registration
- Protection of religious minorities against the attitude of big (state) Churches and other groups practicing aggressive nationalism and chauvinism
- Step by step transformation of archetypes and development of constructive attitude towards domestic and international issues related to modernisation
- Enhancement of positive impact of religion on human behaviour
- The equality of Churches in State-Church relations
- To secure equal access to the media, education and culture for representatives of all religious traditions
- To provide public libraries with publications, which detail the cultural achievements and beliefs of the various religious traditions

Culture of Dialogue – a Prerequisite of Democracy and Stability

- The culture of dialogue is the main tool of democracy
- Dialogue between Churches and religious communities (including Islam and small, non-traditional religious communities)
- Dialogue within the Orthodox family
- Dialogue between believers and atheists
- The contents of dialogue should be not only improvement of relations between participants but as well the consideration of all issues that are in benefit of people

Balance Between the Freedom of Belief and the Preservation of Ethnic and Religious Identity of a Given Society

- The right of individuals to change their religion or belief with their right to preserve their religious traditions and identity is vital for Europe's development in the 21st century

- While the countries of western Europe already have legal instruments which allow them to reconcile preservation of national (including religious) traditions with the religious choices of individuals, the countries of central and eastern Europe are having to introduce them
- Many Christian churches are agreed that a church-member's religious identity should be protected against the efforts of any other church to make him/her switch allegiance
- On the other hand, a traditional religion, which has played a major role in shaping a nation's identity, may not be protected by restricting the freedoms of individuals
- The right balance between protecting freedom of belief and preserving the religious identity of communities and societies

The Equality of Religions in the Future EU – a Corner Stone for its Democratic Character and Stability

- The disappearance of the “Iron Curtain” has made the religious and cultural divide in Europe more apparent, and has even aggravated it. Each side's ignorance of, and failure to understand, the other. This applies also to the cultures spawned by both traditions
- The attitude of Orthodox believers to Catholics and Protestants is rooted in deep seated prejudice and suspicion as well as in the fear of being absorbed into the mighty ocean of western Christianity and losing their identity
- Orthodoxy remains little known in western and northern Europe. It gets little media coverage, if any, and so has a negative public image
- Anti-Semitism is deep-rooted in some European societies but is “swept under the carpet”
- The events of 11 September 2001 renewed in certain strata bygone prejudices, gave rise to anti-Muslim sentiments, suspicion and hostility towards Muslims.
- The last and future enlargements of the EU towards the SEE will considerably change the “religious map” of the Community. In addition, all the above mentioned problems became “internal problems” of the EU
- The mutual understanding and exchange between the three religions - Christian, Jewish and Muslim - which trace their roots

to Abraham's heritage is needed. The religious factor must be taken into account in the future development of the EU structure

The Role of Inter-religious Dialogue in the Balkans: Bridging Religions in Macedonia

Saso Klekovski, Aleksandar Krzalovski and Dervisa Hadzic

The Macedonian Center for International Cooperation

Summary

Macedonia is a country where (inter-)ethnic and (inter-)religious issues are closely related. The political and constitutional changes (the Framework Agreement) in Macedonia 2001 aimed at building a multicultural society (including the acceptance of multi-religious aspects). This was a top-level political agreement, which needed to be rooted in the society, as every step of the top leaders was conditioned by support from the other communities.

In 2002-2003, the Macedonian Centre for International Cooperation (MCIC) initiated consultations with the Macedonian Orthodox Church (MOC), the Islamic Community of Macedonia (ICM), the Catholic Church, the Evangelical-Methodist Church and the Jewish Community of Republic of Macedonia. The consultation resulted in the formulation of a pilot programme “Bridging Religions in Macedonia”, which received support from Dan Church Aid and Norwegian Church Aid. The programme was implemented for two years.

The objective of the programme was to increase mutual understanding between religious communities and in the Macedonian public in general. During the pilot phase, 15 different activities were implemented in education, culture, information and through social-diaconal work. The education activities consisted of exchange of lectures at the Orthodox Theological Faculty and the Faculty for Islamic Studies in Skopje; exchange of students (including from different religious backgrounds); basic skills training (computers, foreign languages);

summer camps; and study trips abroad. The culture activities included inter-religious visits to sacred places/objects and services; workshops on inter-religious (Christian-Muslim) dialogue; development of inter-religious calendars. In the area of information the activities were: preparation of a Newsletter for inter-religious cooperation; a Directory (Year-book) of religious communities in Macedonia; the establishment of an Inter-religious information and dialogue centre and a fair “Days of religious communities”. The social-diaconal work was mostly focussed on capacity building in project management. The programme was managed by a Steering, Editorial and Operational Team composed of five religious community representatives and MCIC.

The key achievement of the programme has been the establishment of a core group for inter-religious dialogue. This group succeeded in achieving high-level of consensus for most of the activities under the initiative, including some which initially were perceived as controversial (inter-religious calendars, visit to sacred places/objects and services, special days of religious communities).

The future challenges are several: There is a need to broaden and deepen support to inter-religious dialogue. One of the options is to launch similar activities at lower levels – in specific regions or municipalities. Another option is to establish inter-religious councils at different levels. The support for inter-religious dialogue is less obvious within larger communities. Moreover, the building of democratic capacities inside the religious institutions is hampered by hierarchical mechanisms. Within the Macedonian Orthodox Church, for example, there is a need to create more space for services in different languages, and in the Islamic Community of Macedonia (ICM) more space needs to be created for dervish groups.

Moreover, the religious communities have to work with the State to sustain the rule of law and develop an appropriate legal framework for basic issues like legal status or employment rules. The religious communities, the State and society at large have to overcome “absurd” secularisation, which is not the separation of religion from the State, but the separation of society and religion. There is an urgent need for a resolution of the debate on religious education in universal education, perhaps including education in different religions. This could partly be obtained through the integration of the theological faculties into the formal educational system.

To achieve this, support of the international community is needed. Unfortunately, some of the largest donors in the Balkans - like the EU

(EAR) / CARDS programme - are reluctant to work with the inter-religious dimensions of inter-ethnic relations.

Background and Context

In Macedonia, (inter-)ethnic and (inter-)religious issues are closely related. During 2001, as the last in a row, Macedonia suffered armed conflict on its territory following the break-up of former Yugoslavia, ten years earlier. Most visible was the ethnic component of the conflict between the ethnic Macedonian majority (around 67% of the total population) and the minority of ethnic Albanians (23%) in the country. During the previous ten years of transition, inter-ethnic relations had been tense, but constantly improving (e.g. solving of the problem of higher education in Albanian, the release of public funds for the improvement of infrastructures in predominantly ethnic Albanian areas, etc.). Therefore, for most of people in the country - and many abroad as well - the beginning of the armed conflict was a surprise. It did happen, however, and brought with it at least 150 casualties and a total of 170,000 displaced people. It severely deteriorated existing inter-ethnic relations.

On the other hand, the relatively small number of civilian casualties during the conflict and the massive displacements of people prior to military activities in most of the mixed villages, showed that the majority of population was not ready to take up arms for any cause, especially when against their neighbours form another ethnic group. This provided ground for the belief that the inter-ethnic relations were not completely destroyed and could even improve through confidence-building activities and other measures.

While the inter-ethnic component was much exploited during the conflict, the underlying inter-religious relations (most ethnic Macedonians are Orthodox Christians, while almost all (98%) of ethnic Albanians are Muslims) were not so visible, but were also often used to escalate the conflict (in attacks on churches/mosques, etc.). There were attempts to bring religious leaders together in a joint appeal for peace (the MCIC was involved in this activity), but it took a few months to come to a mutually acceptable solution. This was due to the lack of communication, cooperation and understanding, especially among the two dominant religious communities; the Macedonian Orthodox Church (MOC) and the Islamic Community in Macedonia (ICM). The few high-level contacts among religious leaders were mainly taking place on a protocol basis,

driven by the State authorities (meetings with the President of the country) or international actors.

The political and constitutional changes (Framework Agreement) in Macedonia, that ended the conflict in 2001, aimed at building multicultural society (also consisting acceptance of multi religious aspects). This was top-level political agreement which needed to be rooted in the society. Also, further steps of the top leaders were conditioned by support of the rest of the communities.

The Macedonian Centre for International Cooperation

The Macedonian Centre for International Cooperation (MCIC) is a non-governmental, non-profit organisation, founded in 1993 as a joint initiative of the Dutch Inter-church Aid and local organisations. MCIC operates in the domain of sustainable development, awareness-raising and social, humanitarian aid. The general aim of MCIC is to support and develop local and national initiatives for the promotion of sustainable development of human resources in Macedonia. MCIC's objectives are: the promotion of peace, the development of civil society and assistance to groups in need. These objectives are realised through work in several sectors: rural development; water supply and sanitation; employment and income generation; health and education; emergency relief. The MCIC obtains funding for the activities from various agencies of the World Council of Churches (WCC) and from governmental and international organisations.

The MCIC has a certain involvement with religious communities. Four members of its Council (out of 26 members) and three members of its Governing Board (out of 10) are representatives of religious communities: MOC, ICM and Evangelist-Methodist Church (EMC). The MCIC has provided support to a few humanitarian organisations of these religious communities, like for instance: "Milosrdie" (Charity), "Diakonia" and "Voskresenie" (Resurrection) of the MOC; "El Hilal" of the ICM and to EMC directly (for the establishment of a social and diaconal center in Strumica). Cooperation with these organizations has taken place through capacity building training and advice, technical support to equipment and running costs, and especially humanitarian aid coordination. One of the most positive examples of this cooperation occurred during the conflict, when four NGO's including MCIC, Milosrdie and El Hilal organized a joint humanitarian convoy to the civilian population in blocked areas (both to ethnic Macedonians and Albanians in the municipalities of Vratnica and Sipkovic).

Moreover, during the conflict, MCIC facilitated meetings of the working group with representatives of the major five religious communities in Macedonia. The aim was to reach consensus on a peace message and formulate a joint appeal by the religious leaders. The group held three meetings (March-May) and agreed on a message, but the initiative was delayed due to procedural obstacles. However, in June 2001, in cooperation also with the World Council of Churches, senior representatives of the five religious communities held a three-day meeting in Morges, Switzerland, where they discussed the current situation in the country and their roles in it. The unintended result of that meeting was a signed peace message. The representatives also agreed on certain follow-up activities, which unfortunately never materialized.

In May 2002, the MCIC provided logistic support to the Global Dialogue Institute, USA, for the organization of an inter-religious conference, held in Skopje. Here, leaders of the religious communities agreed on certain steps to strengthen their cooperation. Six months later, none of the conclusions were implemented. This is more or less the experience of other organizations which have made similar attempts, like the World Conference on Religion and Peace (WCRP), together with Norwegian Church Aid (NCA).

Some isolated activities, like the inter-religious conference in May 2002 in Skopje, were showing how little religious communities know about each other. But there has also been examples of how this can be improved. Lectures by the Deans of the Theological faculties (both Orthodox and Islamic) on each other's faculty (which happened for the first time, ever), inspired the identification of other models for further contacts and cooperation between different religious communities. In 2002, the Macedonian Centre for International Cooperation initiated communication with major religious communities in Macedonia: the Macedonian Orthodox Church (MOC), the Islamic Community of Macedonia (ICM), the Catholic Church, the Evangelical-Methodist Church and the Jewish Community of Republic of Macedonia, which ended in late 2002 with the formulation of the pilot programme "Bridging Religions in Macedonia".

Dan Church Aid (DCA) and Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) provided support for this initiative for an initial period of 18 months with an amount of about 210,000 €. The programme started in mid-2003 and was fully implemented by the end of 2004.

The “Bridging Religions in Macedonia” Programme - Objectives and target group

The aim of the programme was to increase mutual understanding between religious communities and in the Macedonian public in general. Based on the principles of common causes and shared experiences, activities were designed to attain following three objectives:

shared experience and interfaith dialogue through education and culture. The communication between religious communities in Macedonia was so weak (except protocol contacts of higher officials) that simple activities could make a significant difference in mutual understanding. The activities included exchange visits of students and professors (lecturers) between theological faculties/high-schools; exchange lectures; basic skills (computers, English language) courses; summer camps; study visits; workshops. Exposure to other experiences and cultural exchanges were aimed at broadening perspectives and mutual understanding, so that collaboration on finding feasible solutions for differences and emerging problems would be possible: visits to important places/objects of the other religious communities; seminars on inter-religious dialogue; inter-religious calendars.

increased information between religious communities and in the wider public. A few concrete results contributed to the attainment of this objective: The bulletin for inter-religious cooperation, the Info and dialogue center; the directory of religious communities, comparative studies and special days (fair) of religious communities. These were delivered to the wider circles of religious communities and the general public as well.

strengthened capacities of religious communities in social-diaconal work through various capacity building activities: a) technical support (equipping offices in both faculties; providing internet connections in faculties, a high-school and in the regional offices of the religious communities); b) training in project cycle management (PCM) and institutional development/ organizational strengthening (ID/OS). Trainees were mainly students and professors of theological high schools and faculties, as well as activists of other religious communities in Macedonia.

The broader target group was the wider general public in Macedonia, i.e. citizens in contact with the religious communities in Macedonia, either through membership, activism, participation in religious events, etc. The specific target groups were members and activists of all (24 registered) religious communities in Macedonia. Students and professors of the

religious communities educational institutions were in focus as well, as direct beneficiaries in most of the planned activities.

Activities

During this pilot-programme, 15 different activities were implemented in education, culture, information and social-diaconal work. The education activities consisted of an exchange of lectures between the Orthodox Theological Faculty and the Faculty for Islamic Studies in Skopje; an exchange of students (including from different religious backgrounds); basic skills training (computers, foreign languages); a summer camp; and study trips abroad. The culture activities included inter-religious visits to sacred places/objects and services; workshops on inter-religious (Christian-Muslim) dialogue, and the development of inter-religious calendars. The information activities consisted of the publication of a newsletter for inter-religious cooperation; a directory (Year-book) of religious communities in Macedonia; the establishment of an inter-religious info and dialogue centre and a fair celebrating special days of religious communities. The social-diaconal work mostly focussed on capacity building in project management. The programme was managed by the Steering, Editorial and Operational Team composed of five religious communities and one MCIC representative.

Education

Four exchange lectures were held in each of the two theological faculties, the Orthodox Faculty (OF) and the Faculty of Islamic Studies (FIS). The lectures were attended by an average of 25 students (and a total of 200) and generated great interest. Three out of four lectures were given by the professors of the other faculty, while the last lecture in this series was given by a lecturer from the Jewish Community.

Five exchange visits were paid to the Theological Educational Institutions. The students of the Orthodox Faculty paid a visit to the Islamic High School "Isa Beg Medresa" and to the Faculty of Islamic Studies; in return the students at the FIS visited the Orthodox High School and the Orthodox Faculty. Groups of about 15 students from all years of study (totalling 84) were selected to participate in these visits. This was an opportunity for them to visit the other faculty, meet colleagues and exchange opinions and experiences with them. Apart from the overall positive impressions about the visits, and the expressed need to continue

such visits, one of the students stated that “the two theological schools should cooperate, so we can learn about each other and realise that we do not have to be enemies, but become friends”.

Two cycles of the English language course were completed. It covered 32 representatives from MOC (OF), ICM (FIS), EMC, the Catholic Church and the Christian Church – The Voice of God.

The computer training of some 25 representatives from MOC (OF), IRC (FIS) and the Christian Church – The Voice of God, was completed. The advanced computer training of 4 students was conducted, enabling the participants to edit the Bulletin on Inter-religious Cooperation on their own.

An inter-religious Summer Camp was held from 12-17 July 2004 in Struga. Out of the 26 applicants, 22 students and activists from the following religious communities were selected (FIS, OF, EMC, Pre-Christian Community – Universal Life, Baptist Church, the independent Church of Christ and the Christian Church – Word of Hope). The camp offered an opportunity to get to know each other better. Within the camp, three lectures were delivered by representatives from the OF, FIS and the EMC, and a workshop was held on the evaluation of the Bridging Religions program.

Two representatives from the Macedonian Orthodox Church (MOC) made a study visit to the Institute of Ecumenical Studies in Bossey, Switzerland. The study visit focussed on the topic “Is there a just war”?

As part of the workshops and seminars, a one-day round table entitled “Reforms of the Religious Education within the Islamic Religious Community of Macedonia” was held on 17 May, 2004.

Culture

As part of the project visits to religious places/objects and services, a total of 166 representatives from each of the Theological Faculties, the churches and the religious communities (OF, FIS, EMC, KC, EZ, the Evangelical Congress Church, the Christian Church – The Voice of God, the Pre-Christian Community – Universal Life, the Vaishnav Religious Community), as well as representatives of civil society paid a visit to seven places in the course of 2004: the St. Kliment Ohridski Church and the Mustafa Pasha Mosque in Skopje, the Monastery – Presveta Bogorodica Precista in Kicevo, the St. Kliment and Plaosnik Church in Ohrid, the Mustafa Celebi Mosque and the Hasan Baba Hajati Teke in Struga. According to the answers provided in the evaluation questionnaires, the

visits were considered to be very useful and important for the enhancement of mutual knowledge and understanding. A most controversial activity in the beginning, it quickly became the most successful

On 13 September 2004, a seminar was held on Inter-religious Dialogue. The lecturers at the seminar were Lis Rasmussen and Safet Bektovic from the Danish Islamic-Christian Centre. In addition, professors Jovan Takovski, Ismail Bardhi, Metin Izeti, Petko Zlateski, Goko Gorgevski and Abduxemil Nezimi delivered short speeches. The seminar consisted of two sessions, the first took place at the Faculty of Islamic Studies; the second at the Orthodox Faculty. A total of 70 students and other interested citizens participated in this event. They emphasized the need for dialogue and expressed the desire to live together in increased mutual understanding, as well as through shared experiences. The seminar was well attended by the media.

The inter-religious calendars have been published in eight different layout designs in Macedonian and Albanian. They have been distributed to churches and religious communities, governmental and civic organizations, embassies, and the media. Pocket calendars were distributed to the general public. Through the publication of these calendars, the general public was informed about the holidays, festivities, fasts and commemorative days of all religious communities in Macedonia. A most impressive achievement was the high degree of agreement among the members of the Editorial Board when determining the contents of the calendars.

Information

Four issues of the Bulletin on Inter-religious Cooperation have been published, each of them in 500 copies in Macedonian and 300 in Albanian. The students and the members/activists of the churches and the religious communities took active part in this initiative by submitting texts for publication. The Bulletin was mainly covering events relating to the Bridging Religions programme, but it also included information about events of particular religious communities and sometimes about the most important religious holidays. The bulletin was constantly improved by adding new topics, following suggestions from the readers.

The inter-religious Info and Dialogue Center was opened and furnished with books and publications by religious communities. Two students from the Theological Faculties were employed in the centre, on a part-time basis. In addition, five religious communities delegated a representative to work in the Center on voluntary basis. Apart from the

churches and religious communities, the Publishing House “Tabernakul” and the State Commission for Relations with Religious Communities provided publications for the Centre. In September 2004, information leaflets about the Centre were distributed to daily newspapers resulting in an increased number of visits to the Centre, including by the media (the newspapers Vecer and Zaman, the Turkish and Bosnian TV). Two meetings of the Organizational Board for the Days of Religious Communities were held at the Centre.

For the first time in Macedonia, a Directory of Religious Communities was published. All 23 active (out of 25 registered) religious communities were presented in this publication, containing basic data on the headquarters of the religious communities, their main sacred objects, the size of each community (members/believers, clerks and other staff, religious objects, etc.), as well as on their humanitarian and publication activities.

Within the Comparative Studies project, three editions were published: the History of Protestantism in Macedonia (by the Evangelic-Methodist Church), the Basic Terminology of the Judaism (Jewish Community) and the Ten Commandments (Orthodox Church).

One of the major activities within the programme was the organization of the first Days (Fair) of Religious Communities in Macedonia in early December 2004. After several rounds of discussions, the event was organized with participation of 18 religious communities. During the Fair, around 370 people visited the exhibition, where religious communities presented their publications and other relevant materials and participated in three forum debates (topics: laws for religious communities; religious education; and the Orthodox and Protestant views on salvation). The event brought high media attention and allowed for the presence of representatives of un-registered religious communities, some of which unfortunately misused the event for their own promotion.

The event also highlighted the more significant differences between the approaches of the MCIC and the religious communities. However, the established level of trust and cooperation among the Steering Committee members provided space for discussion of these differences of opinion and enabled the identification of practical compromise solutions, acceptable to all involved parties.

Social - diaconal work

Two offices at the premises of the Theological Faculties were provided with office equipment (computers, including Internet access, and

furniture). The offices were opened to meet the needs of the students to get to know each other and participate in the programme. The offices were also available for several other activities planned and conducted by the students at the Faculties. The training course on Project Cycle Management (PCM) was held in early June 2004 in Krusevo. It was attended by 16 representatives from seven churches and religious communities in Macedonia (the MOC, IRC, KC, EZM, EMC) as well as representatives from the New-Apostolic Church and the Vaisnav religious community. Training in Institutional Development and Organizational Strengthening (ID/OS) in relation to the churches and the religious communities was accomplished on 28-30 September, 2004, in Skopje. Eleven representatives from the Theological Faculties, the churches and the religious communities (FIS, EMC, Word of Hope, and Vaisnav religious community), as well as two other representatives from the Commission for Relations with Religious Communities participated in the training.

Organisation of the programme

For an initiative like the “Bridging the Religions in Macedonia” programme, characterized by many new activities and partners, one of the most positive experiences has been the creation of its Steering Committee with members representing all partners. The Committee consisted of the Deans of the two theological faculties, one representative from each of the five major religious communities, as well as representatives from NCA, DCA and the MCIC. Apart from the Steering Committee, an Editorial Board was also established (responsible for approval of all planned publications throughout the programme) as well as an Organizational Board for the special Days of Religious Communities, composed of one representative from each of the major five religious communities and one MCIC representative.

The two bodies were established to broaden the participation of the religious communities in programme activities, thus increasing the feeling of ownership in the entire process. This provided space for discussion of issues ranging from simple and practical matters (such as the design of the inter-religious calendars) to sensitive subjects like the participation of smaller religious communities (often not recognized as such by the five major communities) in programme activities. Each of the groups met regularly about 3-4 times per year, but also frequently engaged in telephone consultations on both a bilateral and multilateral basis. The formation of different groups facilitated the division of responsibilities, in-depth

discussions on particular issues and the identification of solutions at different levels.

Key achievements

Towards the end of the programme, in early December 2004, an external evaluation was conducted by a team composed of an international consultant, a MCIC staff member and a resource person from the religious communities. The team reached the following conclusions:

The overall programme objective is to improve mutual trust and understanding between different religious and ethnic groups. The programme has made an important step in this direction, by focusing on a significant, but often neglected, target group, namely the theology students, who will be the future opinion-forming clergy, activists and church members, as well as the religious and academic staff that train them. Winning the confidence of the faculties and the young people is a major achievement that needs to be built upon and consolidated.

The most important result of the programme is that it has systematically introduced dialogue to the important institutions of the two largest religious communities in Macedonia. It has demonstrated that there is goodwill on which to build broader ambitions of tolerance and co-existence. It has created the activities through which this goodwill can be made visible and grow. Furthermore, it has provided a forum within which the representatives of five religions can regularly plan and provide guidance for their collaborative work. This forum sets an important precedent of religious cooperation in Macedonia and the region as such. It is too early to speak of the sustainability of the new structures established at the faculties. They will need careful nurturing, both by their churches and by MCIC.

Too many activities were foreseen for the short pilot phase, especially when taking into account the need to establish new infrastructures at the same time (for example the public Info-Centre and the project offices in the two Faculties). As a result, not all planned activities could be implemented and some only with difficulty. However, the project has gained a real experience with regard to the practical aspects of coordinating inter-faith dialogue, and it should be possible to implement a reduced and amended portfolio of these in 2005.

There is little evidence that the programme has yet had much effect upon the broader target group, the members and activists of the religious communities in Macedonia. It is possible that this is over-ambitious within

the scope of the programme, which may need to set itself priorities in the second phase and acknowledge that reaching a broader target group is a longer-term challenge. The “Bridging Religions” programme is itself based upon the lesson that lower levels than the religious leadership are more effective in developing inter-faith and inter-ethnic dialogue. A new lesson arising from the implementation of this programme is the need to be precise and realistic about targeting the different lower levels. The programme has worked best where it is more tightly focused on a particular target group: in this case the faculties.

The Diaconia and social-humanitarian work of the religious communities is an important aspect of inter-faith understanding. However, it has its own operational levels and structures, which need special focus and systematic attention. The current programme cannot fully do them justice, but may be able to pave the way for their future development, for example by encouraging improved management in Church organisations.

According to the MCIC, one of the key achievements of the programme is the establishment of core groups for inter-religious dialogue. Debates within these groups were held in an open-ended fashion, thus providing different opinions for discussion. Even with a rather tight schedule set for the programme activities, these bodies were not under pressure to make quick decisions. On the contrary, decisions on issues raised during the meetings were sometimes postponed, thus enabling further clarification and also discussion within each individual body.

The groups succeeded in achieving a high degree of consensus for most of the activities, including ones that in the beginning seemed controversial (inter-religious calendars, visit to sacral places/objects and services, special days of religious communities). Hence, the bodies now function as a special kind of Inter-religious Council; something that has been tried previously by many actors, but without success. The expressed level of mutual trust and cooperation, as well as the results achieved, indicate that this structure is sustainable and may be used towards a further deepening of inter-religious dialogue.

Future challenges

The future challenges in relations of religious communities are several. There is a need of broadening and deepening the support to inter-religious dialogue. One of the options is to establish similar activities at

lower levels – regions or municipalities. Another is to establish Inter-religious councils at different societal levels.

The support for inter-religious dialogue is less obvious when launched within larger communities, groups and structures. This was noticeable during the implementation of the “Bridging Religions” programme, where much time was spent trying to reach agreement on certain activities. This might be due to complex structures and decision-making procedures, but may also be a reflection of a rather self-sufficient and self-contained perceptions and behaviour.

To this should be added the building of democratic capacities inside the religious institutions, which are known for their very restrictive hierarchies. As mentioned above, approval of decisions was always by the highest level. Sometimes this blocked processes and activities and in some cases it was not clear on what ground, and on the basis of which facts, specific decisions were made. Tolerance for other - mainly smaller - religious communities, and the possibility of discussing more sensitive or political issues, was not exerted at the higher levels.

However, there are several practical questions and possibilities which can be addressed in the near future. For example, in the MOC there is a need for creating more space for services in different languages, and in the ICM there is a need for more space for dervish groups. The religious communities have to work with the State to sustain the rule of law and develop adequate legal frameworks, related to basic issues like legal status or employment regulations. The religious communities, the State and society at large have to overcome what we call “absurd” secularisation, which is not separation of religion from the State, but separation of society and religion. There is an urgent need for a resolution of the debate about the role of religious education in universal education, perhaps including the questions of religious education. One solution could be to integrate or link the theological faculties with the formal educational system.

Representatives of the religious communities raised these pressing issues in debates held during the Days of Religious Communities. Apart from the need for a more significant involvement from the State, religious communities themselves can do much more to resolve these problems, e.g. by engaging in more practical cooperation and establishing working groups that will actually come up with proposals to be subsequently submitted to the State authorities for approval. The cooperative structures established during the “Bridging Religions” programme can be very useful in this regard.

To achieve this, however, support from the international community is needed. Unfortunately some of the largest donors for the region hesitate to work with inter-religious aspects of inter-ethnic relations. However, the reluctance to work with religious communities in societies which are multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religious – on the grounds that there is a need for a clear distinction between the State and the religions - is not always and easily justifiable. Inter-ethnic and inter-religious issues in such areas are deeply interlinked and ignorance of such link does not contribute to overall improvement of such relations.

The Question of Conflict as a Door to Opportunity

Arthur E. Liolin

Chancellor, Albanian Orthodox Archdiocese in America

It is a privilege and pleasure to join with you today as we affirm the lessons learnt and the aspirations to which all humankind aspires. Especially here - in this region and in this place of transitions - where, over the course of time, pain and grief have been brother and sister to codes of honour and to pride in one's identity. Here in Albania, where tolerance and individual worth are valued traditions, where the past and the present are in stark contrast and where the struggle to form a constructive future finds fertile ground as well as challenges.

UNESCO has been a valued resource. In so many ways, it provides us with a many-faceted prism in order to focus our shared faith in a constructive future: through education, in science, and by our respective cultures. That is, in part, why we are here: to place in perspective and incorporate our shared experiences. Hopefully, they will be forged into policy and practice. Most of us today, in our own labours, have duties to perform: we've been elected and appointed to governance, and we've assembled to record with others the data we have gathered and studied as writers, philosophers and researchers: ordinary people who care and serve.

My own wish is to pursue this course of discovery via a few modest ruminations and a series of questions. I view this assembly's goal as an affirmation as well as an adventure - which has yet to be fulfilled, a harbour yet to be reached, a journey just begun. To my mind, most questions will add to the quest. They are not limited to Southeast Europe, but have implications elsewhere as well. I thank you for this occasion.

I. The Origins of Conflict

Hatred between individuals, groups and peoples has long been recorded in history's annals. Our predecessors witnessed - as we continue

to witness - personal crimes, internecine struggles, cultural differences, religious crusades and counter-conflicts, wars of oppression and liberation. Since Homo sapiens families and tribal clusters first appeared on the earth, these terms and others - such as “holocaust,” “genocide” and “ethnic cleansing” - have become far too common occurrences, even in advanced societies. We need to know why. Is it a genetic inheritance, or a learned behaviour? Has a tool which may have facilitated the survival of earlier creatures and cultures, outlived its usefulness today? Or is it a latent human tendency which is easily exploited by other agendas?

Often, coexistence appears less of an ideal than it once was. Learning from debate & dialogue - in the free market of ideas - helps to refine one own belief. Is it true that advocates of a world view, may better advance their goals and vision - by contrasting their ideas with the ideas of others who differ? When will we learn that destruction of the adversary only returns in even more virulent ways to haunt and torment the perpetrator?

To be sure, such issues are not confined to the dramatic, to the melodramatic, to the sinister and to the criminal. Even in the loftier areas of human debate, they pertain to the refined questions of competing value systems, and of cultural goals and aspirations. Too often, these too explode from simple “differences of opinion” into combative ideological conflicts and not only for Southeast Europe. Such attitudes seem to strike at the heart of a group’s world view and become a matter of destiny. And with it, comes the larger dilemma: how can an individual or group preserve the integrity of its own beliefs, while not infringing on the similar sentiments of other, different individuals and groups? It is an issue which affects neighbours on the same street, as well as neighbouring countries.

In other words, what is the nature of compromise and cooperation in a world of competing values?

My first question arises: What is behind this motivation? What purpose does it serve and what may have been its primeval origins?

II. Theological Aspects: Living One’s Doctrines

Every religion has had to face the challenge of such behaviours in its constituents. No scripture is without accounts of battles and “spiritual warfare.” Its focus is to strengthen the believer’s pursuit of knowledge of God and devotion to the Creator. Why is it translated into defending one’s beliefs at the expense of others’ convictions? In extreme instances - no doubt out of necessity - why must theologians feel compelled to clarify whether a war has its “just cause,” or is the “lesser of evils?” And when an

individual or group is found on the losing side, it festers into the deeper throes of victimizations, only to rise again, sometimes centuries later with a new vehemence. Indeed, why?

There is even a powerful Slavic term for this phenomenon: "Zolpamiatnost:" the insidious delight in recalling over and over again the evil done to us. Instead of learning from our own sins and flaws, we wallow in them, and appeals for repentance go unheeded. It is the easy way and contradicts the Divinity. Ultimately, it is an insult to our Creator. Even Almighty God may weep at what His creatures do, or fail to do.

Question number 2: How may we foster the view that dogmas serve God and man - not as rigid or stagnant museum pieces - but as living avenues to the holy, which are firmly linked to the human aspiration to love God with "mind, heart, strength and soul?"

III. Secularism: Mind vs. Soul?

The legacy of the Enlightenment is often counterpoised, in Europe and elsewhere, as the antidote. One ideology strives to replace another.

Rival political camps, each with a differing world view, tempt destiny. Each seek followers and power, in a shifting landscape which leaves most folks in a state of perpetual bewilderment and insecurity. Indeed, living with ambiguity - especially in the SE region of Europe - is counterpoised by a rush to totalitarian forms of security. Nearly every secular system and every ideology arose from organic necessity and need, as well as from vision. For each, the challenge is to find avenues for change even while remaining committed to essential principles.

In this and in neighbouring regions, for example, it is often said that society has moved from the ruination of one ideology into the harsh reality of another: from communism to capitalism, proceeding from vicious security to harsh insecurity, from total service to all to service only to oneself. Both are impervious to the consequences which our own deeds have on one another. And its effect on ordinary people has often been to increase bewilderment, cynicism and disillusionment.

This phenomenon has even taken on an ontological nature. It is a compelling question on the nature of being: of what it means to be a Homo sapiens, to be a person - and we struggle with questions on what it means not only to be, not only to fulfill one's potentials, but whether our existence requires a return to ancient tribalisms.

Is God and scripture the measure of man, or is man's own discovery the measure of society? Is our destiny anthropocentric or theo-centric?

One hopes that both views together would balance and complete the picture.

Question Number 3: It seems apparent today that Secularism and Dogmatism also require a bridge between them. Where and how are to build it?

IV. Social Ramifications: Realism and Idealism - a duet

Societies and ideologies hold double standards in this regard. On the one hand, we extol the virtues of peace, while at the same time we bless those who must do battle. Oftentimes, there is only a fine line drawn between bemoaning the war, while at the same time safeguarding the warrior. It is the dilemma of all who govern. We run the risk becoming many warring islands. And the call for justice too often masquerades as other more sinister impulses.

In all conflicts, there is a tendency to identify and idealize the hero. Usually, he is thought to be the protector of the patrimony and enters into myth as symbol of the nation, or of a victimized people. But the truly heroic should be seen not only for what he is, but for what he ought to be. One who sees clearly, who has a vision, and is able to overcome adversity not simply by popularized strength, but by his ability to lead people one step forward, beyond what is expected.

How does one compare a mythic hero from an exaggerated ego? One gives, while the other is prone to take. The former's strength enables him to relent and yield, while the latter's insecurity makes him deride and intimidate. The first one understands and persuades, whereas the second enforces and imposes. The former is liberated by his office, while the latter is clad only in armour. The hero loves, while his opposite grasps at that which is not contained. One creates an opening, while the other closes doors. One admires those whom he serves, the other imprisons his charges. One listens, the other only hears. One protects, the other ridicules.

The idealist prefers to honour his most positive deeds. The realist tells us that the hero serves only a defined, separated group. To be most effective, he and she must embody both attitudes. Mostly, the authentic hero encourages heroism in each and every individual. It is of such ordinary heroes that conflict might be transformed into goals for peace and opportunity.

Question 4: How then may we encourage healthy heroism in the people of our respective societies?

V. Psychology, Sciences & Literature:

Thus, in issues of conflict, it comes down to essential matters of fear and hatred, and overcoming them -of discerning truth from fiction, of what is good or evil, of what is right and wrong, and of the gradations in between extremes. Often that which is hidden is more telling than that which is transparent. We know that behavioural patterns often stem not from the obvious, but from what is veiled.

To attain a goal, we must know what we are up against. One needs a microscope to peer into origins, then a telescope to view the future. Or to choose another metaphor: like the physician, each of us - in our own life's work - must look deeply into causes and not only at symptoms. Why, for example, is it said that "anger is the most pleasurable of human passions?" Do our angers arise out of necessity, or out of the pursuit of justice, and when might our emotions deceive us? When is anger appropriate, and when is it destructive? Here, our writers and novelists offer this challenge with clarity. And not only them, but it is our parents and teachers, and the examples which they give by their own behavior.

Question 5: Hatred, violence and fear - are they inherited, or learned?

VI. Options: The Formation of the Conscience

Providing an answer to the dilemmas posed to governments and to all people seeking peaceful resolution to conflict must therefore begin by rephrasing the question. What is it in human behaviour - and by extension the policy of any given government - that finds in vicious conflict something that appears to be beneficial, but eventually is found to be counterproductive, destructive, and in the end can lead - to make a moral judgment - evil?

And following that: what can be learned about ourselves by not only avoiding our crimes of conscience and deed, but in deeply exploring the roots which prompt such behaviour?

Studies of the psychology and anthropology of hatred, abuse, racism continue to be undertaken, as well as of their moral and ethical implications. For example, Prof. Robert Sternberg at Yale studies "The Psychology of Hate," as does sociologist Jack Levin at Northeastern University in Boston. Prof. Lawrence Kohlberg at Harvard and Notre Dame

University outlined a “theory of moral development.” In researching the aspects of the brain, Professor Susan Fiske of Princeton University, concludes from empirical data that “prejudice is not inevitable.” University of Toronto Professor William Cunningham’s soon-to-be-published research results challenge the notion that “racism is natural and unavoidable.” From authors, we have Vaclav Havel’s compelling talk, “On Hatred.” From social philosopher, Hannah Arendt, was coined the arresting phrase: “the banality of evil,” when doing violence to others seems so casual, so everyday, so ordinary, so acceptable, and even worse, so easy.

CONCLUSION:

Looking for Ordinary Heroes

In summary, the hero teaches us that justice is attained when all are satisfied or no one nearly so. Justice, clarity, self-criticism, repentance, forgiveness, foresight and vision: all these hard-won virtues may be drawn from theology, from society and science, from worldwide scripture, from national myth and are embodied in constitutional aspirations. All these help bring us out of conflict and to conciliation, from derision to respect. Each individual by each. One person by one. One neighbour with another neighbour down the street. And by every nation to its neighbour and to those beyond its borders. It all begins next door.

We are all vulnerable. All are warmed by the same sun, inhabit the same earth, enter a common pit, envision a shared future. Our views on this may differ widely. Yet, it is in the sharing and mingling of those views that we refine our own view. It is in relation to others that we strengthen our own group’s awareness. Diversity is such a rich gift.

Our primordial human ancestors - who began the journey so long ago - often found security, self-protection and solace by demonizing others because of their perceived differences. And yet, little by little, they began to discover the merits of leaving behind untoward and hostile behaviours. We ought to have learned by now that we all have more to gain by exploration, curiosity and cooperation than by limiting our adventures only to those who appear similar to ourselves.

This then, is a lesson to be learnt: to fully “know ourselves” - and ultimately “to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God.”

The Role of Religious Leaders in Times of Conflict in Multinational and Multireligious Societies: a Contribution Towards Interreligious Dialogue in Macedonia

Paul Mojzes

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It is natural that people wish for harmony in their communities, be they local, regional, national, or international. However, it appears that we have come to think it equally natural that conflicts and violence disrupt our lives and cause great suffering.

The stages of interaction between different groups range from war (the most destructive form of interaction), to less violent forms of antagonism, to indifference, to negotiation, to active tolerance of differences, to cooperation, and in some cases to the integration of groups. These stages are often changing and overlapping. "Dialogue" is the method or approach whereby one can deal with disparate and even conflicting aims and situations. Since it has become habitual to use the word dialogue for practically every kind of conversation or exchange, Leonard Swidler and Ashok Gangaden have coined the term "deep-dialogue" in order to describe a special kind of encounter between those who do not hold identical views. They explain "deep-dialogue" as a method of entering into other worlds or perspectives to gain a deepened sense of one's own worldview and an awakened awareness of the worldview of others¹. "Deep-dialogue" can therefore be a powerful transformative technology, which can lead to learning how to live together in genuine respect and mutual care. Human relations break down when diverse worlds collide² in ethnic conflict, racial hatred and ideological confrontation.

Dialogue, in the sense of "deep-dialogue" is a relatively new phenomenon, practiced more widely in the twentieth century, as it became

a means of addressing long-standing tensions between communities that could not be resolved through traditional forms of confrontation. Obviously such “deep-dialogue” is more easily practiced in stable societies in which greater measures of tolerance and cooperation already exist and where the memory of hatred and destruction has begun to fade.

In societies beset by war and powerful antagonisms, many feel that conflict must cease before dialogue can begin. However, we are convinced that even in the most distressing circumstances of distrust and fear, “deep-dialogue” ought to be attempted, as it can greatly contribute towards better mutual understanding and the creation of trust, at least among leaders and other opinion-makers, which can then be transmitted to other people eager to build more harmonious relationships.

Many parts of the world, including the so-called post-Communist countries, are experiencing profound convulsions of the most complex nature. The Republic of Macedonia is one such country. Its population, like that of some of its neighbors, is multiethnic, multicultural, multilingual, and multireligious. As is the case in many other European countries, certain ethnic groups are almost concurrent with a religious community. The vast majority of Slavic Macedonians are Orthodox Christians, though some are Catholic, Muslim, Protestant, agnostic, or atheist. The second largest ethnic group is the Albanians of Macedonia, who are also mostly adherents of Islam, though some are Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, agnostic, or atheist. The smaller religious communities also differ in ethnic composition but remain an important part of the community called the Republic of Macedonia.

It is a well-known fact that when nationality and religion overlap there are both positive and negative outcomes. A major question is whether the specifically religious factor of ethnoreligious identity can have a positive influence on bringing the entire country toward greater mutual trust, cooperation, tolerance, and peace. In a somewhat oversimplified way, one may say that the leadership of religious communities may contribute to the crisis, may entirely avoid involvement in social developments in the state or local community, or may make efforts to mend the broken relationships in pursuit of a happier and more stable common ground for all. We know that during the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia, many religious communities unfortunately allowed themselves to be manipulated into adding fuel to the fire of interethnic hatred and violence, while others felt that they could not make any meaningful contribution toward peace. The war between nationalities certainly affected the relationship between religions, making them quite strained and even

hostile. There were, of course, some notable exceptions demonstrating courageous anti-war advocacy and cooperation for the sake of peace making and reconciliation. While the situation in different republics of the former Yugoslav federation vary and cannot simply be transferred from one to the other, it would be, nevertheless unwise to dismiss some important general lessons.

Professor Ivan Cvitkovic³ undertook a sociological analysis of the role of religion in the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in which he explored the complex relationship between ethnicity and religion⁴ and how extreme nationalists from all three groups were able to manipulate religious sentiments. He argues that religion contributed to the fall of socialism because religious institutions were allowed to hold to views not in line with official ideology.

During the war, Cvitkovic explains, the ruling ideology shifted from a secular to a religious one. Religion and religious institutions became the pillars of society, and in the process of revitalization of religion under war conditions, tolerance and interreligious dialogue weakened. If one religious institution was identified with the state, then the other religions were considered as destabilizing and distrust toward them increased. Cvitkovic emphasizes that dialogue and tolerance are indispensable in societies that are ethnically, religiously, culturally diverse, and urges that the return of tolerance is necessary for the survival of both ethnicity and religion in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Did the war actually lead to an increase in religiosity? The increased numbers of declared believers, the upsurge in religious practices and the increased influence of religion and denominations upon everyday life suggest that the war has had just such an effect. The credibility of religion and religious institutions was amplified and their political role became less marginal. When war takes place in a multireligious area, the revitalization of religion occurs though the obligatory intermingling of different religions.⁵

From the example of Bosnia and Herzegovina, among others, it is evident that it is a mistake to wait for conflicts to end before beginning interreligious dialogue. Indeed, one could argue that religious leaders are able to find inspiration in their holy scripture and other traditions and writings to work with one another even when the relationships between politicians and the population are strained to the utmost and general distrust prevails in society. Compared to inter-ethnic dialogue, for which there is no internally compelling logic other than enlightened self-interest, interreligious dialogue among Judaism, Christianity, and Islam have powerful internal stimuli arising from their founding principles. For these

religions, it is not only their pastoral role of taking care of their own followers which urges them toward dialogue, but the prophetic concerns of their founders and leading personalities which beckon them to work for peace and reconciliation as a mandate from God.

Where can religious leaders find the courage and strength to promote such dialogue? Is it that they are better, wiser, stronger, and more able than other leaders? No. The answer is rather to be found in the message given by God to each community and entrusted to the leaders to uphold, proclaim, and nurture. Despite the fact that Jews, Christians (of various churches) and Muslims believe in one God who desires that the entire world live in peace and goodness, they are, regrettably, heirs of distrust and disharmony among each other. Through long histories of conflict, persecution, and suffering, we have come to consider it natural that we cannot get along with each other in a trusting, secure, respectful, and mutually appreciative way. It is regarded almost as miraculous when communities live in peace and harmony - the condition that God desires for us.

We have a tendency to focus our concerns primarily or exclusively on the well being of our own group, family nationality, or religious community. We even tend to look at God as our God, only ours. It is normal to give priority to the interests of the group over which we have special responsibility. However, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, all being universal religions, do not accept the notion of a tribal God, or a God only of one people, even when they believe that theirs is the best expression of the human response to God. We all believe that the whole of creation is under God's domain and care. That mandates a broader view, namely one where all people, whatever their shape and form, are sisters and brothers, even if they have not gotten along well at a particular moments in history.

The international Jewish-Christian-Muslim dialogue (dialogue between the three partners) is several decades long and has become a sign that we do not have to passively accept the hostilities which characterized and continue to determine the relationships between the followers of these faiths. We know from the experience of the past dialogues that great strides can be made by leaders and scholars of the three religions when they are willing to engage in respectful sharing of others' insights, aims, frustrations, fears, and hopes.

The late President Boris Trajkovski understood both the need for this dialogue and its potential to promote the well-being of the people in his country and in the region of Southeast Europe. He invited those from outside the region to assist the religious leaders in the region to work

towards trust building and reconciliation. He was an enthusiastic supporter of all efforts by religious leaders and followers to find ways and means to work with each other for the achievement of this noble goal.

Concretely, Professor Leonard Swidler and this author, leaders of the International Annual Scholars Dialogue and editors of the Journal of Ecumenical Studies, Philadelphia, USA, visited Macedonia six times on the invitation of President Trajkovski. After ascertaining that the churches and religious communities were willing to work together in the process of confidence building, we organized a major international Jewish-Christian-Muslim dialogue conference in Skopje in May 2002. One of the concrete results of that conference was the establishment of the Council of Interreligious Cooperation, consisting of the Macedonian Orthodox Church, the Islamic Community, the Catholic Church, the Evangelical-Methodist Church, and the Jewish Community. That council has met a number of times with and without us. When a group of us would come from abroad, we would always bring at least one representative of each of the five communities in order to demonstrate interreligious communication among ourselves. Meetings were held at the Macedonian Orthodox Theological School, the School of Islamic Sciences, and at the universities in Skopje and Tetovo, as well as other civic locations. In support of these endeavors, we received grants from the United States Institute of Peace, the Foundation Open Society Institute, as well as smaller grants from various American church organizations. Papers of the May 2002 conference were published in English, Macedonian and Albanian⁶. President Trajkovski took a deep interest in these meetings and was present at the opening and closing sessions of the May 2002 conference, as were the chief leaders of all five member churches and religious communities. The deans of the two Orthodox and Islamic faculties exchanged visits and lectures at each other's institutions and made public radio broadcasts. In October 2004, during the most recent visit by a team of six international experts in dialogue, President Branko Crvenkovski received foreign scholars in Skopje and also convened a meeting of the heads of all the religious communities at Ohrid, indicating that he also supports the process of interreligious dialogue and cooperation.

Thus the religious leaders and scholars from the three faiths of the Republic of Macedonia joined one other and international advisors in the continued search for peace and understanding, in order to continue "deep-dialogue" in their own country both during our visits and, more importantly, when we are gone. The task is to make this process a permanent and more widespread one throughout the country. It would be

highly desirable to broaden this process regionally because there are a number of outstanding and difficult regional interreligious problems that have a tendency to aggravate interethnic conflicts, which should be dealt with by religious scholars and leaders. Obstacles are formidable but religious communities have a reservoir of hope based on trust in a God who cares for the welfare of human beings. When churches and religious communities are true to their own core teachings, they are able to overcome barriers to human cooperation. There are now a number of scholars working at the regional level who seem to be able and willing to get involved in this process. With a little help from their governments and civic groups, as well as from scholars experienced in interreligious dialogue, one may be able to stimulate broader interest and concrete projects for progress in the region. Churches and religious communities are able to exemplify this process rather than hinder it and they should be encouraged to do so.

Notes

1. Global Dialogue Institute.
2. Ibid.
3. From his manuscript "Konfesija u ratu" sent to the author in typescript form.
4. For other view see Paul Mojzes (ed), *Religion and War in Bosnia* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1998).
5. Ibid.
6. Paul Mojzes, Leonard Swidler, and Heinz-Gerhardt Justenhoven, eds. *Interreligious Dialogue Toward Reconciliation in Macedonia and Bosnia* (Philadelphia: Ecumenical Press, 2003) also published as a special issue of the *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, Vol. XXXIX, Nos. 1-2 (2002), and as bi-lingual Macedonian and Albanian publication by Paul Mojzes and Leonard Swidler, eds. *Gradenje doverba pomegu crkvite I verskite zaednici vo Makedonija preku dijalog and Ndertimii i bismit permes dialogut ndermjet kishave dhe bashkesive fetare ne Maqedoni* (Philadelphia, Ecumenical Press, 2004).

The Action-oriented Dialogue is the only Way for Peace, Stability and Well-being in South-East Europe

Vladimir Petrovsky

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Six years ago on November 16, 1998 the Government of Albania convened the Conference on Human Rights, at which I represented the United Nations. The Conference was held on the eve of the referendum, which approved the founding act of the state, the Constitution. It was an important landmark for the promotion of the dialogue, which later has taken a regional dimension.

Last year in Ohrid we agreed on the issue of what should be done, and now we are moving towards practical implementation of the recommendations adopted in Ohrid. This is the high time for the energetic actions on the global and regional levels. We are facing hardware threats (terrorism, WMD, Organized Crime) and software (conflicts, migration, hunger, diseases, etc.). With all the differences, these threats to the World are standing in close interdependence and should be treated simultaneously through dialogue at the global and regional levels.

It is very important that we are concentrating on inter-ethnic and inter-religious dialogue. Following a period of conflicts and widespread human-sufferings, countries of South East Europe have now committed themselves to democratic values and objectives, to full respect of human rights and mutual tolerance among citizens of different ethnic group and religions. Among them Albania represents a good example. Inter-ethnic and inter-religious dialogue should be concentrated on the promotion and education of the human values and goals. It is on the basis of a reasonable consensus, favouring open societies and their basic democratic values, that we can, no doubt, find a way out of a highly destructive relativism.

Such dialogue is greatly facilitated by the fact that we are entering a new global society - Pax Multilateral, democratic and interdependent in

substance and multicultural in form. The emerging possibility of travel to other planets gives us a chance to look at ourselves not as inhabitants of a global village but rather as passengers on one small spaceship called Planet Earth. It does not matter in which class we travel -first, business or tourist. All of us are interested in the safe flight of our spaceship within the Galaxy.

I think it would be important to include in the dialogue a new planetary dimension, at the core of which, to my mind, is the unity between countries and peoples living on this planet, based on respect of cultural differences and balance of interests, rather than the balance of power.

Now a few thoughts on how the dialogue should be conducted.

- 1) While emphasizing unity through cultural diversity in our interdependent world it is very important to promote the common human values that transcend all civilizations, cultures and religions.

They are:

- Liberty and justice,
- Rationality and spirituality,
- Legality and moral-ethical principles,
- Rights and responsibilities.

You will notice that they are presented in pairs, thus facilitating reflection about the heritage that has sprung not from one, but from all civilizations and cultures.

Take, for example, the legality and moral-ethical dimension. There is no doubt that legal precision requires moral clarity. Referring to the continuing debate between idealists and realists I would like to express my strong belief that without moral conviction you can be neither idealist nor realist because a purely pragmatic approach would offer narrow alternatives, while morality provides the opportunity to choose between different options.

Not only politicians, but the judges too, should be guided by real human values.

Elaboration of common ethical standards is of utmost priority for our dialogue.

- 2) Education in common human values should go hand-in-hand with education in the human-oriented approach to the global agenda, which includes peace and security in all aspects, sustainable development, human rights, humanitarian imperative, and the visionary governance.

I would like to pay a special attention to the education in governance at all levels -global, transcontinental, regional and national.

We often speak about good governance, but to my mind the term does not give a clear message as to its meaning because good governance is democratic, for some, and authoritarian, for others.

I prefer to speak about human-oriented, constitutional, democratic governance.

Without strong commitment to the constitutional democracy, based on the rule of law, any reliable process to the common goals of peace, stability and well-being is impossible.

3) Democratic governance Implies the existence of a system based on the active participation of the whole non-governmental sector -civil society, business community and church -and on the transparency and accountability in management of public affairs.

Accommodating peoples' growing demands for their inclusion in society, for respect of their religion, ethnicity and language takes more than democracy and equitable growth. Also needed are multicultural policies that recognize differences, champion diversity and promote cultural freedoms, so that all people can choose to speak their language, practice their religion, participate in shaping their culture -so that all people can choose to be who they are.

At least I would like to stress particularly the importance not only of the substance, but also of culture of dialogue at all levels of interaction, in other words, what is important is not only the message itself we wish to communicate, but the way in which it is communicated. This affects how our message will be perceived and received.

In our communication we must be neutral and devoid of double standards. It is imperative that the norms of international law, as well as the decisions of the UN be applied non-selectively. A violation of norm is always a violation. It is important to understand that, although exemptions from the universal legal or moral norms may offer immediate benefits to certain states, in the long run they become counter- productive and harmful to all members of the global community, including their initiators. Such violations destroy the very fabric of international solidarity, lead to distrust and provoke others to follow such actions. As the UN Secretary General K. Annan says, "those who seek to bestow legitimacy must themselves embody it, and those who invoke international law must themselves submit to it".

We should also speak less of generalities, concentrate on practical undertakings and bring to the attention good examples that will demonstrate how peace, stability and well-being are able to replace hatred and conflict. As good examples we could quote a few European

experiences with regard to “peace enclaves”, “shared cities” and transborder cooperation as well as examples from other continents. Of course, citing “good examples” does not imply the insistence of the adoption of a “blueprint” for all countries.

With all the importance we pay to inter-ethnic and inter-religious dialogue we need to keep in mind that dialogue should be comprehensive and include also political, diplomatic, military and business dimensions.

In the course of this dialogue we need to activate a corps of future moderate political leaders, who will be able to pilot the changes in an evolutionary, non-violent democratic way.

Trajkovski's Apple Tree

Jordan Plevnes

Ambassador and Permanent Delegate of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to UNESCO

The topic of our meeting today with Tirana: “The Development of Inter-religious and Inter-ethnic Dialogue – a Significant Factor for the Stability and Progress in South-East Europe”, reminds us incontestably of the spirit looking down upon us from the sky, that of President Boris Trajkovski, the initiator of the first Regional Forum on the Dialogue among Civilizations.

Indeed, in the history of each people and, more broadly, in the context of the history of civilization, there exists in the sky of world humanism, some stars that shine and disappear abruptly, so that we can remember that they will remain alive forever in the eternity of human hope.

Such was the star of President Boris Trajkovski, who in the spirit of UNESCO – and with the immense respect that he testified towards the Director-General, Mr. Koïchiro Matsuura – carried out a political action deeply imbued with one concept, that of the Dialogue.

On this occasion, I would like to read some lines that I wrote when I learned of the tragic death of President Boris Trajkovski and which were published in Macedonian newspapers under the title: “Trajkovski's Apple Tree”.

The night before the tragedy, I was speaking with President Trajkovski. A tone of sadness could be perceived in his voice, translated by these few words which resound still in my memory: “Is humanism always to be condemned to die in the Balkans?” The Dialogue among Civilizations, on which we had worked together these last three years, brought him to an increased prominence in the eyes of a great number of world statesmen, amongst the ranks of those humanistic and moral figure, in whom the energy of the Balkan centuries is concentrated, that of the history of the spirit and not that of the profusions of blood.

I remember once, during a conversation we had had on the Vardar Quays, that he had quoted Martin Luther: “Even if I know that the apocalypse were to take place tomorrow, I would plant an apple tree in my garden today!” That was his political philosophy. It is also the will of the man who believed with enthusiasm in the future of Macedonia and the Balkans, belonging to Europe, released forever from political adventurism and criminality, and devoted to the sustainable values of civilization.

Today, as his smile belongs to our memories, this thought of the symbolic apple tree of Trajkovski remains. His untimely death did not allow its fruits to be born. This remains to be undertaken by his children, the future generations, all the citizens of the Republic of Macedonia, gathered under the branches of his apple tree.

The political philosophy that marked the actions of President Boris Trajkovski, are those of an ethical and not ethnic vision of the history and future of the region. This political philosophy has been deeply rooted over several centuries in the dream and the design of Macedonia, making her a model for the future of the Balkans.

This Macedonia, symbolized by the home where he was born, would change the modern political currents of the Balkans. Why?

Boris Trajkovski, as one of the youngest Heads of State of Europe after the fall of the Berlin Wall, was received in various palaces, presidential or royal, such as the Elysée, the White House or Buckingham Palace, but he always carried in his heart the words from Psalm 51 of the Bible: “in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom” or in Macedonian: “Vnatre vo mene ti mi ja objavi tajnata premudrost tvoja”.

These words inspired him to welcome his hosts, various Heads of State on official visit in Macedonia, in the modest home where he was born in Strumica, where his father Kiro and his mother Gonca have always lived, as simple ploughmen. Some of these Presidents, present here today, were accommodated in this manner, that represents a new form of political action in the Balkans, that of the proximity of the heart! This type of political action is rooted in each Macedonian house, however humble it may be, where the Other has been welcomed over the centuries by an open heart!

When one mentions the name of Boris Trajkovski in South East Europe, or elsewhere in the world, an idea emerges: that only through inter- religious and inter-ethnic dialogue can the doors of hope open to see tomorrow’s world setting out on the way towards unity and to a civilization of peace and love, erasing - once and for all - off of the face of the Earth, violence, terror and massacres.

It for this reason, that I proposed to all leaders of the countries of South East Europe who have taken part in the Tirana Summit, to name a street in their respective capitals with the name of President Boris Trajkovski.

The destructive events that have occurred in the region demonstrate that the application of the principles of the Message from Ohrid and the final text to be adopted here in Tirana, are now more than ever necessary.

Dialogue, understanding, mutual respect and peace should not have other alternatives in the region. For this reason that the Republic of Macedonia and UNESCO decided to continue the process started in Ohrid. This time, the word will be given to young people, because in 2005, a regional Youth Forum on Dialogue among Civilizations will be organized in Ohrid. This Forum will take place each year in Ohrid, under the high patronage of the President of the Republic of Macedonia, Mr Branko Crvenkovski, will continue in its way, to recall the work and the political actions of President Boris Trajkovski.

Speaking of the younger generation, I would like to quote the great Albanian poet Migjeni, who, in his poem entitled “Ne, bijt e ?ekulit te ri” (We, the children of the new century), said: “We, the children of the Balkan people, with our modern conscience and ideas, it is up to us to change the life and the face of the Balkans...”

I am convinced that in history those who believe that the world will be saved by beauty will never die. President Boris Trajkovski is one of those who strongly believed in this idea. Allow me to thank UNESCO and its Director-General, to have paid homage during his life-time to his vision of a universal humanism, by inscribing the Regional Forum on the Dialogue among Civilizations and the Message from Ohrid in the documents of the General Conference and the Executive Board, and by raising his name and his work high on a pedestal, after his tragic disappearance, so that he can live on in the universal memory of the world.

Intra-civilisational Dialogue

Adam Seligman

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To a great extent it can be said that the 20th century Europe both began and ended in Sarajevo. The murder of Archduke Franz Ferdinand on June 28, 1914 and the outbreak of the First World War brought an end to a complacent belief in material progress and amelioratory politics that had characterized 19th century European civilization. Heir to Cartesian method and positivist science, the 19th century believed that rational thought, empirical investigations and a presuppositionless universality would provide sufficient bases for the correct organization of the social world. The First World War put an end to these assumptions.

What followed – communism, fascism, nazism, the anti-colonial and national struggles of the 20th century – were all, whatever else they were, forms of what Eric Voegelin termed, “modern gnosticism”: that is, movements focused around a divinized people, or elite (or class) who would usher in the *Endzeit*. Through correct knowledge of the true telos of history, modern Gnostic movements sought to realize salvation through their own actions in history. However, as Voegelin warned, “Self salvation through knowledge has its own magic and this magic is not harmless”.¹ Though the destruction unleashed by these secular messianisms was incalculable, many continued to believe in their emancipatory potential throughout the 20th century. The genocidal wars in the former Yugoslavia carried out in the midst of a largely silent Europe were the final act in the horrific dramas of the 20th century.

An end, it was also a beginning. The mass murder and ethnic cleansing of Europe’s major indigenous Moslem population, carried out in full view of the world, was to herald our contemporary reality of intransigent religious identities, the so called “clash of civilizations” and an increasing inarticulateness of all attempts at dialogue between different peoples, religions and world views.

In today’s world, when the citizens of Lodi in North Italy pour pig urine on a site designated for a mosque, when ethnic Tartars living in St.

Petersburg understand Islam to be an integral part of their ethnic identity, when the mainstream of Israeli political discourse has come to include the option of a “transfer” of its Palestinian citizens as a legitimate option, when synagogues are bombed in Paris as in Istanbul, when religion continues to provide the source of conflictual identities from the Sudan to the Gujarat State in India and from Bosnia to Britain, it is clear that we need to seriously rethink our understanding of the importance of the terms of identity, solidarity and our relations to one another in our different societies.²

For, rather than opening ourselves up to dialogue we are closing ourselves off from the other. Our present condition is not so much marked by a “clash of civilizations”, or even by the now oft remarked “clash within civilizations”, but rather a “clash of civilization” (in the singular). Civilization, in the sense of an organizing center of values, goals and structuring premises can only exist when it is open to its margins, to its limits and boundaries. When it turns in on itself and abandons its margins, it abandons itself. “Civility” for Samuel Johnson meant, “politeness, the rule of decency and freedom from barbarity”. “To civilize” was “to reclaim from savageness and brutality”. In many respects our own conditions would seem to be of an increase of savageness and of brutality. The barbarians may indeed be at the gates -but only in so far as the gates are closed.

To remain open to the other and so to our own margins is a tremendously difficult enterprise. It involves recognizing our own extremely limited apprehension of truth. It involves our admission that transcendent truth is, in its very transcendence, inaccessible to us. What must ensue from this realization is nothing less than a constitutive modesty in our epistemological assumptions. Truth can only develop in conversation, in dialogue - that is through engagement with what is beyond ourselves, beyond our boundaries. What we reclaim from savageness and barbarism is, in the final analysis, nothing less than ourselves.

Not surprisingly, this theme -of the transcendent nature of the one truth and the consequent plurality of truths accessible to mankind, and the tolerance of difference that must ensue - was the subject of a crucial set of lectures given by Karl Jaspers in the University of Groningen in 1935 and later published as *Reason and Existence*.

There he noted that since it was impossible for man to have transcendence as a knowable object, the highest demand of truthfulness was for each to act, according to his own truth - bearing in mind that this

was his own truth only, and only apparently incompatible with the truths of others.

Jaspers is making a claim for the plurality of truths accessible to humankind, for difference, indeed for the ontological necessity of difference arising from the contingent, mutable and immanent nature of our own understandings. He is demanding a stoicism in the face of uncertainty and calls on us to recognize the particular nature of our own truth claims while, at the same time, refusing to retreat into an easy relativism. He is in fact articulating a call to tolerance, predicated on a belief not in relativist truths, but in transcendent ones.

There is -he tells us -the sophistry of easy tolerance which wishes to be valid, but not to be really touched. On the other hand, there is the truth of tolerance that listens and gives and enters into the unpredictable process of communication by which force is restrained; in such a process, man reaches from his roots to the heights possible for him.³

Tolerance of difference, of the other who is different, is for Jaspers not based on either indifference or relativism, but rather on principled engagement with the other, on a process of dialogue and communication that is, itself, structured by the very recognition of the transcendent nature of truth. Tolerance is thus not the solution to all contradictions. It does not make a fractured universe whole – as would those modern Gnostics noted earlier – but it does preserve the integrity of self, of the other, and of their interaction. For without it, we are left with the eradication of difference that inheres to all attempts at overcoming multiplicity and plurality and which is, in the final analysis, but a succumbing to a form of narcissism, whether collective or individual. A mature discipline in face of the human condition is the best we can do if we are to avoid doing ill.

This is a voice we have heard often – if indeed, have continually failed to hearken to. It is the voice of Niebuhr. It is the voice of Martin Buber and of Emmanuel Levinas. It is the voice that calls on us to see God in our responsibilities before the other. It is the voice that admits infinite plentitude of the I-Thou, and of the obligations it entails.

This is the language of self-restraint, of the reigning in of desire in the face of the responsibility that desire entails. This is a language we are familiar with from the German philosopher Hermann Cohen, who, in the early decades of the 20th century, argued the centrality of monotheism to that process by which the stranger was turned into the fellowman. As he pointed out: “Humanity is already so rooted in the stranger, that the slave, as stranger, can be admonished to the bond of gratitude.”⁴

Gratitude demands restraint – a restraint that, at the end of the day, must rest on a form of humility in the face of transcendence. For without restraint there is no dialogue; without silence there is no language; and without tolerance there is no communal life. Common to all is a reigning in of desire, an ability to suffer desire frustrated, rather than a continual calibration of desire quantified. From Bernard de Mandeville, David Hume, Adam Smith and all of the modernist politics and social theorists we learn the capacity to bear frustrated desire as a compromise of interest realization (desire delayed). A calculus of delayed gratification is however of a very different nature than the bearing, or suffering, the carrying of unrealized desire that is at the core of tolerance and of its connection to transcendence.

Religion not only recognizes unrealized desire, but generalizes its understanding in different ways in different civilizations. It is therefore only in and through particular religions that a true tolerance and engagement with the other can be sought. It is neither indifference, nor relativism nor the tolerance of a balance of power between mutually absolute masters. Rather, it is a tolerance predicated on the particular work of restraint in the face of desire. Without this, tolerance becomes but a personal virtue or attribute, an indicator of purely personal pluralism or worldliness in matters of taste, art, cuisine, sexual mores, religion or olfactory stimulants.

What is defined away though such a process is the dynamic of any real, substantive tolerance, that is, of a tolerance of restraint and endurance – of the work of the slave, of the dialogue of suffering. This work can only exist, can only begin (indeed only makes sense), in a world where the existence of the other is recognized. This recognition is, by definition, done in the face of transcendence. Following in the tradition of Jaspers, Voegelin, Buber, Cohen, Levinas and others we are reminded that this is the language of tradition from which and only from which a true dialogue (rather than an exchange transaction) may be affected.

We can again quote Hermann Cohen on the very origins of ethics, where he notes, “The correlation of man and God is in the first place that of man, as fellowman to God.”⁵

The problem of the “fellowman” is the problem of tolerance. Here then is a very different basis for human validation, mutuality, respect and tolerance than we have come to expect in the modern world. For here is a basis of ethical action predicated not on any set of purely political rights that the human subject carries, rather on the very constitutive conditions of human existence in the world. This is an idea that exists among all the

monotheistic, axial traditions in whose image of a God Creator the human was formed. Whether we look to Koranic injunctions against coercion in matters of religion, or to Biblical decrees on justice for the stranger or yet to the Sermon on the Mount: all give expression to a shared and fundamental truth of human existence as correlative to God and Being. It is precisely this shared traditional appreciation of the problem of existence that makes translation, mutuality and, dialogue possible and so it is with these traditions that we must re-engage.

Notes

1. Eric Voegelin, *Modernity on Endless Trial*, University of Missouri Press, 2000, p.256.
2. On the Lodi incident, see *La Repubblica*, 15.10.2000, "Lodi, la lega alla guara santa". On Tartar identity, see *Vostochny ekspress* weekly from 17 May 2002. On Israeli discourse of transfer, see for example, *Ha'aretz* May 21 2002 quoting former Prime Minister Barak.
3. *Ibid*, p. 103
4. Hermann Cohen, *Religion of Reason: Out of the Sources of Judaism* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995) p. 120.
5. *Ibid*, p. 114.

Ethics of Communication among Neighbours

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In my paper prepared for the last conference in Ohrid, I discussed the essence of contemporary ethics as well as how they could improve relations among people with a view to building a better world. In this context, I presented the new substantial ethical values: non-violence, peace, understanding, dialogue, tolerance, and the universal ethics. In the paper for the present Tirana meeting, I intend to expose the cognition of the ethical value of the neighbourhood and the principles underlying relations between neighbours, as well as the most important issue among them - communication.

Recently, we have learned to look on the “Other” with open eyes and an open heart. In that the existentialists have helped us very much and also the philosophers, who defended the Ethics as a first philosophy, like Emmanuel Levinas. Wherever the human being goes, he/she will meet people. The human being lives amidst people, surrounded by people, with people. Among these numerous relations in life, some of the others are members of the family, some are relatives, some are friends, or parent’s friends or children’s friends or really close friends of your own. Some of them are my school pals, some are colleagues from work; some of them are linked to diverse attempts and acts of mine. He (the human being) obtains or uses some of my services, in the same way as I am seeking help for something that he knows. Some people are nationals, civilians from the same place or from the same region, but with all of them he shares the same destiny. The human being will meet some people shortly, on some occasion or in passage, but also with them he talks and may have pleasant moments.

All the people that the human being knows constitute his ample wealth, which is a treasure for his life. The human being cannot count all the people he has met or with whom he has had close relationships during his lifetime, with whom he has collaborated and with whom he has spent

at least a brief moment. Some of them are more important for our life and acts, some less so. Some of them are very close even if most of the time they are not members of our family, neither relatives nor friends in a classical sense, nor relations with whom we engage in business. But still, they are nearer to us than the others. These people are our neighbours.

The phenomenology of the neighbourhood is extraordinarily interesting for cognition. There is a special quality of the Other as a Neighbour, which results in a closeness among people and a special relationship between them, which is typical for people who are constantly together, knowing each other and communicating in different ways. This includes the existence of the neighbours, with whom one shares the same problems and pains. The relationship is a good example of the fact that people cannot live alone and that the nearest in space becomes the “nearest in heart”.

Neighbourhood is important for the human being. We are not alone in the world and the neighbours are the closest to us. They are part of our life in the same space and in the same time. Our houses are close to each other, they are touching each other, in much the same way as our lives do. Special relationships grow between neighbours; connections that are very important for their lives and for their families. The neighbourhood helps us to build up other important relationships in our connections with people. It shows how people with different roots and with different levels of wealth, with different professions and interests, people from all generations and with different views, can become close to each other. The differences do not prevent people from knowing each other and getting close, from associating with each other and living in unison.

The neighbour has a special meaning for everybody. All relations and friendships have their own rationale and their own course, their own way of communicating. It is the same with the neighbourhood. Maybe the neighbours did not know each other very well, or not at all, before living close to each other. When they become neighbours they get closer to each other. It is important for them to stay close when they live in the same area. From the closeness in a living space emerges the closeness among neighbours and the development of special relationships, which are typical for people who are constantly together, knowing each other, communicating in different ways, counting on each other, supporting each other.

Communication in a neighbourhood is particularly characteristic because of its own ethical dimension. It has special ethical values, aims and

standards, which are affected by the essence and meaning of the neighbourhood as a social and anthropological relation. The permanence, closeness and confidence of the communication among neighbours form a model of how people can find a way for developing good relationships and behaviours.

The neighbourhood is a relationship, which must be cultivated. It requires sensibility for the “Other”, for the neighbour; it requires respect and understanding. The life in a neighbourhood inspires empathy (with special incidents and with the joy and suffering of the neighbour). It provides the human being with a consciousness of his existence as one being surrounded by others. It includes carefulness in his behaviour so that the others will not be hurt. Today in large societies where men often feel alone, the neighbourhood is one of the psychological and moral support areas for obtaining indispensable communication. It is a source of security which provides you with the feeling that that you might obtain assistance from your neighbour.

Therefore, when we speak about neighbourhood, we speak about an ethical phenomenon with special ethical values, aims and standards. My father has taught me: The neighbour is nearer than the relative! This is a vital principle in the Balkan region. The idea is that if there are problems the neighbours will help you first. If you have to be rescued the neighbours will do it. It is a fact, because the neighbours are always together and they naturally support each other.

Neighbourhood is a kind of relationship that must be extended as an idea of understanding among all people in the world. As Martin Luther King pointed out, the new human principles of tolerance and understanding must become a component of the universal ethics of humanity. In much the same way, the ethics of neighbourhood must also be extended to become a principle for a global living together of all people. Today, communication is very fast and human space extends much beyond the valley in which he/she was born.

Of course, we all have relationships with people from different countries and different professions, but the idea of global neighbourhood is still wider. It seeks to support the mutual understanding of all people in the world. The wholeness of the world is the new reality. It must become an ethical framework for all people, based on universal trust, confidence, humanity and creative morality. From the communication among neighbours - their type of relationships, their dialogue and their mutual help - must emerge components of a common human living together.

Education, Intercultural dialogue and the Development of Democratic Attitudes: The Reality and Perspectives from South-East Europe

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Albanian, Rumanian and Bulgarian students work in a pizzeria in Turin – they are connected by the endeavour to work in no matter what conditions in order to survive and to finance their studies despite their poverty, by the desire to become successful and to be incorporated into this world. At the same time, they are very different and spiritually far from one another; this is not a joint effort but a situation in which they meet occasionally because of the need to earn a living and not because they wish to be together. The pizzeria constitutes a small Balkan community of educational actors – in an environment far away from education – who discover their similar fates in conditions of competition and hostility, but who also use this environment as a step towards a future, which will be different for all of them.

If we leave aside the metaphor of different educational human destinies, let us try to find an answer to the following questions: does a coordinated educational policy provide better chances for development and cooperation in the South-East European region? Does contemporary education influence the building of cooperation models based on dialogue, mutual understanding and the creation of common spaces in the process of democratization? What is the educational situation in the region today in light of the European integration processes, globalization and the advanced incorporation of countries into democratic norms and order?

Interstate cooperation is not sufficient at a moment when the need for coordinated educational policies is the biggest in the region's history. The former socialist educational model was universal at first sight, but also

resulted in very similar social structures and practices, performed in closed communities and consequently not suitable for effective cooperation. Today, affiliation to the European democratic educational space (this is a very conditional term, indeed) takes the form of internalizing and copying of western models of policies and educational approaches, of one-sided connection with donors and countries from the European Union, of competition for access to resources. It does not necessarily lead to a unification of efforts for the joint management of resources.

Despite the similarity of educational problems and challenges (the political elites solve problems of modernization and change by themselves), the lack of political cooperation in education is obvious and civic cooperation - even though it focuses on future processes - is insufficient due to the undeveloped state of civic national societies and their lack of resources. External support for educational change still follows national borders too much - despite attempts like the Stability Pact, EU and UNESCO programmes, as well as private initiatives like the George Soros's network of mainly educational/political structures - to support common processes and joint interaction in education. The combination of social ignorance and populism, inherited from the communist years and increased during the years of change is not a sound foundation for cooperation. The social and cultural context of educational developments in the region - coexistence and tradition, modernity and post-modernity - is quite ambivalent when measured against the need for interaction.

The same applies to the accomplishment of educational tasks and developments, which are so multifaceted that it is difficult to coordinate them within the national societies with the result that the entire social energy is engulfed by them. The transformation of totalitarian societies cannot internalize the ideas about cooperation in domestic and international domains so quickly. The black and white vision of the world inherited from communism, the emerging market economy and the growing social differentiation within the countries, consolidate the conflict model of perceiving and building a new reality, and such a model is destructive for areas like education. Due to the lack of contacts, knowledge as well as tradition, this obsolete model of knowledge and action is transmitted to the image of the neighbour. "He is a rival and thus we cannot make plans together, especially not in education where we are so different due to history, language, culture, and we are equal in our poverty and in the desire to attract resources from one and the same country".

Educational public figures are so immersed in the events that they neither have the perspective nor the ability to analyze and understand the things that happen in the neighbouring educational systems, and therefore cannot share their experience or introduce good practices and policies elaborated on the other side of the border. This is a paradox for a region – which was for centuries a cultural epigone - in which the educational developments during communism a hundred years ago and now are strikingly similar. Social differentiation, which hampers the formation of a coherent national education policy, is accompanied by a differentiation in the ways of moving the national educational systems towards a democratic model and this truly undermines the idea and possibilities of cooperation.

The transition to democracy in education is a process of mastering different ways of articulating educational interests, for their incorporation into a Social Educational Contract. This task is not accomplished at the national level in any of the societies in the region, which in fact diminishes the chances for formulating and signing such a Regional Contract. The political elites are also not ready for such an action and are still ignorant in terms of the perspectives which it might open up for, and the civil society is not strong enough in order to articulate and impose such model of cooperation as an educational priority.

Ruined old educational systems and the relative failure to build an active democratic model arouse and provide indicative social types of defense reactions such as: concentration on the past, idealization of a former educational reality, support to and “enrichment” of hidden totalitarian educational programmes. These contain elements like “national uniqueness”; the myth of the good old education based on order, security and predictability; mistrust and even contempt towards freedom and participation in education and towards the power of emotions, spontaneity, creativity; fear of religion, disbelief in educational potential and fear of the possibilities of public interference in education. These types of protection hamper the development of mutual interests and the coordination of efforts, and everybody hopes only to win or obtain the highest price for a separate movement on their own path towards democracy in education. Teachers and educational figures, closed in their battle for accomplishing material interests and restricted by the isolation of the school system, actually reproduce these categories on a mass scale while taking the isolation for granted.

Western Europe is an objective and the “European Project” is a norm. Therefore the neighbouring educational reality is experienced as unfamiliar and exotic which does not motivate anybody to envisage a

similar destiny. It is a common opinion that nationalism is one of the main reactions in post-communist societies. The nature of nationalism is to respect the power of the past and look into unaccomplished plans and missed historical moments, in the resurrection of past enmities and oppositions. Nationalism is the denial of differences or the assertion of one's own difference within one's own territory. Overcoming nationalism is not only dealing with its negative aspects; the question is how to use the energy, the attitudes it possesses and fosters, the power of traditions connected to it with a view to starting an international dialogue. It is about how to connect the idea of national identity to the establishment of democratic order; how to keep this identity during periods of transition and uncertainty and how to build a European identity based on its positive elements.

Education in transition

Education during transition is a contradictory process. On one hand, the influence of traditional institutions of socialization like the family and the school (not to mention the church, army and political system) is decreasing, and influence from mass communication, the entertainment industry, and the business world, i.e. the uncontrollable and non-pedagogical institutions of socialization is increasing. In fact, in our societies - with the disintegrating traditional institutions and the still distant European dimension - one can talk about a dangerous and threatening process of independent and consequently random socialization, which is regardless of the control and desires of society. At the same time, education in a period of transition is the democratization of educational system, the consolidation of the very idea of education. The most important aspect of this is that the personalities of young people and the opportunities for personal development are at the core of educational efforts. The aim of the system is the building of a personal project for development and the realization of certain related social skills and attitudes. Consequently the educational process is directed towards the future, towards knowing and envisaging the surrounding world, preparing for life in transition and developing the necessary collective skills for cooperation and dialogue.

Democratization in education means respecting the interests of all main educational actors, the development of their subjectivity, and the creation of conditions for their self-governance. The other side of this process is the generation of cooperation and interaction processes, the aim

of which it is to work out and ratify a Social Educational Contract. This process actually means building new relationships between educational actors, rejecting the model of a one-sided imposition of development schemes by the political power, strengthening the processes of negotiation, cooperating and looking for mutual interests and benefits. In a society undergoing change, to focus on past divisions is an unproductive policy not only for individuals but also for the group or for the entire population. Life in transition suggests exploration and understanding of the future, development of strategies and cooperative interactions (in the family, at work, within the community, at the national and international levels). In other words, every actor in education should be looking for his/her place in a consensus model, which accepts existing differences. And more than that: education is the sphere where the consensus model is very easy to achieve. Education is the area, which sets an example of cooperation and dialogue for other areas in social life.

Knowledge has always been the foundation of education, but for the first time it is turning into a main resource of society. It is also an unlimited resource unlike land, wealth, capital. In other words, knowledge is an objective basis for interaction, cooperation, and for achieving common benefits. Knowledge does not possess any dividing power and cannot oppose people and communities like in a society organized around wealth, land, capital and related ideologies. Moreover, the acquired knowledge in education is not only an individual set of rules for socialization and survival, but is experienced, shared, and practically oriented towards concrete skills and attitudes to the world, including other learners. The nature of the new knowledge and learning requires interaction, togetherness and a foundation of new human relations.

Democratic education is based on the establishment of a value system for personal development, which is characterized by an aspiration for the good and by cooperation and justice in the sense of equal opportunity and distributive justice. The other side of the learning process - i.e. of socialization and personal development from a value perspective - is its connection to public democratic conditions of peace, co-existence, and cooperation. The aim of this education is the peaceful citizen, a member of his own community and of the world, who builds relationships with others on the basis of understanding, good will and non-violence. In this respect, education is also an opening, a way of getting to know things, a dialogue, and an interaction. It brings people together (where religion and ethos are secondary, non-defying marks), overcomes borders, and directs attention to the learning person, the

community and to the universal dimensions of existence in an interdependent world.

Such opening of education towards personal development and towards the world is essential for the East-European communities where people were previously atomized, separated from one another, living in a parallel fashion. Communities were subordinated to a common political centre (Moscow, Belgrade) and did not have their own independent ideas and plans for the development and consolidation of their true nature. Education can create or consolidate common values, not only because it socializes mainly young people, but because it is the only systematic process of socialization. Economics by no means brings societies in the region together because of its many layers of stereotypes, the battle for limited resources, and the search for profit at the expense of the other side. Politics, despite the European democratic phraseology, is an heir of the past; it serves populism and does not always clearly define future societal opportunities and options for development.

Basically, education is the only opportunity for a structured consolidation of the democratic idea and order, for dialogue, and for enhanced understanding between different ethnic groups and religions. Education based on the written and spoken word leads to dominance of the present in the learning process. In this respect, a key contradiction in contemporary education is the fact that it has to transfer social knowledge and provide examples but it can no longer use its past authority to do this. Young people live in the present. The world shown in images and accepted by them is a world which is developing, one with more shared features unlike the world of the past. It is a world of joint experience and awareness. Through images young people immerse into society with its problems and questions and this is a new condition for togetherness and possible cooperation. The past loses its power of attraction and all the hatred from yesterday appears more unreal than made-up film stories. Of course, other things do persist - the possibility of manipulation, of moving away from the world and its problems, of entering the fictive asocial world of pleasures, but even so it is now much more difficult to influence young people with dividing ideologies and religions of the past. Their image of the world is mainly a global message of the present.

The other big change in contemporary education is the idea of "lifelong learning". Education in this sense does not try to impose, over time, simple and final truths about the world, people, neighbours or modern technologies. The school prepares for a learning process, which will continue throughout life. In this case, the number of binding and

necessary dogmas decreases. Messages are much more open and applicable, and their universal character achieves more importance. The school, even in its most extended form, is not the final place for obtaining knowledge but a starting point where one sets out on a journey of permanent learning. The other side of the lifelong learning is that there is a possibility to avoid the perceived division between knowledgeable and non-knowledgeable (illiterate) people, between developed underdeveloped nations. Lifelong learning offers equal chances to everyone who takes this as a key idea and seeks to build a more homogenous society of knowledge and co-operation.

This also implies a transition from “hidden” towards open educational programmes of social actors. The new socializing paradigm in education has an open message – democratic, personally directed, transferring power and energy with which to face challenges. It proposes a program for cooperation and union among young people on the basis of acknowledged differences, of complementing each other, of mutual respect and the acceptance of differing views. A program based on cooperation and the potential of educational actors not only triggers social energy but also releases the development of the exhausted educational systems.

The collective learning model is another significant difference in contemporary education. Learning, which opens for the person next to you and takes place together with the same person, is learning in a group based on common experience and reflection. Group learning removes borders between young people; they get to know each other, become closer, trust and rely on each other, achieve results together and their personal projects move beyond the borders of community, of ethnic and religious divisions, of the national state. Computers create connections, which traditional education cannot realize – they help to overcome barriers and distance. Playing games collectively in computer clubs generates a growing number of connections and innovative ways of networking which is popular around the world, as it opens up new possibilities for communication, exchange of opinions, understanding and joint action. The world of young people is global, intercultural, tolerant, relying on the religious sphere when looking for something transcendental. This life is shared through music, pleasure, overcoming distances through information, life in a net. It is also a world of globality, energy, mobility; a place where authorities, traditions and barriers are not taken into consideration.

Finally, the role of the teacher and the world of the educator are changing at present. They are removed from the pedestal and prevented from being ideologists, who set limits, and they are discovering new horizons of knowledge. They are no longer absolute role models re-

creating their own social and personal illiteracy, narrow-mindedness, devotion to “still knowledge”, order, the division of the world, including distrust of the unknown, of sensuality, spontaneity, people’s inner world, the global processes, of religion as a mystery and of personal freedom. Today, the teacher is above all a symbolic image of a liberating member of society, of a liberating citizen, and this freedom, humanity and tolerance is what the educator really needs in the contemporary school reality. In this sense she/he can serve as a model in societies, which are still far from accomplishing the democratic ideas. These educational conditions are also necessary to consolidate the idea of intercultural and inter-ethnic dialogue – a dialogue between generations, young people from different communities, groups, societies and countries. If educational systems do not manage to create conditions for this dialogue, the roads to global communication and universality will be defined by the media and the entertainment industry and also by permanent resistance and institutional violence.

European integration

The development of the region of South-East Europe and consequently of the key democratic values and principles cannot be understood without the idea of an integrated Europe. According to the official ideology, Europe is a model, and ideal type, but also a democratic, economic, and social practice. Usually people from the region view it more as a successful and rich society and less as a democratic one. Whatever way, Europe is a role model, a direction for development, a community evoking approval and envy. The attractive power of the European idea is also in its proved practicality, although its accomplishment will imply not only an economic but also a social revolution of values for East-European society. To some extent, like America in the past, Europe is a practical goal. Moreover, for the countries in the region, Europe is a development model without any alternative, which in fact deprives the democratic ideal of its necessary dose of romanticism and turns it into something more prosaic.

It is important for us East Europeans that the European idea in its different aspects legitimizes the new educational paradigm and as such becomes part of the educational normative framework. Democratic values and principles are formulated as educational aims even though they are still part of a really conservative and anti-European educational reality. Once asserted, these values develop normatively and little by little begin to

change educational practices and to create a resource base - in the face of the teachers, parents and students who practice them.

The role of civil society

Despite the devastating religious and ethnic collisions during the last decade, the Balkans remain a place where religion and different ethnic groups have existed together for centuries, even if this coexistence did not help consolidate and diffuse tolerance (something really difficult given the lack of State organization and freedom of expression during the centuries of Ottoman rule). Respect for ethnic and religious diversity, the building of simply human relationships among ethnic groups in times of weak state organization and aggressive industrialization, a morality closely related to religion – these are positive features inherited from the past, and not yet exhausted. One could also add the tendency, typical for small communities and nations, to watch things happen with open eyes, to borrow and consolidate ideas, to strive for a more developed society, and to eliminate mistrust of the new.

Today this motivation and cognitive interest is stronger than ever – for the first time the nations of the region face the opportunity to join the European family almost at the same time. In this context, the role of civil society is extremely important for the dialogue between different ethnic groups and religions. Above all, dialogue lies in the heart of civil society. It is the union of people in a search for satisfying noble human needs such as belonging, mutual support, personal development, etc. In order to function well, civil society requires cooperation, trust, understanding, the abandonment of narrow personal interests, the transcendence of borders. The most dynamic, informed and educated people are normally involved in civic organizations and they exemplify a particular social thinking of tolerance and providers of support. As a large number of the civil society projects receive assistance from abroad – from West Europe and USA – they intentionally consolidate values like cooperation, dialogue and tolerance, which become real in the smaller communities in which the projects are carried out.

In the beginning of the 1990s, civil society projects were realized by both local and external organizations, and a dialogue of cooperation was achieved with other cultures, other ways of behaviour and other decision-making processes. Through such projects, the most dynamic and open aspect of Balkan society started making connections and cooperating and in this way created a new model within a traditionally closed, divided (and

even hostile) setting. The strong link between civil society and the media gave publicity to these efforts and made the models even more significant. As part of the members of civil organizations belonged to the younger generation (ecologists, teachers, etc.), they played a doubly useful role for the intercultural dialogue – by being both public and civil figures, and at the same time parents or future parents nourishing new attitudes among their children.

Representatives of civil society form the most dynamic potential in terms of their mobility and their ability to speak foreign languages, learn from others, grow up with the projects and gain new democratic social experience. The development of civil society creates the critical mass of people needed for accomplishing the dialogue and for supporting the political will to develop the dialogue. Today, the civil society increasingly experiences its power and finds its place without depending on other models and perspectives, thus starting to create a Balkan community of agreement.

Dialogue and education

What are the grounds for cooperation and dialogue in and through education? In the first place, it is the similarity in historical fate and educational reality. The problems faced by the educational systems in the region are the same: educational actors operate at a similar level of development, the educational tasks of building a democratic identity and developing a system of educational standards are the same; the integration of minorities follows similar procedures, young people are on the same footing and face equal chances and difficulties, the qualification and refreshment of the educational staff is also similar as is the decentralization of the management system in forming a coalition for educational problems.

Along with the development of democratic educational systems also grow the possibilities for mutual understanding and the development of joint activities. They already have a common educational language, common standards, a common language of the accomplished changes and a common social language – the language of democracy. When leaders, teachers and young people learn to speak English, it creates a formal basis for interaction between educational systems and their participants. At first sight, the decentralization of systems creates fewer possibilities for dialogue because the self-governing units (municipalities, schools) look for enriching partnerships and opportunities for interaction with educational systems different from their own. However, decentralization is also a

possibility for developing a trans-border and/or regional dialogue when solving problems of a similar nature. In this context, the relatively low financial cost of cooperation among neighbors is crucial when the ideological and physical restrictions cease to exist. The specific government policies, the undertaken international agreements, the integration and encouraging interaction of interstate organizations and international civil organizations also deserve mentioning.

The factors impeding the intercultural dialogue and its consolidation in education are equally strong. Each country in transition tries to connect the accelerated democratic development with the development of national identity. This is a natural process for societies which have been artificially internationalized during communism to the extent of denying their own special features and priorities. Stressing the development of national identity is an all-embracing process, which includes attempts to differentiate oneself from the neighbours, who are in a similar one-sided search for approval, appreciation and interaction with the richer, more developed societies. The official explanation is that societies try to achieve higher standards and that their neighbours have nothing to offer when it comes to democracy or resources – such questions can be sorted out independently within national societies. Despite the rapid advance of English, the obstacles for mass communication are in many cases linked to language.

The poverty of civil society leads to competitiveness and battles for limited resources in the region and this usually takes place along national divisions. The educational actors in the region, mainly the teachers, are materially weak and too restricted in terms of resources to cooperate and interact effectively with the civil society. For the parents who see what their children can realize outside the region, this type of cooperation is not a priority. Children are the most dynamic educational actors but they are too dependent when choosing partners and cannot impose a specific agenda of cooperation. Thus we are sent back to the paradox that in order to consolidate and develop cooperation and dialogue in education in the Balkans, it is necessary to obtain directions from the political elite. This described cooperation and dialogue should become a priority and the necessary resources should be provided to implement it.

Intercultural education

The consolidation of dialogue is a very important characteristic of contemporary education. Without dialogue among actors at school - educators and students, parents and teachers - there will not be an effective

dialogue in society. It is extremely important to introduce interactive learning methods, based on the new concept of communication, group activities, interaction, and new attitudes towards learning and knowledge. Interactive methods mean communicating daily at school, solving educational problems together, developing educational projects (group or individual) while obtaining respect for these from “outsiders”. Secondly, the dialogue depends on the implementation of civic education – which is education for democratic citizenship. This is new and not connected with the past educational space. It represents a new interactive model for socialization of young people, in accordance with their modernized attitudes. Civic education is a model for practical actions for building reality and constructing one’s own world; a model of joint internalization of democratic values. Civil society is also a model for opening up education to the community, the larger world and consequently to the problems of the region, of the neighbour, to be explored as an interconnected whole, a model of joint openness towards democratic values.

Another key area is intercultural education, the introduction of dialogue with others from the early childhood onwards. Intercultural education is to accept the idea of dialogue in everyday life and in key moments of life. It implies exclusion of aggression, violence and domination as determinant relations between people. Tolerance and understanding of the other provide solutions in the new conditions of competitiveness in a socially and resourcefully poor environment, putting an end to the vicious circle of poverty, prejudice, desire for revenge, violence. There are important areas, which not only constitute a common concern, but are a chance for joint action: peace education; ecological education; health education; education for sustainable development. We ought to look at the traditional humanitarian areas in a new way - at geography and its potential to present the world as a whole with the richness of interconnections between its different parts; at literature which leads to an understanding of spiritual and sensual wholeness of the world; at history in its modern sense as the history of joint actions, of common fate and suffering, a history of everyday life, of European life, of expressing Human Rights, of the development of personality and dignity; a history of common ideas and common people.

The way forward

Intercultural dialogue has to become a priority of state policy in education and national strategies for its accomplishment should be

developed. In a structural sense, such strategies can be united around the integration of minorities within national societies. Integration within national societies will raise the question about regional borders for solving the problems of some minorities – the Roma people in the first place, but also all other minorities from neighboring countries. This would be a natural beginning of the process of interaction between educational systems. National standards for intercultural cooperation at different levels of schooling should be developed. We should not remain at the general level where the fight against discrimination and racism is marked.

Introducing “Education for Democratic Citizenship” (Intercultural Education, Peace Education, Education for Human Rights) as a main part of national educational standards should be a foundation without which the other educational developments would be incomplete and unaccomplished. “Religious Education” should also find its place in the school curriculum. When children obtain basic knowledge about the major religions they also learn more about local cultures. Moreover, every school should formulate its own policy for overcoming differences, for tolerance, for the rights of educational actors, for order and safety. Intercultural dialogue should be included mostly in extra-school activities, where different projects will help to shape and develop attitudes and models of intercultural behavior and tolerance. The opportunities for young people to step out of their own community will thus increase, as intercultural dialogue transforms interpersonal relations and leads to the exploration of institutions, of different areas of life.

Another important educational development lies in the European dimension and is connected to the joining of countries in the European Union. This provides opportunities for obtaining knowledge about democratic principles, for getting to know and accept intercultural differences, for exploring inner differences from a common European perspective and point of view. The idea and exploration of good neighborly relations, of interstate and international dialogue from a European perspective is also a key educational activity. This dialogue cannot start by itself; it has to be planned in such a way that it joins the efforts of the formal educational systems and civil societies and fits in with the common interaction frame for securing the resources. Like the initiatives of the United Nations, every year could have a motto for the countries from the region – the year of minorities, of tolerance, of young people’s rights, of border regions, of citizens living along the big rivers.

An informational basis for cooperation among young people also needs to be provided along with educational TV programmes and specific computer games. In a fragmented, hostile reality the common engaging initiatives have the most promising future – regular meetings of ministers, regional educational dialogues, meetings of educational actors, Olympic games for the youth, development of model schools for Balkan culture. Another important potential lies in the provision of sufficient resources for project activities for young people – for trans-border projects, creation of educational networks, training of young leaders. The major principle should be to view European integration as a possibility for development of common educational relations.

These developments cannot be expected to take place spontaneously within the frame of the European integration policy. Efforts should be directed at the more problematic areas where interaction and good dialogue are most needed. The new liberal approach to diminish the role of the state and over-relying on the economic aspects of education should be abandoned. The processes of learning, integrating, overcoming isolation; of dialogue and understanding need clear support. The model of European unity also suggests the existence of a model for regional cooperation and especially of regional educational cooperation. It is not business but a widely recognized contemporary education which will cross borders, bring people and societies together, and create a natural basis for mutual understanding and dialogue. Dialogue is the responsibility of politicians, businessmen, and media figures, but in every day life its foundation is laid by thousands of pedagogues, by support from parents and by the enlightened participation of self-governed young people.



Leaders from South-East Europe at the inauguration of the Mother Teresa Monument

REPORT ON A WORKING GROUP ON:

South-East Europe in the Global Context - Globalization and South-East European Societies: Challenges and Dilemmas

Moderator - Horst G dicke,

Chairman, UNESCO Working Group on South-East Europe

The moderator introduces the panelists and sets the stage for the discussions by pointing out that space is an essential feature of globalization, and that “challenges and dilemmas” are basically concerned with the future and the past, i.e. with the time factor. He links the question of space to the notion of fragmentation and its meaning in the Balkans, underlining that globalization implies a contrary move, i.e. directed towards establishing larger units in terms of communication and exchange.

In the presentations by the panelists, the following issues are highlighted:

1. Globalization is a two-edged sword, carrying with it both threats and promises and having both hardware and software dimensions. There is a need for an educational dialogue promoting common human goals. A new planetary unity must be based on norms of international law and decisions by the UN, which should be applied in a non-selective way.

2. Dialogue should be comprehensive by encompassing political, military, diplomatic and economic dimensions. Globalization should be seen in an ethical framework in the service of Man - the ultimate target of all human endeavours. It must take into account historical developments, respect human rights and protect cultural diversity.

3. As an economic issue, globalization calls for South-Eastern Europe to strengthen its regional mechanisms, within which specific regional interests can be articulated. In order to strengthen their position, SEE countries need to step up economic reforms, legal security, and reduce the phenomenon of brain drain.

4. Security should be considered within a wide framework, not only in the context of terrorism, conflicts and wars, but also in a socio-economic perspective, including aspects relating to environmental degradation, hunger, disease, extreme poverty and violation of human rights.

5. Certain conditions can cause failure of dialogue. Secular nationalism and even liberalism sometimes tend to "divinize" political and social frameworks. This often represents an obstacle to genuine dialogue. Rational forces and efforts against radical and fundamentalist movements need to be encouraged by all concerned.

6. It is therefore imperative to learn from the lessons of the past, when religions were abused for political objectives. Secular politics does not require a religious component. Still, Western Europe should make greater efforts to understand the situation of e.g. Muslims in South-East Europe, respect their values and consider them an integral part of European history and of its cultural diversity.

In the ensuing interventions from the audience a tribute is paid to late President Boris Trajkovski and his outstanding commitment to the pursuit of dialogue among cultures and civilizations in the region. A proposal is made to ensure that the principles of the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity be defended and adequately advocated within the fora of the World Trade Organization when dealing with trade in cultural goods.

The countries of South-East Europe should pursue thinking in terms not of divisions and fragmentation, but of inclusion as a basic principle underpinning all efforts towards European integration. When jumping on the European train, which is one aspect of globalization, certain national prerogatives have to be abandoned, barriers and borders have to be pulled down, and market regulations have to be undone. Opening doors and windows will allow external energies to enter and internal resources to reach other regions, thereby enriching them in every aspect.

Report on a Working Group On:

The contributions of inter-religious, inter-ethnic dialogue in South-East Europe

Moderator - Harriet Hetnges,

United States Institute for Peace

Despite the late hour, a rich and fruitful discussion was accomplished on such a challenging and diverse topic as the “contributions of inter-religious, inter-ethnic dialogue in the South-East Europe region”.

Members of the Panel heard that while the Balkans provides for the fertile soil of conflicts, it ought also be considered as a healing place between peoples.

It was noted that the greatest causes of conflicts in the region have been based on artificial frontiers, and that the only solution for South-East Europe was greater integration into the European fold, thereby diminishing the importance of these imposed boundaries.

It was also posited that “diapraxis” – or the practical reality of living and working together –with the inclusiveness of smaller religions could lead to increased tolerance and peace, not only in the region, but throughout the world through greater understanding of minority groups.

The intention is towards public tolerance of all leading to greater dialogue and understanding of the Other.

One speaker highlighted the difference between two differing perspectives for freedom: the Freedom to Will and the Freedom to Experience, inferring that the concept of imposing the will of the strong over the submission of the weak can no longer hold true. Freedom to Experience, however, is much more liberating in allowing the individual to live and learn through experiencing life rather than being subjected to it:

It was pleaded that Albania should exemplify the life of the late Grand Mufti of Albania. Just as it honours the life and work of its famous sister, Mother Theresa, Albania could recognize and support the promotion of the life and work of Sabri Codo highlighting to the world and example of the good that Muslims can do.

It was also suggested that if the world is to rid itself of terrorist threats, it must be understood that religion is not the only fuel for nationalism and fundamentalism.

One panelist also mentioned that the values of justice, clarity, self-criticism, repentance, forgiveness, foresight and vision were key elements to bring about the resolution of conflict and conciliation. It was suggested that we are all inhabitants of this blue planet and that while our collective views may differ – and in some instances, differ widely – it is only through the sharing and mingling of these differing perspectives that we can come to any understanding of the self within the group.

Finally, the Panel was given an overview of the Opatija Declaration which encourages “discovery of the Other”, detailing the Council of Europe’s goal for the past 50 years on this subject. The following aspects of the declaration were highlighted, followed by specific examples:

Apart from its content, the “Declaration on Intercultural Dialogue and Conflict-prevention”, reflects the determination of all the Culture Ministers to discharge their new responsibilities in this area fully. Governments everywhere must become aware of the important part which cultural policy can play in preventing conflicts. This was the point made by the Ministers, who see the Council of Europe as the ideal forum for that purpose. They emphasise that the Council is the only international structure with the capacity to co-ordinate these efforts today, and hope that it will develop its partnership with all those active in culture even further.

It was noted that, a preventive mechanism function in areas of tension, intercultural dialogue helps to encourage understanding and “discovery of the Other”: “learning diversity” by opening people’s eyes to

the world outside, thereby implying new ways of seeing. Thus, respect for cultural diversity, and the protection of material and intangible heritage must be accorded through greater synergy between Governments, governmental institutions, the private sector and civil society.

The panel successfully concluded its debate with a fulfilling period of exchanges between participants and panelists for which, I should like to thank each member.

Background paper

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I. Background

1. As part of the follow-up to the High-Level Conference on Strengthening Co-operation in South-East Europe, held at UNESCO Headquarters on 4-5 April 2002¹, and the Regional Forum on Dialogue among Civilizations, held in Ohrid, 29 and 30 August 2003², the President of the Republic of Albania, H.E. Mr Alfred Moisiu, and the Director-General of UNESCO, agreed to co-organize in December 2004 a regional summit meeting in Tirana on “The Development of Inter-Ethnic and Inter-religious Dialogue as an Important Factor for the Stability and Progress of the Balkans”.
2. The contribution of a dialogue among cultures and civilizations to stability and progress in the South-East European region was spelled out in key passages of the “Message from Ohrid” adopted at the Ohrid Regional Forum on Dialogue among Civilizations. In particular it stated that “Mutual respect of traditions and people will be possible when the matrix of values and the underlying spiritual and ethical foundations can influence education systems in different societies”. For its part, UNESCO is committed to pursuing this objective and translating it into concrete projects and activities.

3. The Tirana Summit will focus on the contribution of religion and multi-ethnicity to the dialogue among civilizations and cultures. Refuting the Huntington vision of a “clash among civilizations”, it will seek to examine and assess how religion and multi-ethnicity can constructively contribute through dialogue in the areas of UNESCO’s expertise – education, culture, the sciences and communication and information – to further stability and progress in the region. These discussions will draw on experiences and best practices as well as lessons learned in the South-East Europe region.
4. The Summit will address the following key topics and questions:
 - The South-East European experiences of inter-religious and inter-ethnic relations;
 - The need to raise public awareness of the positive impact of ethnic and religious co-existence, understanding and harmony;
 - The promotion of inter-ethnic dialogue among the peoples in South-East Europe as a tool to further mutual understanding and to resolve existing problems;
 - Efforts to counter intolerance, discrimination and extremism which are destabilizing factors;
 - The positive contribution an open dialogue among civilizations can make to peace, security and stability in the region.
5. The concept of a “Dialogue among Civilizations” has assumed increasing importance in the face of new and multi-faceted threats to global peace and security. Attracting attention at the highest political levels throughout the world, the promotion of a dialogue among civilizations requires the charting of future avenues for international endeavors and engagements. UNESCO’s constitution calls explicitly for the promotion of dialogue and the Organization has been active in dialogue-related activities ever since the mid-1950’s. Coinciding with United Nations General Assembly resolution 56/6 of 21 November 2001 adopting the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations, UNESCO has intensified its own action in the area of dialogue. These efforts received further impetus through 31C/Resolution 39 by UNESCO’s General Conference on the fight against terrorism, adopted in November 2001. This resolution underlined the importance and the role of the dialogue among civilizations in this fight. A series of global, regional and sub-regional conferences ensued, as described below, which culminated in a new resolution (32C/47) by the General Conference on “New

Perspectives in UNESCO's activities pertaining to the Dialogue among Civilizations”.

6. This resolution stipulates that UNESCO shall in its action place emphasis on pursuing concrete activities in the following key areas: education, especially through the pursuit of the six Education for All (EFA) goals and efforts to promote quality education; the sciences and technology, including the role of traditional and local knowledge systems
cultural diversity in all its dimensions, including world heritage;
the media and information and communication technologies.
7. We live in a world in which demands for recognition and accommodation of different ethnicities, religions, languages and values have become an inseparable feature of the political landscape of the 21st century. UNESCO's 2000 World Culture Report observed that people everywhere are repositioning themselves in order to preserve part of their traditions, while at the same time engaging in cultural exchanges and redefining their relationships with their neighbors. In vastly different contexts and in different ways – from religious minorities in South-East Europe to indigenous people in Latin America to immigrants in Western Europe – people are mobilizing anew around old grievances along ethnic, religious, racial and cultural lines, demanding that their identities be acknowledged, appreciated and accommodated by wider society.
8. UNDP's 2004 Human Development Report argues that people want the freedom to practice their religion openly, to speak their language, to celebrate their cultural heritage without fear of ridicule or punishment or diminished opportunity. People want the freedom to participate in society without having to slip off their chosen cultural moorings. The world's nearly 200 countries contain some 5,000 ethnic groups. Hence, almost no country is entirely homogenous. In fact, almost two-thirds of the world's countries have a least one substantial minority – an ethnic or religious group that makes up some 10 % of the population.
9. Responding to these demands and expectations has become an urgent challenge for all countries. Indeed, greater recognition of identities will bring about greater cultural diversity in society, enriching people's lives. Struggles over cultural identity, if left unmanaged or managed poorly, can quickly become a source of instability within states and between them – and in so doing trigger conflicts that jeopardize peace and hinder development. The

- UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001) states in Article 2 that “Policies for the inclusion and participation of all citizens are guarantees of social cohesion. Thus defined, cultural pluralism gives policy expression to the reality of cultural diversity”.
10. Dialogue is at the core of such a vision. However; the challenge today is to move beyond general agreement about the value of, or the need for, dialogue, to concrete approaches and activities. New and complex challenges abound and demand innovative modalities, which allow for common reflection and commitments. Today, dialogue must become a tool to bolster peace and security and to advance sustainable development.

II. UNESCO - Intensifying the dialogue among cultures and civilizations

All civilizations celebrate the unity and diversity of humankind and are enriched and have evolved through dialogue with other civilizations...despite obstacles of tolerance and aggression, there has been constructive interaction throughout history among various civilizations...civilizational achievements constitute the collective heritage of humankind...³

11. UNESCO has striven to broaden the scope of the dialogue among civilizations and cultures by reviewing and assessing the concept and past approaches and organizing a series of international conferences in several parts of the world. Among these events were the International Ministerial Conference “Dialogue among Civilizations – The Quest for New Perspectives” held in New Delhi, 9-10 July 2003, the Regional Forum on Dialogue among Civilizations, held in Ohrid, 29-30 August 2003, the Colloquium on Dialogue among Cultures and Civilizations, Sana’a, Yemen, 10-11 February 2004, and the International Conference on “Eurasia in the 21st Century – Dialogue of Cultures or Conflict of Civilizations?” held in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, 10-11 June 2004, have contributed significantly to the sharpening and focusing of the conceptual framework underlying the dialogue and especially to defining practical and concrete activities in this area.
12. General Conference Resolution 32 C/47 “New Perspectives in UNESCO’s activities pertaining to the dialogue among civilizations

and cultures, including in particular follow-up to the New Delhi Ministerial Conference” set forth a clear direction for UNESCO’s future orientation and lead role in promoting dialogue among civilizations and cultures. It defined a framework for action in the Organization’s key areas of expertise and highlighted the need to hold regional and sub-regional events, as these will allow the identification of more concrete, better focused and relevant approaches and conclusions, beyond agreements on general frameworks and declarations.

13. Reinforcing this trend, UNESCO’s Executive Board held a thematic debate in October 2004 on “New Approaches and Concrete Actions in the Dialogue among Civilizations”. On this occasion, UNESCO’s role as a lead agency in this field was re-endorsed, and the importance of education, the involvement of youth and the role of women in dialogue-related activities were highlighted among the key avenues to be pursued in future initiatives.
14. The Tirana Summit will thus be the first occasion to advance and concretize a specific regional focus, while building on the political consensus reached and on a universally agreed framework of shared norms and values that must be at the core of dialogue-related activities.

III. Focus on Albania in the context of South-East Europe

15. Within the past decade, the countries of the South-East Europe region have suffered military, economic, and political crisis and conflicts and even war. Internal and external shocks impacted neighboring countries, for example, through influx of refugees, dislocations of ethnic groups, disruptions in transport and trade, and loss of investor. In the last few years, the region has made good progress across a broad front. Economic growth has resumed, institutions of the emerging democracies and market economies are being created and strengthened, regional trade links are being restored, private investment is slowly growing and the prospects for poverty reduction have improved. The ability of all countries to maintain macroeconomic stability and sustain reforms has been the foundation on which progress has been built. For all countries, the capacity and willingness to generate - and sustain - internal and external dialogue across a range of issues will be a major determinant for advancing further on the road to peace, democracy, stability and sustainable development.

16. As regards Albania, it ended 46 years of Communist rule and established a multiparty democracy. The country faced a difficult socio-economic and political transition to democracy and open markets, while struggling with a series of challenges; e.g. widespread social and political unrest, the bankruptcy of hundreds of thousands of families due to the collapse of the pyramid investment schemes (1997), and the influx of half a million refugees from Kosovo (1999).
17. International observers judged parliamentary elections in 2001 to be an important step toward democratic development, and the progress toward democratic reform enabled Albania to gain membership in the Organisation on Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Efforts to establish a market economy caused severe dislocations, but they also opened the road for Albania to obtain significant amounts of aid from developed countries.
18. These profound changes entailed a significant societal shake-up after 1991/2. It caused widespread unemployment, which has risen to 35 % among young people aged 15 to 24. This constitutes a source of discouragement, discontent and potential problems. About a quarter of the population migrated to cities in search of new livelihoods, breaking supportive family and community bonds and taxing fragile social services.
19. Albania has a population of 3.545 million⁴, distributed among essentially three confessions (Muslim, Orthodox and Catholic). Twenty percent of the populations left the country seeking employment opportunities abroad. The growth of an Albanian diaspora has implications for Albanian society, for regional inter-ethnic tolerance and for economic development.
20. The Albanian government is committed to implementing “The National Strategy for Socio-Economic Development” (November 2001), a poverty-reduction initiative based on the Millennium Development Goals, with a view to improving the lives of poor Albanians, especially children and women. Albania has also prepared its national strategy on the development of education, which was made public in mid-August 2004 as the basis for reforming the country’s educational system. An important part of the strategy for the period 2004-2015 is the process of decentralizing education. Moreover, a new system of curricula for elementary education is scheduled to be in place in 2008.
21. In cooperation with other national and international stakeholders, the Government is seeking also to develop a National ICT Strategy

that addresses issues such as bridging the digital divide, introducing e-government, e-education and e-commerce initiatives, and the continued development of telecommunications infrastructure.

IV. Possibilities for reinforcing the dialogue through education, culture, the sciences and communication and information

Education

22. The Delors report *Learning: The Treasure Within* (1996) spelled out that education can promote social cohesion if it strives to take the diversity of individuals and groups into consideration, while at the same time seeking to construct universally accepted philosophies and policies of education.
23. Dialogue can be reinforced through the pursuit of the six Education for All (EFA) goals and in particular through efforts aimed at promoting quality education at all levels focused on learning to live together. This does not merely encompass aspects of educational attainment, but particularly the qualitative aspects of teaching curricula and their content focusing on peace, universally shared values, human rights and civic education, democracy, tolerance, mutual understanding and multilingual education as well as the change of gender perceptions – all within the frame of promoting sustainable development. Promoting and securing gender equality at all levels of the education system will be an important overarching task. ICTs are more and more becoming an integral part of educational strategies, providing greater flexibility in learning situations, promoting increased interactivity and dialogue for learners and connectivity to people and learning resources.
24. The necessity to develop quality education is paramount. And educational institutions and materials are uniquely able to serve as a vehicle for peace, dialogue and intercultural understanding. A key modality for quality education is the improvement and revision of textbooks and teaching materials and the training of teachers. A revision of handbooks and teaching materials used in primary and secondary schools (public and private) will be an equally critical task so as to eradicate stereotypes and judgments leading to a demeaning of cultures and civilizations and related to gender roles.

25. At the secondary school level, the teaching of history and sociology of civilizations and religions should also be included in curricula. Revisions should also aim to provide impartial, dispassionate and comprehensive knowledge about cultures and civilizations, especially in conflict and post-conflict situations, and promote the necessary forums for research and dialogue among concerned specialists of relevant disciplinary backgrounds.
26. The creation of exchange programmes and twinning arrangements among universities, and the promotion of virtual dialogues and engagement among students can be an effective vehicle for enhancing intercultural understanding and dialogue. An innovative example is the public-private partnership between UNESCO and DaimlerChrysler, Mondialogo, which comprises a worldwide school contest and an engineering competition, both built around - and through - intercultural dialogue at the country and school level.
27. Indeed, education at all levels – through formal, non-formal and informal approaches – has an inherent ability to release the potential of dialogue, provided it is accessible to all. The development of rights-based and values-oriented national approaches should be at the heart of educational efforts. Dialogue nurtured within the minds of human beings through appropriate education can inform and shape overt dialogues among individuals and among groups brought up in different cultural environments leading to a new harmonious existence responding to mutual interests and needs.

Science and technology

28. The speed of scientific and technological progress poses nowadays new challenges. Knowledge and its application in science and technology has always been a key component of development for all cultures and civilizations – yet its potential to advance and inspire dialogue has too often been neglected. On the one hand, there has been an enormous increase in the understanding of nature in all its aspects. On the other, tremendous opportunities keep opening up for the application of this knowledge in diverse areas of human needs.
29. The generation and application of the sciences and technology and scientific and technological interchange, sharing and networking, have become increasingly vital for economic and social development. Policies to address contemporary challenges increasingly demand scientific advice based on analysis,

understanding, sharing and anticipation. More than ever, decision-making and policy formulation require understanding of the scientific underpinnings and consequences must be fully informed as to their scientific basis and consequences, drawing on input both from the natural sciences and the social and human sciences irrespective of national borders – the sciences delineate new frontiers for global unity and connectivity. Social sciences can specifically contribute to dialogue by organizing activities which reinforce tolerance, ethical approaches, the quest for gender equality and a culture of peace and by mobilizing against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

Cultural diversity

30. At present, cultural diversity and heritage are emerging as fonts for identities and tools for reconciliation. Cultural heritage – in both its tangible and intangible forms - embodies the symbolic values of cultural identities and constitutes a fundamental reference for structuring society. As a shared experience, the foremost constituent value of the heritage is diversity. Once respect for cultural heritage allows people to understand themselves, it will also be a key to understanding others. The protection of heritage, and its preservation and transmission to future generations, are therefore ethical imperatives, inseparable from respect for dignity of the human person. Today, heritage must be made a cause for the protection of diversity of cultures and of dialogue between them.
31. The links that unify the defense of cultural diversity, the safeguarding of cultural heritage and the respect for sustainable development must be maintained. This was one of the important messages of the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, where cultural diversity was acknowledged as inseparable from the economic, social and ecological concerns, and qualified as a “collective force” at the service of sustainable development.
32. The furthering of mutual respect and tolerance among citizens of different ethnic origin is a principle to be sustained in the development of inter-ethnic relations. When an absence of solidly rooted norms of cooperation or structural incentives to co-operate has generated conflict, violence, deadlock and secessionism, the challenge of dialogue – and the capacity for dialogue – are

particularly significant in the continuing transition towards stability and human and material prosperity.

33. In areas that have experienced ethnic conflict - or wars - the emergence of multi-ethnic states, built on a commitment to democratic principles, protection of human rights and among them women's rights, guaranteeing the freedom of religion, upholding the rule of law, as well as respect for and protection of minorities, and the development of good neighborly relations and cooperation are prerequisites for regional stability and peace. In conditions of open free-flowing communication and equality, contacts and dialogue between different ethnic and religious groups must be encouraged to generate mutual understanding, not conflict, leading to the emergence of what has been termed a "civic culture".
34. States need to find ways of forging national unity amid diversity, and individuals have to be prodded to shed rigid identities if they are to become part of diverse societies and uphold values of tolerance and respect for human rights and the Other. At both levels, dialogue will be key.

Information and communication

35. Advances in information and communication technologies (ICTs) add a new dimension. They have an unprecedented ability to bring together diverse communities, cultures, civilizations and different faiths. Communication and information open new horizons for creating inclusive knowledge societies through education, the exchange of scientific knowledge, and the promotion of creativity and intercultural dialogue as well as interpersonal exchanges and networking.
36. In this context, UNESCO's core missions to "promote the free exchange of ideas and knowledge" and to "maintain, increase and diffuse knowledge" are exceedingly relevant. Freedom of expression is the cornerstone of any democratic society. Emphasis is on creating an environment among decision-makers and civil society that is conducive to the full enjoyment of freedom of expression in democracy. The promotion of freedom of expression and its corollary, the freedom of the press, is of particular relevance in the development of knowledge societies.
37. ICTs bring about new challenges for freedom of expression and cultural diversity, gender equality and reduction of disparities and

new forms of exclusion existing in access to and participation knowledge societies. Capacity-building in communication and information is crucial for building knowledge societies based on freedom of expression and pluralism. In a rapidly changing media landscape, the constant evolution of ICTs and the emergence of new professional profiles in both communication and information fields require a continuous process of improving the skills and knowledge of professionals.

V. Future stability and progress in South-East Europe

38. Many of the challenges facing the countries in South-East Europe are not only common to all, but they also have cross-border dimensions. The return of refugees, the building of infrastructure, the advance of economic development and the fight against organized crime are examples for areas where countries need to cooperate closely so as to achieve results. Regional co-operation goes hand in hand with further development of the individual countries. It also constitutes an essential element and prerequisite under the Stabilisation and Association process with the European Union.⁵
39. Much progress has been made, as documented in the increasing number of bi-lateral co-operation agreements. Regional co-operation is becoming the natural way to tackle shared problems and to move towards progress, thus securing stability and mutual understanding.
40. In this effort, dialogue will be indispensable. Dialogue favors the development of greater inclusivity; it subscribes essentially to a more democratic and peaceful society at the international as well as the national level. The concept of dialogue encompasses a shared concern with poverty and underdevelopment, in both material and human terms, and with fellow human beings of different ethnic backgrounds and religious faiths. The very notion of “dialogue” implies listening, learning about and accepting other, often different and even divergent points of view.
41. Inter-religious and inter-ethnic dialogue constitutes a potentially significant feature of social cohesion and stability everywhere. In South-East Europe in particular, the harmonious co-existence of three major confessions (Muslim, Orthodox, and Catholic) constitutes an interesting case of religious tolerance and coexistence. The region’s conflict-ridden and war-stricken recent past has brought to the fore the need to develop a new approach with which to

promote the moral, ethical and spiritual values underpinning the dialogue between peoples and states and the respect for Others. This could be done by reinvigorating the historically entrenched modalities for inter-religious and inter-ethnic dialogue and interaction in the region. 42. The Tirana Summit will seek to draw on the inherent dynamic of dialogue, built on national and regional experiences, seek to define a framework for cooperation and identify concrete initiatives and programmes that should be pursued for the benefit, prosperity, development – and above all, peace within - and among - the countries and peoples of South East Europe.

Notes

1. The proceedings of the Conference have been published in “Cooperation between UNESCO and its South-East European Member States” (UNESCO, 2002).
2. The Proceedings of the Regional Forum has been published in UNESCO’s “Dialogue among Civilizations” series (UNESCO 2004)
3. UN General Assembly Resolution 56/6, Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations (21 November 2001).
4. Statistic as at July 2004 per World Fact Book:
www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/al.html
5. Commission of the European Union. Report from the Commission. The Stabilization and Association process for South East Europe. Third Annual Report, Brussels, 30.03.2004.



Principal participants in the Tirana Summit. In front centre President H.E. Alfred Moisiu and H.E. Ko chiro Matsuura with religious leaders.

PART III

ANNEXES



ANNEX I

Programme

Wednesday 8 December 2004

Arrival of the Participants

20:30 Dinner at the “ Ujvara “ restaurant

Thursday 9 December 2004

10:00 Opening session Statements by the co-hosts of the Summit

H.E. Alfred Moisiu,
President of Albania

H.E. Koïchiro Matsuura,
Director-General of UNESCO

Moderator: H.E. Servet Pellumbi,
Speaker of the Albanian Parliament

10:30- 13:30 Statements by Heads of State or Government

H.E. Borislav Paravac,
Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina

H.E. Georgi Parvanov,
President of Bulgaria

H.E. Stjepan Mesic,
President of Croatia

H.E. Branko Crvenkovski,
President of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

H.E. Svetozar Marovic,
President of Serbia and Montenegro

H.E. Kjell Magne Bondevik,
Prime Minister of Norway

Statements by Personal Representatives of Heads of State and Government

Thomas Mayer-Harting,
Representative of the Federal President of Austria

Mr. Petros Tatoulis ,
Deputy Minister of Culture, Representative of the Prime Minister of Greece

Viktor Opaschi,
Representative of the President of Romania

Statements by Representatives of International Organizations

Erhard Busek,
Special Coordinator of the Stability Pact for south-st Europe

Lawrence Rossin,
Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General in Kosovo, United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK)

Claudia Luciani
Directorate general of Political Affaires council of Europe

Marc Scheuer,
Director of Political Advice and Cooperation, Directorate General of Political Affairs,
Council of Europe

Anna-Kristina Stjärnerklint,
United Nations Resident Co-ordinator in Albania

13:30-13:40

13:45-14:15 **Group photo of the Presidents**
Inauguration of Mother Teresa monument at Mother Teresa Square

Thursday 9 December 2004 (cont'd)

14:15-15:15 **Lunch hosted by the Director-General of UNESCO,**
H.E. Koïchiro Matsuura

15:15-16:30 **First panel**
Inter-ethnic dialogue in South-East Europe: Instead of walls, bridges - Lessons learnt

Moderator: Mrs. Ana Lalaj (Albania)

Speakers:

Veton Surroi (Serbia and Montenegro)

Nicholas Whyte (United Kingdom)

Emily Coffman-Krunic

Silvo Devetak (Slovenia)

16:30-17:00 **Discussion**

17:15-18:45 **Second Panel**
The contributions of inter-religious, inter-cultural and inter-ethnic Dialogue in the South-East Europe region

Moderator: Mrs. Harriet Hetnges (United States of America)

Speakers:

Ismail Kadare (Albania)

Sabri Godo (Albania)

David Nearon (USA)

Mustafa Ceric (Bosnia and Herzegovina)

Roger Etchegaray (France)

Arthur Liolin (USA)

18:45-19:15 Discussion

20:00 Reception Hosted by the President of the Republic of Albania,
H.E. Alfred Moisiu Friday 10 December 2004

9:30-11:00 Third panel

South-East Europe in the global context: Globalization and South-East European societies -
challenges and dilemmas

Moderator: Horst Gödicke, (Germany), UNESCO

Speakers:

Arber Xhaferri (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)

Shlomo Fischer (Israel)

Adam Seligman (USA)

Frank-Lothar Altmann (Germany)

Malgorzata Pawlisz (Poland)

11:00-11:30 Discussion

11:30-13:30 Break

13:30-14.15 Adoption of the Tirana Declaration and Conclusion of the Summit

14:30-15:00 Press conference

15:00-16:00 Lunch

19:30 Diner at President Hotel

Saturday 11 December 2004

9:30 Cultural visit to the City of Durres

Lunch in Durres at “Belvedere” Restaurant

Dinner in Tirana at “Chateau Linza” Restaurant

Sunday 12 December 2004

Departure of Participants

Annex II

List of Participants

Co – Convenors

Alfred Moisiu,	President of Albania
Ko chiro Matsuura,	Director-General of UNESCO

Heads of State or Government

Borislav Paravac,	Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina
Georgi Parvanov	President of Bulgaria
Stjepan Mesic,	President of Croatia
Branko Crvenkovski,	President of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
Svetozar Marovic,	President of Serbia and Montenegro
Fatos Nano,	Prime Minister of Albania
Kjell Magne Bondevik,	Prime Minister of Norway

Representatives of Heads of State and Ministers

Kostas Karamanlis	(Greece)-Minister of Culture
Blagoj Stevanovski	(Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) Minister of Culture
Murat Basesgioglu	(Turkey)-Minister of Labour and Social Security, Representative of the Republic of Turkey
Thomas Mayer-Harting	(Austria), Director General, Foreign Ministry of Austria, Representative of the Federal President of

Viktor Opaschi

Austria

(Romania), Special Adviser to the President of Romania, Representative of the President of Romania

Delegations

Albania

Luan Hajdaragai,

Vice Minister, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Edmond Dragoti,

Vice Minister, Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport

Edlira Haxhiymeri,

Vice Minister, Ministry of Education

Tatjana Gjonaj,

Ambassador and Permanent Delegate of Albania to UNESCO

Teodor Osoja,

Representative of UNESCO in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Rexhep Majdani,

Former President of Albania

Sali Berisha,

Former President of Albania

Filip Rrumbullaku,

General Secretary, Office of the President

Iris Halili,

Chief of the Cabinet of the President of Albania

Kristaq Birbo,

Chief of Protocol, Office of the President

Muhamet Kapllani,

Diplomatic Advisor to the President of Albania

Llesh Kola,

Advisor to the President of Albania

Idriz Konjari,

Advisor to the President of Albania

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Sulejman Thic,

Bosnian Member of the Presidency

Dragan Covic,

Croat Member of the Presidency

Zeljana Zovko,	Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Bosnia and Herzegovina to France, Permanent Delegate to UNESCO
Vasilj Zarkovic,	Advisor for Economic System and Finances, Delegation of the Serb Member of the Presidency
Mirsad Basic,	Chief of the Department of Protocol, Secretariat of the Presidency
Ivana Saravanja,	Expert associate, Contact Person for Public Relations, Secretariat of the Presidency

Bulgaria

Zorka Parvanova,	First Lady of Bulgaria
Andrey Karashevov,	Head of the Office of the President
Atanas Pavlov,	Chief of Protocol, Office of the President
Boika Bashlieva,	Press Secretary, Office of the President
Hristo Georgiev,	Secretary General of the Bulgarian National Commission for UNESCO
Nikola Karadimov,	National Coordinator of the Stability Pact

Croatia

Davor Bozinovic,	Croatian Foreign Ministry, The Department of Neighbouring States
Katarina Trstenjak,	Chief of Protocol, Office of the President
Ivica Mastruko,	Foreign Policy Advisor to the President
Anica Djamic,	Assistant to the Foreign Policy Advisor

Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

Natasha Savova,	Secretary General, Cabinet of the President
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Igor Ivanovski,	Public Relations Councillor, Cabinet of the President
Kire Petkov,	Protocol Councillor, Cabinet of the President
Blerina Starova Zlatku,	Assistant to the Foreign Policy Councillor, Cabinet of the President
Darko Kostadinovski,	Assistant to the Foreign Policy Councillor, Cabinet of the President
Zoran Jovanov	Member of the Cabinet, Prime Minister's Office

Greece

Panetelis Carcabassis,	Ambassador of Greece to Albania
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Italy

Massimo Ianuci,	Ambassador of Italy to Albania
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Norway

Odd Saeter,	State Secretary, Office of the Prime Minister
Bente Angell-Hansen,	Director General of the Department of International Affairs, Office of the Prime Minister
Øivind Østang,	Head of Information, Press and Information Section, Office of the Prime Minister
Jan Braathu,	State Undersecretary for Western Balkans, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Trine Skymoen,	Deputy Permanent Delegate of Norway to the OSCE

Serbia and Montenegro

Zeljko Perovic,

Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs, Head of the Sector for Multilateral Affairs

Dragoljub Najman,

Ambassador and Permanent Delegate of Serbia and Montenegro to UNESCO

Slovenia

Iztok Simoniti,

State Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Melita Gabric,

Internat. Relations Adviser, Office of the President

Turkey

Ugur Yalcin,

Delegation of the Turkish Minister for Labour and Social Security

Representatives of International and Regional Organizations

Erhard Busek,

Special Coordinator of the Stability Pact

Pieter Verbeek,

Director of Working Table III, Stability Pact

Björn Kihne,

Political Advisor, Stability Pact

Dragan Barbutovski,

Spokesperson, Stability Pact

Claudia Luciani,

Head of Division III, Directorate General of Political Affairs, Council of Europe, Strasbourg

Hubert Petit,

Head of Contracts and Finance Section, Delegation of the European Commission, Albania

Evgeny Efimov,

Deputy High Representative and Senior Advisor to the High Representative of the International Community and to the Special Representative of the European Union to Bosnia and Herzegovina

Una Zeger,

Executive Assis of the Deputy High Representative

- Pavel Vacek,** Ambassador, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, Albania
- Anna-Kristina Stjærnerklint,** United Nations Resident Coordinator and Resident Representative, United Nations Development Program, Albania
- Elzira Sagynbaeva,** Deputy Resident Representative, United Nations Development Program, Albania
- Entela Lako,** Civil Society Focal Point, United Nations Development Program, Albania
- Lawrence Rossin,** Principal Deputy of the Special Representative of the Secretary General, United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, Pristina
- Biyyala V.P.Rao,** Principal International Officer, Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports, PISG, United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, Pristina
- Erica Usher,** Head of Strategic Policy and Planning, Migration Policy and Research Department, International Organization for Migration
- Maurizio Busatti,** Chief of Mission, International Organization for Migration, Albania
- Hans d'Orville,** Director, Bureau of Strategic Planning, UNESCO, Paris
- Horst G dicke,** Chairman, UNESCO Intersectoral Working Group on South-East Europe
- Ann-Belinda Preis,** Senior Programme Planning Specialist, Bureau of Strategic Planning, UNESCO, Paris
- Marie Paul Roudil,** Chief of Section, Culture Sector, UNESCO Regional Office for Sciences, Venice
- FW (Russ) Russell,** Programme Planning Specialist, Bureau of

Andre Chevelev,	Strategic Planning, UNESCO, Paris Programme Specialist, Sector for External Relations and Cooperation, UNESCO, Paris
Krista Pikkat,	Executive Officer, Office of the Director-General, UNESCO, Paris
Andrea Stengel,	Consultant, Bureau of Strategic Planning, UNESCO, Paris

Participants

Alajdin Abazi	(Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), Rector of South East European University, Tetovo
Franz-Lothar Altmann	(Germany) - German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP), Berlin
Bjoern Andersen	(Denmark), Cultural Sociologist
Nena Arvaj	(Croatia) - Project Officer, Centre for Peace, Non-Violence and Human Rights, Osijek
Paul Ballanfat	(France) - Professor of Persian Studies, University of Lyon
Ivo Banac	(Croatia) - Professor of History, Yale University, Member of the Parliament, Croatia
Relja Basic	(Croatia) - UNESCO Artist for Peace, Zagreb
Harry Birnholz	(United States of America), Director, USAID mission in Albania
Marcus Braybrooke	(United Kingdom) - President, World Congress of Faiths, London
Alja Brglez	(Slovenia) - Director, Institute for Civilization and Culture, Ljubljana
Narciso Binayan Carmona	(Argentina) - Journalist, Historian

- Mihail Cekov** (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) - Reverend, United Methodist Church
- Mustafa Cerić** (Bosnia and Herzegovina) - Grand Mufti of Bosnia and Herzegovina
- Justyna Chrzanowska** (Poland) - Legal and Treaty Department, Human Rights and National Minorities Division, Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Emily Coffman-Krunic** (Bosnia-Herzegovina), Regional Director, South East Europe., World Conference of Religions for Peace
- Andrea Decker** (Germany) - Balkan Representative, German Foreign Trade Association
- Agon Demjaha** (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), Executive Director, Balkan Children and Youth Foundation
- Silvo Devetak** (Slovenia) - Director, European Centre for Ethnic, Regional and Sociological Studies, University of Maribor
- Zlatko Dizdarević** (Bosnia and Herzegovina) - Ambassador of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Croatia
- Arraham Elqayam** (Israel) - Head of “Abraham Way”, Inter-faith Dialogue between Judaism and Islam in Israel and Palestine
- Schlomo Fischer** (Israel) - Founder and Educational Director of Yesodoth, Jerusalem
- Maciej Gocman** (Poland) - Plenipotentiary of the Board, International Academy of Dialogue among Cultures and Civilizations, Warsaw
- Sabri Godo** (Albania) - Head of the Republican Party

- Wolfgang Greffe** (Germany) - Balkan Representative, German Foreign Trade Association
- Ingrid Halbritter** (Germany) - Director, Dadalos Project, Sarajevo
- Martin Hauser,** UNESCO Chair for the Study of Intercultural and Interreligious Relations, Director of the Department for Inter-cultural and Inter-religious Relations, University of Bucharest
- Harriet Hentges** (United States of America), Executive Vice-President, Institute of Peace, Washington
- Ismael Kadare** (Albania) - Writer
- Kozara Kati** (Albania) - Executive Director, Albanian Center for Human Rights
- Saso Klekovski** (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), Executive Director, Macedonian Center for International Co-operation, Skopje
- Emir Kovacevic** (Bosnia-Herzegovina), Deputy Regional Director, South East Europe, World Conference of Religions for Peace
- Ana Lalaj** (Albania) - Director, Institute of History Albanian Academy of Sciences
- Arthur E. Liolin** (United States of America), Chancellor, Albanian Orthodox Archdiocese in America, Boston
- David Little** (United States of America), President of the International Academy for Freedom of Religion and Belief
- Rusmir Mahmutcehajic** (Bosnia and Herzegovina) - Writer
- Ghassan Manasra** (Israel) - Head of "Abraham Way", Inter-faith Dialogue between Judaism and Islam in Israel and Palestine

- Mirjana Mikic** (Croatia) - Program Specialist, Center of Peace Studies, Zagreb
- Ino Mirkovic** (Croatia) - UNESCO Artist for Peace, Lovran
- Piro Misha** (Albania) - Director, The Book and Communication House, Tirana
- Atia Moor** (United States of America) - Project Director, World Learning for International Development, Albania
- Ferid Muhic** (Former Yugoslav R. of Macedonia) - Professor, Faculty of Philosophy, St Cyril University, Skopje
- David Nearon** (United States of America) - International Center for Law and Religion Studies, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah
- Darina Oketa** (Albania) - Program Officer, World Learning for International Development, Albania
- Borka Pavicevic** (Serbia and Montenegro) - Director of the Centre for Cultural Decontamination, Belgrade
- Malgorzata Pawlisz** (Poland) - President, International Academy of Dialogue among Cultures and Civilizations, Warsaw
- Vladimir Petrovsky,** (Russia) - Chairman, Dialogue among Civilizations Foundation, Geneva
- Jordan Plevnes** (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) - Permanent Delegate and Ambassador of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to UNESCO
- Paolo Roga** (Italy) - Representative, Community of San Egidio, Rome

- Adam B. Seligman** (United States of America) - Professor, Department of Religion, Boston University, Boston
- Jelena Stevancevic** (Serbia and Montenegro) - Project Coordinator, Humanitarian Law Center, Belgrade
- Veton Surroi** (Serbia and Montenegro) - Publisher and Editor-in-Chief of Koha Ditore (Albanian language newspaper) - Kosovo; Member of the UN-supervised Kosovo Transitional Council
- Marcus Tanner** (United Kingdom), Balkans Editor, Institute for War & Peace Reporting, Belgrade
- Kiril Temkov** (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), Professor, Faculty of Philosophy, St Cyril University, Skopje
- Matty Thimm** (United States of America), Country Director, World Learning for Development, Albania
- David Thompson** (United States of America), USAID Program Officer, Albania
- Alfred Uçi** (Albania), Philosopher, Member of the Albanian Academy of Sciences
- Rumen Valchev** (Bulgaria), Professor Bourgas Free University, UNESCO Chair in Culture of Peace and Human Rights, Bourgas
- Ivan Vejvoda** (Serbia and Montenegro), Executive Director, Fund for an Open Society Yugoslavia, Belgrade
- Arber Xhaferri** (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), Chairman of the Democratic Party of the Albanians
- Shan Zefi** (Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), Chancellor of the Bishop Marko Sopi of the Catholic diocese of Skopje-Prizren

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Our challenge is the education and upbringing of a new European generation that does not reconcile with old mentality keep the spirit of exclusion and the notion of "the hostile neighbour" alive, but one that is capable of building a new spirit that accepts and respects the Other, their differences along with the culture of dialogue and understanding. That is why schools and the entire society have an irreplaceable role in the education of young generations with the spirit of acceptance and not that of exclusion, with the feeling of forgiveness and not that of the hatred, of tolerance, understanding and coexistence.

Alfred Moisiu
President of Albania

The Tirana Summit is a most timely occasion to focus on how religion and multi-ethnicity can contribute positively to a dialogue among civilizations and cultures.

The presence of Heads of State and Government from the region and beyond is a clear sign that the theme of this Summit attracts interest at the highest level. It also testifies to the broad-based political commitment to constructive dialogue among countries, among peoples and ethnic groups and among religious leaders.

Koïchiro Matsuura
Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Excerpt from the Tirana Summit Declaration:

South-East Europe has suffered from the ravages of the last wars of the 20th century in Europe, also as a consequence of inter-ethnic and inter-religious tension, hatred and violence. Today, the region is rebounding, leaving the wounds of the past behind and responding to the desire of its peoples for reconciliation, exchange and cooperation, especially among the youth. Ensuring freedom of movement in the region will be an important practical step. In the present post-conflict period, there is an undeniable need to face up to the truth of the past as the region is not yet free from the seeds of divisions and confrontations of a religious or ethnic nature.

For further information about UNESCO's activities related to the Dialogue among Civilizations, please consult:
see: <http://www.unesco.org/dialogue>

