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pour l'éducation,  
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de las Naciones Unidas  
para la Educación,  
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منظمة الأمم المتحدة  
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、  
科学及文化组织

# Inter-Faith Dialogue for Peace and Reconciliation Conference

Colombo, Sri Lanka  
3-5 November 2012

## Interventions

by the

## Delegates from UNESCO

### CROATIA

#### **Mrs Alida Matkovic, Minister Counsellor to UNESCO**

Madame President of the UNESCO General Conference, Ambassador Bogyay,  
Most Venerable Master Chin Kung,  
Excellencies,  
Respected delegates,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

Allow me to express my deepest gratitude for the possibility of being in Sri Lanka today, first of all to the Sri Lanka's government and your President H.E. Mr Mahinda Rajapakse . It is indeed an honor and a privilege to be able to address you today at this Interfaith Forum which is trying to provide the answers to the question on how the intercultural dialogue may be enhanced by education. I come from Croatia, a small country almost the same size of Sri Lanka, less densely populated, with a diverse range of cultures, languages and religions, which had to share a similar experience with yours: how to integrate a territory which, because of violence, was out of control of Governmental forces.

The Croatian Danubian Region (eastern part of the country) was peacefully reintegrated into Croatia following the UN Security Council Decision 1037, with the help of UNTAES (UN Transitional Administration) in the period between January 1996 – January 1998.

That was the last unliberated territory of Croatia since the 1991 occupation during the Homeland War, the only one that was reintegrated in a peaceful manner. The announcement of the Security Council Decision caused a lot of suspicion among ordinary citizens. The reintegration of police forces, even communication were perceived as difficult issues of reintegration and education at the beginning did not raise so much concern.

However, education had to deal with teaching about culture, heritage, history, mother tongue –sensitive issues related to national identity. Although in the end, even according to the UNTAES officials it was among the most difficult one, with a lot of good will on both sides, the Croatian Government and the Serb minority and with the help of the UNTAES , several Agreements related to education enabled the reintegration, which turned out to be a successful exercise.

The main idea about intercultural education was (and is) that it has to enable learning about one's own national identity, as well as about the identities of others, in order to enable intercultural dialogue among different national/religious groups.

Some of the agreed educational aspects for reintegration covered issues such as :

- The Croatian Government recognised all school certificates issued during occupation;
- All teachers teaching in the occupied territory were granted teaching jobs;
- New distribution of positions of Heads of schools also enabled the returnees (mainly Croatians) to obtain some of those positions;
- School names were expressed in numbers rather than previously used names of nationally important persons;
- Students of different nationalities were educated in different shifts;
- School certificates for the Serb minority were issued in Cyrillic script and Serb language;
- There was a five year moratorium on teaching recent history

Teacher/student trainings on peace, tolerance and intercultural dialogue were organised as even in the early war years the Croatian Ministry of Education with the financial help of UN/UNICEF/Council of Europe and some foreign governments/NGOs' help developed teacher training materials on the mentioned topics.

Teaching about national identity of different minorities was carried out according to the *Law on teaching in the languages and script of national minorities* which was for the first time introduced in Croatia during the period of former Yugoslavia (1979). The Law was slightly changed in 2000, enabling also the students of majority (Croatian) nationality to follow the minority curricula. Basically, according to the mentioned *Law*, the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia as well as the *Constitutional Law on the Rights of National Minorities*, members of national minorities were (and are) entitled to education in their mother tongue. They can effectuate their constitutional right to education in their mother tongue and script according to the three basic models and specialised educational framework:

- classes in the language and script of the national minority (classes held entirely in the language and script of national minorities, with compulsory 4-5 periods per week of teaching of Croatian language and literature)
- bilingual classes (subjects relevant for national minority taught in the language and script of national minority and other subjects taught in Croatian language)
- nurturing language and culture (tuition carried out in Croatian language with 5 periods per week of teaching the subjects relevant for the national minority: language, history, geography, art). For more information, please consult the Ministry of Science, Education and Sport: <http://public.mzos.hr/Default.aspx?sec=3194>

Education in the languages and script of national minorities has been/is entirely financed by the Croatian Government and today all students in the Croatian Danubian Region learn about the Homeland War and classes held in Croatian as well as in Serb language are held in the same shifts.

From our experience several aspects were helpful in the peaceful reintegration of the educational system:

- Legislation enabling education in the language and script of national minorities, which allows for the protection of national identity
- Public support of national minorities provided by the highest ranking state officials

- Inclusion of parents as well as communities in general , not only of students and teachers, in the (training for) intercultural dialogue.

As the topic of the Forum is also the interreligious dialogue, allow me to inform you briefly that students in Croatia are entitled to Religious Education carried out by teachers provided by different religious communities and at the same time they have the possibility of learning about different types of religions: Catholic, Orthodox, Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist. Apart from state and private schools there are also schools run by different religious communities : Catholic, Orthodox, Muslim, Jewish.

Thank you for your attention!

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**HOLY SEE**  
**Msgr. Francesco Follo, Permanent Observer to UNESCO**

Before beginning, I would like to thank the organizers of these days of study and philosophical reflection for having honoured me with an invitation. I will try to merit this esteem, and present myself as an academic, a diplomat of the Holy See, a religious man, under the sole patronage of the most high and great truth, which not only guarantees the coincidence of the intellectual and the spiritual, but procures for people of goodwill the interior peace necessary to seek the concrete conditions for peace, in a world too often chaotic and violent. Truth is not a possession, but that which must be served. It is not that which makes us right and the other wrong, but that which judges us together. Finally, if it is both a horizon and the path which leads there, it is because it gives and shares itself in all ways.

The multiplicity of cultures is a fact which seems to justify ethical and anthropological agnosticism; yet, people's aspiration to a unity which can overcome dispersion is also a fact, as testified to by the Declaration of Human Rights – and by the presence here of all of us. In this sense, I am glad to affirm that the Holy See is in agreement with the affirmation of the equal dignity of all the society and social groups (Art. 2.4), and it also wishes to underline, as other States, that only the cultures which accept and promote the values of peace, tolerance, justice and above all openness and respect for the other must be considered of equal dignity, because one cannot be recognized if one does not recognize - or worse, refuses - others.

Like the other States, the Holy See not only wishes for the protection and the promotion of cultural diversity but, concretely, exchange and dialogue among cultures, as moreover several operational articles of the 2005 Convention underline.

Exchange and dialogue – the practice of good relations with the other thanks to a word that goes to other and a word that goes to us (*dia*: to, toward; *logos*: word) – is the only birthplace and development of peace. It cannot be imposed from the exterior if it is not at the heart of the relation. Moreover, the dangerous notion of the “clash of civilizations” must be refused and, should the case arise, talk of the “clash of ignorances” or, to use a positive notion: the “dialogue of cultures” must be continued to have a “civilization of love”.

Indeed the problem, in my opinion, is not cultural diversity as such – diversity is a fact, a given – but *inter-culturality* which is to be constructed day by day. Cultural diversity is an effective wealth if it becomes “fertile and creative diversity”. In this manner, I can say that the Holy See appreciates all the articles which speak of solidarity and cooperation (above all of the developed countries towards the developing countries). All cultures and all religions must recognize intercultural respect and also the principle of mutuality, which has been recalled several times by the speakers.

A Berber proverb says: “God has diversified people’s faces to permit peace”. And in the Evangelist it is written: “Do for others all that you wish them to do for you”. This is the famous Golden Rule, which one finds in the Evangelist, but also in all other religions...it is a transversal formula. Precisely, all religions. They are a resource and not a problem.

I will give an example with a quotation from a speech of Holy Father Benoit XVI. During his apostolic trip to Great Britain (16-19 September 2010), on the occasion of his meeting with Parliament and the British Society at Westminster Hall on 17 September 2010, Pope Benoit XVI affirmed:

“The central question at issue, then, is this: where is the ethical foundation for political choices to be found? The Catholic tradition maintains that the objective norms governing right action are accessible to reason, rescinding from the content of revelation. According to this understanding, the role of religion in political debate is not so much to supply these norms, as if they could not be known by non-believers – still less to propose concrete political solutions, which would lie altogether outside the competence of religion – but rather to help purify and shed light upon the application of reason to the discovery of objective moral principles. This “corrective” role of religion vis-à-vis reason is not always welcomed, though, partly because distorted forms of religion, such as sectarianism and fundamentalism, can be seen to create serious social problems themselves. And in their turn, these distortions of religion arise when insufficient attention is given to the purifying and structuring role of reason within religion. It is a two-way process. Without the corrective supplied by religion, though, reason too can fall prey to distortions, as when it is manipulated by ideology, or applied in a partial way that fails to take full account of the dignity of the human person. Such misuse of reason, after all, was what gave rise to the slave trade in the first place and to many other social evils, not least the totalitarian ideologies of the twentieth century. This is why I would suggest that the world of reason and the world of faith – the world of secular rationality and the world of religious belief – need one another and should not be afraid to enter into a profound and ongoing dialogue, for the good of our civilization.

“Religion, in other words, is not a problem for legislators to solve, but a vital contributor to the national conversation. In this light, I cannot but voice my concern at the increasing marginalization of religion, particularly of Christianity, that is taking place in some quarters, even in nations which place a great emphasis on tolerance. There are those who would advocate that the voice of religion be silenced, or at least relegated to the purely private sphere. There are those who argue that the public celebration of festivals such as Christmas should be discouraged, in the questionable belief that it might somehow offend those of other religions or none. And there are those who argue – paradoxically with the intention of eliminating discrimination – that Christians in public roles should be required at times to act against their conscience. These are worrying signs of a failure to appreciate not only the rights of believers to freedom of conscience and freedom of religion, but also the legitimate role of religion in the public square. I would invite all of you, therefore, within your respective spheres of influence, to

seek ways of promoting and encouraging dialogue between faith and reason at every level of national life.”

Nevertheless, even from a simply anthropological point of view, it cannot be denied that the relationship with the sacred and/or different forms of transcendence is part of the human as such. Therefore, religion is an important aspect of cultures. His Holiness the Pope John-Paul II affirmed that if faith does not also become culture – if it does not express itself in the language of mankind at a specific historic moment – it is not a mature faith. All cultures have a religious origin, even cultures which no longer believe in a Supreme Being. And there is always something holy in the links which unite the members of a culture, and the vision of the world which it proposes to its own and to others, even in the most secular cultures.

The cultural and artistic expressions with religious connotations – we are thinking of popular holidays, holy music, etc. which are moreover cultural content which generally escape from an economic type of approach, they are difficult to classify as “goods and services” – but nevertheless they must be safeguarded. In this sense, as I have already had the opportunity to say previously, the Holy See shares the preoccupation of certain states concerning the current risk of the marketing of culture.

The market can content itself with individuals, while culture needs persons, and links between persons; and thus the links which form living communities: I completely agree with the fact that one must take into account the collectivities which create and enjoy culture, while speaking of creative subjects and cultural identities. The aim of each culture is the well-being (in its widest possible sense) of the human being, to be educated as a person who has obligations towards others, and not only rights.

Indeed, the principal stake concerns education. Thus, I will allow myself to add my voice to that of all those – numerous – who underline the importance of the promotion and protection of cultural diversity. In this regard, I would like to specify that the question of education must be considered – and promoted – in two distinct and complementary manners:

First of all, there is education as an introduction to total reality, as an opening to the Infinite, as communication of meaning (in its triple sense: direction, signification, a taste for life). Consequently, education must be before all the transmission of the meaning of life and, after, the vehicle for knowledge of learning, of cultural diversity: one only really respects that which one knows, and that which we know ceases to be considered as “barbarous”. This education, which renders a person capable of promoting cultural diversity, is thus an education for peace, for recognition, for respect to the point of welcoming the other as a gift, wealth, and complementarity.

However, there is also education in the sense of the right of the individual and the community to receive – or to give itself – an education according to its own cultural, linguistic and religious membership, and its own tradition. One cannot go towards the other if one does not leave one’s own place, if one does not have the possibility of forming one’s own cultural identity, according to one’s own convictions and values. One must constantly educate to meet the freedom of the other, which enriches us because of what it is and the values which it carries and expresses.

Allow me an observation on the factor of language, a factor of identity par excellence, as it is the concrete symbol, the most immediate and tangible, of cultural diversity, even here, in this assembly which has seen many wise comments on this subject:

I would like to underline the importance of the concept of translation, not only as a contingent practice, but also as a style of managing cultural diversity, as a “philosophical” approach of diversity: instead of opposing one another, of shutting oneself into one’s own cultural and linguistic positions or houses, the Holy See suggests seeking a “creative strategy of coexistence”, as said UNESCO’s 2001 Universal Declaration on cultural diversity; putting people in the place of others, as far as possible, accepting the risk of misunderstanding, but having confidence both in that which brings us together and the truth which we share.

Within their own spheres of competence, human and natural sciences provide us with an inestimable understanding of the diverse aspects of our existence and help us to better comprehend the mechanisms of the physical universe which can then be mastered and thus procure a great advantage to the human family. Nonetheless, these disciplines do not and cannot respond to the fundamental question, as they operate at a completely different level. They cannot satisfy the deepest aspirations of the human heart, they cannot fully explain to us our origins and our destiny, why and for what aim we exist, and also they cannot provide us with an exhaustive response to the question: “Why is there something rather than nothing?”

The quest of the sacred does not devalue the other domains of human research. On the contrary, it situates them in a context which enhances their importance, as so many possibilities to exercise a responsible management of creation. In the Bible we read that, when the work of creation was completed, God blessed our first parents and said to them: “Be fertile, multiply yourselves, fill the earth and subdue it” (Gn 1, 28). He entrusted us with the task of exploring and dominating the mysteries of nature to contribute to a greater good. What is this greater good? In the Christian faith, this explains itself in the love of God and the love of one’s neighbour. And therefore we involve ourselves in the world, unreservedly and with enthusiasm, but always with the aim of contributing to this greater good, as otherwise we risk disfiguring the beauty of creation in exploiting it for selfish reasons.

It is thus that all authentic religious belief orients us, beyond the immediate and utilitarian aspect, towards the transcendent. It reminds us of the possibility and the imperative of a moral conversion, the duty to live in peace with our neighbour, the importance of leading an honest life. It encourages us to cultivate the practice of virtues and to join others with love, in the greatest respect for religious traditions different to our own.

Since the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), the Catholic Church has particularly underlined the importance of dialogue and cooperation with members of other religions. In order to be fruitful, this dialogue, whose foundation is the dignity of each human being, demands reciprocity on the part of all the partners of dialogue and members of other religions. I am thinking in particular of the situations existing in certain parts of the world in which cooperation and dialogue among religions demand mutual respect, the freedom to practice one’s own religion and to take part in public religious acts, as well as the freedom to follow one’s own conscience without being subject to ostracism or persecution, even if one has converted from one religion to another. Once this respect and opening is established, people of all religions will effectively work together for peace and mutual understanding, and also give a convincing account to the world.

This type of dialogue needs to be installed at different levels, and must not limit itself to formal discussions. The dialogue of life necessitates that one live simply beside one another and that one also teach one another to grow in knowledge and mutual respect. The dialogue of action brings us closer together in concrete

forms of collaboration, while our religious intuitions inspire our efforts in favour of full human development, peace, justice and a responsible management of creation. Such a dialogue can encourage us to explore together the means of defending human life in all its stages and to assure the non-exclusion of the religious dimension of individuals and communities in the life of society. Then, at the level of official conversations, it is necessary not only to exchange from a theological point of view, but also to share our spiritual riches, to speak of our experience of prayer and contemplation, and to bear witness to one another of the joy of our meeting with the love of God. I am above all pleading for cultural dialogue. Authentic cultures are not closed in on themselves and neither are they petrified in a determined point of history, but they reciprocally fertilize themselves. Even if our origins are far from each other, strangers from a geographical, historical and cultural point of view, no distance, no diversity can create a total extremity between us: we are all human beings: we are brothers and sisters in humanity. In this context, I am happy to note the numerous positive initiatives undertaken in many countries to promote such a dialogue at different levels. One must therefore encourage the growing acceptance of the need for dialogue and respect at all levels of society between the world of reason and the world of faith. Believers or non-believers, all are encouraged to collaborate in the full human development of peoples (from the local situation in which one lives), which is too important to be doomed to failure.

I do not wish to be too long and suggest, to finish, five decisive areas in which strategies will be useful in order to bring cultures closer together to construct peace: 1) the decisive role of politics, with its legitimate authority, in such a manner that no religion substitutes it; 2) the importance of the alliance of faith and reason; 3) the importance of the search for truth; 4) the importance of the other who is a wealth, a resource and not a problem, and finally 5) the holy character of the duty of education and freedom of conscience, which are two essential factors of democracy.

First point: I plead for a reflection, once again, because the problem is complex and recurrent, on the articulation of the religious, the social or civil society and of politics. The religious authorities here make a great contribution when they accept to be neither instrumentalized by nor indifferent to politics, and doubtless their role simply to remind one of ethics in politics, while themselves remaining examples and guarantors of these ethics. I think that it is necessary to have a public space where all cultures and religions can meet one another. To have this, we need a redefinition of the role of the State. In the Western world, at least, since the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the educational, the social, the institutional, the religious and the economic are strongly interlocked in the nation-state. Yet, despite the emergence of the phenomenon of globalization, above all economic, we are attending a restructuring of the role of the State as regulator and guarantor of social cohesion. In effect, globalization tends towards casualizing and blurring its role. J. Louglin, in *Regional Autonomy and State Paradigm Shift in Western Europe*, *Regional and Federal Studies* 10 (2), 2000, pp. 10-34, distinguishes three stages in this regard. The first is that of the welfare state. The second stage is that of the neoliberal state. The hold of the nation-state over the economy, but not only over it, is called into question. The contributions of the central state diminish and the regions must thus rethink their economic development in an endogenous manner by mobilizing their interior resources. This is the period of the reassertion of the value of local and regional languages and cultures. Finally, the third stage is that of the contemporary state, which combines neoliberalism and social values. The state plays a role of stimulator and regulator. One speaks from then on of "subsidiarity" and "governance at multiple levels". The regions become actors it is not possible to ignore, including

in cultural and educational policy, the integration of migrants and social cohesion.

Second point: the extreme importance of the inseparability of faith and reason in the struggle not only against violence, but above all for the construction of a culture of peace. Advocating an absolute which would suspend the critical mind is not advocating the absolute, but raising, consciously or unconsciously, in any case unduly, its own conceptions of the absolute. A mystic who is not critical does not merit the name: the word covers all sorts of irrationals. You will understand, I plead here for theology, as the reflection of faith in reason, by all the scholarly and cultural mediations available. Faith, as faith, has nothing to fear from reason (I did not say rationalist and positivist distortions). No question is to be feared if the first to pose fundamental questions to humans is God Himself, in general in two forms: who do you say I am?, against all idolatry, and: what have you done to your brother?, against all violence. The challenge is to find the right position in the public space of theology. This is not easy, but neglecting this contribution will be a certain lack in the search for peace.

Therefore, I will allow myself to propose a suggestion of Pope Benoit XVI, who proposes: "to enlarge the horizons of rationality. But this must not simply be envisaged as a new orientation of theological and philosophical thought, but must be heard as the request for a new opening with regard to the reality to which the human person is called in his uni-totality, overcoming old prejudices and simplifications, to thus also open himself to the way towards a true comprehension of modernity. The desire of a plenitude of humanity cannot be disappointed: it is awaiting adapted responses. The Christian faith is called to take charge of this historic emergency, by involving all men of good will in a similar enterprise. The new dialogue between faith and reason required today cannot take place in the terms and the manner in which it has taken place in the past. If it does not want to reduce itself to a sterile intellectual exercise, it must depart from the concrete situation of mankind, and it must develop on this a reflection in which must be gathered ontological and metaphysical truth." (Benoit XVI, speech to university professors, 7 June 2010). This point of view helps us to understand that philosophy is the possible ground for entente and dialogue with those who do not share the faith, because faith does not present itself as destructive to philosophy, but as the highest possible integration for it.

Reason and faith are two sources of knowledge, neither identical nor competing: one is an exercise of our intelligence, and the other is the opening to the mystery of life, the welcome of transcendence. However, one must also be attentive to the autonomy of reason and faith. The former professor (Benoit XVI) knows it very well (cf. his speech delivered at the University of La Sapienza in Rome in January 2008), and I am sure that all of you agree that it does not mean confusing the levels. It does not mean, for example, to put a little piety into science to save reason or to make good theology and philosophy. Concordism and fundamentalism endanger faith and reason. The Pope recalls that the true greatness of reason is to seek truth, including the truth concerning religion. Truth cannot be sought except through dialogue and work, in a climate of respect and liberty (Conc. Vatican II, Declaration "Human Dignitatis" on religious freedom). It is there that human reason appears in all its scope and that it reveals its potentials. There is a stake not only for the believers, but also for all in a secularized society who risk no longer asking themselves essential metaphysical questions. One must keep the sensibility for the truth alive and "invite reason to set itself to seek the true, the good, God", without which it loses its greatness and denatures itself.



Third point: the importance of seeking truth, which always unites. It is not in renouncing the truth that the meeting of religions and cultures is possible, but in engaging in it more deeply. Scepticism does not bring people together, no more than simple pragmatism. The two things only serve as an entrance to ideologies which next present themselves with so much more assurance. Renouncing truth and one's convictions does not elevate mankind, but delivers it to the calculation of profit, depriving it of greatness. What must be demanded is respect for the faith of the other and the availability to seek, in the foreign elements which I encounter, a truth which concerns me and which can correct me and lead me further. What must be demanded is to be ready to seek in perhaps disconcerting manifestations the deeper truth that hides behind them. What must be demanded is in addition to be prepared to break out of the narrowness of my understanding of the truth, to better enable me to hear that which is my own good, in understanding the other and in letting me place myself on the way of God most Great in the certainty that I never have the whole truth about God to hand and that, in front of this, I am always an apprentice, and that in walking towards it, I am always a pilgrim whose path never ends.

If this is so, there is the fourth point, because one must also seek the positive in the other and that, in this respect, the other is also necessarily an aid in the pursuit of truth, nonetheless does not signify that the element of criticism can and must be lacking. Religion offers, so to say, a shelter for the precious pearl of truth, but it also ceaselessly dissimulates, and it always again runs the risk of failing that which makes up its own nature. Religion can fall sick and transform itself into a destructive phenomenon. It knows and it must lead towards truth, but it is also capable of cutting man off from it. The criticism of religions in the Old Testament has not lost its subject by a long way. It might be relatively easy for us to criticize the religions of others, but we must be as prepared to accept this also for ourselves, for our own religion. Karl Barth distinguished in Christianity religion and faith. He was wrong in that he wanted to totally separate the two, seeing a positive aspect only in faith, while he considered religion as a negative factor. Faith without religion is unreal; religion is part of it and it is in the nature of the Christian faith that it is a religion. However, he was right in the sense that even for the Christian religion can fall sick and become superstition, that concrete religion in which faith is lived must thus be continually purified from the truth which manifests itself in faith and which, on the other hand, allows, in dialogue, to recognize its mystery and infinity in a new manner.

Finally, the fifth and last point or the decisive area, finally linked to the "need for the other" without whom no society can construct itself in peace: the recognitions of the sacred character of the duty of education (I am particularly thinking of the education of girls, a priority duty among us) and freedom of conscience (to be placed among the first foundations of a peaceful society, as where this freedom is not assured, one or other of the human rights will end up being weakened). Tocqueville wrote one day that there is no democracy without two conditions for the vote, that is, education and press freedom. He wholeheartedly pleaded for the capacity to pronounce an informed and responsible speech. I will go even further; the culture of debate is fundamentally of to major activities which impassion peoples: science and politics, knowledge and power. Religions should verify that they demand, beyond knowledge, learning, and, without closing down or confiscating power, which is one of the keys to the possible, that they favour the transformation of power in to service. However, as one must begin with the beginning, what is in the capacity of religions is the lofty and sacred idea which they have of education, as the promotion of the human being and its dignity to be informed and responsible, and not only trained to enter the chain of production-consumption, and to

encourage with all their inspiration absolute respect for freedom of conscience, in order that we may all pass from tolerance to respect, and from respect to recognition. Indeed, education is not only to assimilate something, but is above all to allow one to meet someone in freedom. Authentic education aims to make the whole man greater, to enlarge his view and his heart, in order that he does not impoverish himself in withdrawing into himself, and that he turn to God and to his brothers, to humanity.

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**MADAGASCAR**  
**Mr Ny Toky Andriamanjato, Chargé d'Affaires a.i., Deputy**  
**Permanent Delegate to UNESCO**

Vénérables et Hauts dignitaires religieux,  
Excellences Mesdames et Messieurs les Ambassadeurs,  
Mesdames et Messieurs les représentants du Gouvernement Sri Lankais,  
Mesdames et Messieurs, Chers Amis,

*Présentation de MADAGASCAR*

Madagascar est un pays situé dans la partie occidentale de l'océan Indien. Elle est séparée de l'Afrique par le canal du Mozambique qui est large de 415 km. Sa capitale est Antananarivo. Madagascar est souvent appelée l'«île-continent». Elle est la cinquième île du monde en superficie (587 000 km<sup>2</sup>) après l'Australie, le Groenland, la Nouvelle-Guinée et Bornéo.

*Religions à MADAGASCAR*

Plus de 50 % des Malgaches sont chrétiens (divisés presque également entre protestants et catholiques). Les Musulmans représente 10% de la population du pays et environ 35 % pratiquent encore la religion dite traditionnelle ou Culte des ancêtres.

Le Malgache a ses particularités et ses originalités. En résumé, le Malgache est parti d'une vieille civilisation malayo-polynésienne mais la proximité de l'Afrique et de toutes sortes de commerces et d'échanges l'ont mis en contact direct avec les civilisations arabe et africaine qui prévalait sur les côtes Est du continent noir.

*La philosophie ancestrale malgache :*

La philosophie de base du Malgache est faite de tolérance et de relativisation, ou les idées contraires peuvent très bien faire bon ménage. Cette tolérance et cette relativisation l'empêche de devenir dogmatique ou extrémiste dans l'expression de sa foi.

Cette philosophie ancestrale malgache est en gros basée sur :

- La croyance et l'adoration de Zanahary ( le Dieu unique créateur de l'univers) depuis les temps anciens.
- La certitude en l'immortalité de l'esprit qui fait que les morts ne sont pas «morts» mais changent seulement de statut social
- La peur du Tsiny qui est une sanction divine causée par les actes mal perçus par la société qu'ils soient volontaires ou non.
- L'acceptation du Tody comme résultat des actes antérieur.

La croyance fortement implantée dans la pensée malgache en «Dieu unique créateur de l'univers» a contribué favorablement à l'implantation des religions monothéistes comme le Christianisme et l'Islam à Madagascar. Dans toutes les

religions pratiquées dans l'île, le nom de Dieu en langue malgache est resté «Zanahary» (Celui qui a tout créé) comme dans les temps anciens. Ce nom aussi apparaît dans l'Hymne national malgache ce qui signifie que, malgré les différentes religions pratiquées dans l'île, les malgaches prient et adore le même et unique Dieu. C'est alors un Dieu unificateur de tout un peuple.

Pour le Malgache, l'Esprit fait l'Homme et cet Esprit est immortel. Dans la perception populaire, quand une personne meurt ce n'est guère sa fin : il change seulement de statut social et a une mission de veiller sur sa descendance. Culturellement, consciemment ou inconsciemment, et ce jusqu'à aujourd'hui, chaque malgache vit avec ses ancêtres dans sa conscience. Cette aspect culturel cohabite normalement avec la religion de tout un chacun.

La notion du Tsiny est spécifique de la pensée malgache. Le Tsiny est une sorte de malédiction terrible causée par une simple maladresse dans la parole ou les actes de chaque individu. Du coup, avant même de dire ou de faire quoi que ce soit, le Malgache conjure le Tsiny pendant de longues minutes dans un Kabary ou discours. Cet aspect culturel lui impose l'humilité et la tolérance dans son comportement quotidien. Ceci le rend sensible et à l'écoute des autres.

En ce qui concerne le Tody, c'est le constat établi dans la société malgache que tout ce qui nous arrive est le fruit de nos actes antérieur. On récolte ce qu'on sème. Cette notion aide le Malgache à analyser profondément ses actes, à bien réfléchir avant de commettre tel ou tels actions, ce qui en théorie, et ce avec la peur de Zanahary, devait l'inciter à faire toujours le bien autour de lui.

Excellences, Mesdames et Messieurs

L'acte constitutif de l'UNESCO stipule que « La guerre prenant naissance dans l'esprit des hommes, c'est dans l'esprit des hommes que doivent être élevées les défenses de la paix »

Dans le cas de Madagascar, on peut déduire que la philosophie ancestrale malgache qui a forgé un comportement tolérant et pacifique a contribué à l'élévation des défenses de la paix dans l'esprit des Malgaches. En effet, l'histoire de Madagascar est truffée de crises sociales majeures. Contrairement à ce qu'on aurait pu voir ailleurs, toutes ces crises ont été résolues d'une manière relativement pacifique. Les protagonistes ont toujours essayer de trouver un moyen pour minimiser les pertes humaines en acceptant de dialoguer sous l'égide des représentants de la communauté internationale ou les « Anciens » de bonne notoriété comme le conseil œcuménique des églises chrétiennes à Madagascar.

Permettez-moi de dire quelques mots sur la situation actuelle qui prévaut à Madagascar. Comme vous le savez certainement, la crise politique actuelle persiste toujours. Néanmoins, la Paix sociale règne dans tout le pays. Au début de cette année, sous l'égide de la communauté internationale, le consensus fut atteint et le dialogue national a abouti sur une Feuille de route de sortie de crise qui fut signée par tous les partis politiques. Actuellement, toutes les institutions prévues de transition par cette feuille de route et en place à savoir le Président de la Transition, le Gouvernement d'union nationale, les deux chambres qui font office de Parlement de la transition, le comité de la réconciliation nationale, le conseil électoral indépendant qui doit préparer et piloter les élections prévues pour mai 2013.

De cette expérience nous pouvons appuyer ce qui a été déjà dit que, pour pouvoir entamer les dialogues sociaux dans une situation de crise, il faut de part et d'autre beaucoup d'amour, de tolérance, de compréhension, ainsi que d'humilité pour accepter que l'autre aussi puisse avoir raison. Le plus important et aussi le

plus difficile dans ce processus est la capacité de tout un chacun, non seulement au niveau des dirigeants politiques mais à tous les niveaux, de pardonner les torts causés par l'autre. Seule la maturité «spirituelle» de la population peut endiguer toute velléité de vengeance ou règlement de compte et accéder ainsi à une réconciliation véritable.

Nous constatons aussi que l'assaut de la globalisation culturelle que nous subissons a fait perdre petit à petit les bonnes valeurs culturelles de la population. Les impacts immédiats sont le changement de comportement de quelques individus qui ne respectent plus ni la vie, ni la nature, ni la société. Certains de ces individus n'ont plus peur du Tody. Pour pallier à ces dégradations de comportement, toutes les institutions culturelles et religieuses de l'île ont véhiculé des messages d'amour, de paix, de tolérance et de réconciliation dans laquelle le pardon est primordial. Néanmoins, il est évident qu'il est très difficile de pardonner quelqu'un qui n'a pas l'humilité de reconnaître ses torts et ne demande pas le pardon. Nous sommes convaincus que seule la volonté réelle de la population de se rapprocher de Dieu, quelle que soit la religion pratiquée et les idées politiques véhiculées, pourrait instaurer le vrai pardon sinon la réconciliation reste fragile. Pour ce faire le renforcement de l'éducation civique, culturelle et aussi religieuse intégrant les bonnes valeurs ancestrales et religieuses ainsi que les droits universellement reconnus à l'endroit de toutes les couches de la population toute entière est le seul moyen pour pallier la résurgence de conflits et préserver ainsi la Paix dans un pays multiculturel comme Madagascar.

Pour terminer, permettez-moi d'exprimer toute ma reconnaissance à l'endroit du Vénérable Master Chin Kungqui, par ses enseignements, m'a appris des choses essentielles de la vie et m'a montré le chemin pour mieux pratiquer ma propre religion chrétienne.

Merci de votre attention

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## **MONTENEGRO**

### **H. E. Mrs Irena Radovic, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to France, Permanent Delegate to UNESCO**

Madame President of the UNESCO General Conference, Ambassador Bogyay,  
Most Venerable Master Chin Kung,  
Dear venerable Sirs, including Venerable Bogadhama Chandima Nayaka Thera,  
Respected delegates,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

Allow me to start by saying, that it is an honour and a great pleasure to be part of this UNESCO delegation, comprising ambassadors of 25 countries, privileged to find ourselves in Sri Lanka - a stronghold of the Buddhist religion and culture, from ancient times, a nation where the Buddhist teachings were first written down and a truly beautiful and magnificent country which boasts a diverse range of cultures, languages and religions.

In the era when understanding the many contexts that shape expressions of religious identity and belief – especially cultural, historical, political, and economic – is one of the great challenges of interreligious and intercultural dialogue this Forum devoted to overcoming crisis through education is very topical.

It goes hand in hand with UNESCO's profound commitment to bridging gaps in knowledge about other civilizations, cultures and societies, laying the foundations for dialogue based on universally shared values and to undertaking concrete activities, inspired and driven by dialogue and translated in the area of education.

Intercultural and interreligious dialogue is extremely important for my country, Montenegro one of the Republics of the old Yugoslavia, a founding member of the UNESCO and the Non Aligned Movement and a country whose history has to a significant extent been shaped by its ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic diversity.

With no majority nation, Montenegro embraces Montenegrins, Serbs, Bosniaks and Moslems, Albanians, Croats and others. Although Orthodox Christianity is the dominant form of religion at 72%, there are also sizable adherents of Islam at 19%. Catholic Christianity is also present at the level of around 4% and to a reduced extent Protestantism, Judaism and Buddhism.

Being on the crossroads of civilizations, ruled by Illyrians and Romans, by battling Venetians and Ottomans, and most recently embroiled in the meltdown of Yugoslavia, Montenegro wears its wounds as medals, rather than scars. Why? The tradition of embracing our multi-ethnic and multi-religious diversity assured unity and ensure that Montenegro was the only country all republics of the former Yugoslavia that succeeded to escape the war on its soil of during the tragic events of the 90s.

What is remarkable is the harmony between different religions and nationalities, which has endured for centuries. This harmony has withstood attempted invasions, preserved Montenegro's freedom and finally in the last decade of the 20th century meant immunity from all the religious and national conflicts that have raged all around us.

In Montenegro we love saying that ethnic and religious diversity is our historic feature and never source of a problem. There is truth in it but also element of false self-appeasement.

Why? Simply because challenges related to cultural diversity have a different connotation in modern society. In society in which cultural diversity is its standard characteristic, where standard does not necessarily mean desirable, where contemporary individual is doomed to living in the environment of neighbors having different skin colour, speaking a different language, praising a different God (or no God at all). In the era where cultural differences are more often a reason for alienation and distrust between people despite the contemporary society ideal that cultural diversity is a treasure to be celebrated and proud of.

As globalization and the emergence of new contemporary challenges and threats to humankind make the need for dialogue among peoples ever more important cultural diversity imperatively requires development of an adequate policy and education policy as one of the major aspects of it. Education process should aim to prepare citizens for living in multicultural and diverse world. On the one hand it ought to imply respect of different ethnic and religious groups, while on the other hand, to provide equal opportunities to everyone despite their origin, gender and beliefs in a given society. To combine these goals is not easy but as long as we all understand that there is no room for pre-eminence and uniqueness and that our alleged differences bare the same foundations whether we call them "love, mercy or compassion" we are on the right path.

Thank you.

**NETHERLANDS**  
**H. E. Mr Robert Zeldenrust, Ambassador Extraordinary and**  
**Plenipotentiary, Permanent Delegate to UNESCO**

I am very happy to be here and to be able to speak about a subject that is at the core of UNESCO's mission.

After World War II it was concluded that since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defence of peace must be constructed. With reference to what my colleague and friend, the ambassador of Nigeria just stated, I must say that in those days it was indeed largely a matter of men determining these kind of decisions. In this respect we have fortunately come a long way since that time. Now women play an important role in all decision making processes. In any case, it was agreed that cooperation in the fields of education, culture and science would be the most effective way to achieve that goal. At a later stage communication and information were added, which is particularly worth mentioning since these two areas were referred to by various speakers as deserving attention when addressing the issue of conflicts between religious communities.

In Western Europe, religious tolerance is of relatively recent date. My own country, the Netherlands, for instance has known long and serious strife between Roman Catholics and Protestants, a situation that, unfortunately, today still can be witnessed in Northern Ireland, but hopefully will soon be a thing of the past altogether.

The question how to achieve harmonious relations between religious communities immediately takes us back to the area that we covered in yesterday's session at the Presidential Palace, namely education. I would like to make a plea for looking at education from a broader angle. Of course learning how to read and write and, later, mathematics are important objectives of education. But education should do more than just prepare for exams. It should also contribute to creating responsible people that can make positive contributions to a peaceful society.

This can be achieved by informing schoolchildren about other religions than their own, by showing them what religions have in common rather than what divides them. What do children know about all the religions shown on the screen in front of us? Many values are shared by all religions and even by people who are not religious. The President of the General Conference, Ambassador Bogay, rightly pointed at the increasing level of secularisation in the Western world. I would, however, like to emphasise that people who consider themselves as humanists largely adhere to the same values as religious people do. After all, they have not come from Mars, but were brought up in the same traditions as those who still belong to a church. They have only concluded that building a harmonious society, where people treat one another with respect and mutual understanding doesn't necessarily have to be based on religion.

Education, therefore, is the key word, as was also clearly stated by Ven. Master Chin Kung. Children who learn from an early age about other religions, who, in other words, learn to look over the fence, will be more inclined to accept people of a different denomination than their own and will be more open to working together with other good willing citizens whose goal it is to build a harmonious, peace loving society. If this forum can contribute to reaching that goal, it will provide an invaluable service not only to societies concerned but, more generally, to a better world.

Thank you.

**NICARAGUA**  
**H. E. Mr Mauricio Lautaro Sandino Montes, Ambassador**  
**Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to Belgium and to the**  
**European Union, Permanent Delegate to UNESCO**

Dear Friends,

Let me express my sincere gratitude for the government of Sri Lanka, and Ambassador Catherine Bogyay, President of the UNESCO General Conference.

Nicaragua is a small country of 5.5 million of inhabitants, located in the middle of the Americas. Our population is made of mestizos, blacks, the miskitos, sumos and ramas, this last 3 were the originals inhabitants of our Caribbean coast.

Let me share with you our experience in developing our democracy. I would say how Nicaragua have been doing to consolidated peace and good governance. The military conflict we lived in the decade of '80 is far gone, our democratic system is developing well and since 1990 there have been democratic election. The government of Reconciliation and National Unity of President Daniel Ortega has been able to improve education, health, and economic development our economy is in good shape.

I think there have been 4 practices that have make this possible and reflect the philosophy of the Nicaraguan government.

In first place, respect, respect for the opinion of others, their political and social decisions, and the dignity of the human being.

Second, tolerance, accepting that each one of us have the right for their own opinions and believes. Tolerance is not easy to reach. But if we learn to have tolerance then we are able to respect the other.

Third, solidarity, this mean we care for the wellbeing of women, men, the youth. Solidarity is our main inspiration and compromise, to eradicate poverty and get sustainable development.

And finally but not least, attitude of service, to seek at all time how we can serve and not being serve.

All this elements are equally important and have been the key of the success of the government of President Ortega.

To finalize I like to share a personal experience. From the wisdom of the Toltec, the original inhabitants of America, who thousands of years ago. They called the four agreements, and offer a powerful code of conduct that can rapidly transform our lives to a new experience of freedom, true happiness, and love.

These agreements are:

1. Be impeccable with your word. Say only what you mean. Avoid using the word to speak against yourself or to gossip about others.
2. Don't take anything personally. Nothing other do is because of you. What others say and do is a projection of their own reality, their own dream.
3. Don't make assumptions. Find the courage to ask questions and to express what you really want. Communicate with others as clearly as you can to avoid misunderstandings, sadness, and drama. With just this agreement, you can completely transform your like. And,
4. Always do your best. Your best is going to change from moment to moment; it will be different when you are healthy as opposed to sick. Under any circumstance do your best, and you will avoid self-judgment, self-abuse, and regret.

Thank you all for your patience and attention

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**NIGERIA**  
**H. E. Mrs Mariam Y. Katagum, Ambassador, Permanent  
Delegate to UNESCO**

Special Guest of Honour, Dear Venerable Chin Kung,  
Your Excellency, President of the UNESCO General Conference,  
Ambassadors, Permanent Delegates,  
Honourable Ministers,  
Distinguished participants,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Permit me to start by thanking the government of Sri Lanka for the kind invitation to bring us together, in the quest for fellowship, dialogue and the exchange of thoughts and experiences, in this important Intercultural and Interfaith Peace Dialogue.

One subject that undoubtedly unites us all here today, is Education and I am sure that I can allow myself the liberty of assuming that for most of us Education has been a Lifelong concern and commitment.

The preamble to the UNESCO's Constitution wisely affirms that "It is in the minds of men, and women of course, "that the defenses of peace must be constructed".

What greater crisis can we dream - up than conflict, wars, brutal confrontations between peoples, among nations, between neighbors and worse and worse still within societies and within nations.

And when these confrontations put on the garments of beliefs and religions they have been known to bring out the very ugliest in human nature.

So how do we deal with these crises; the problems of living together. How do we rid ourselves of prejudices – great and small, how do we learn to give ourselves that golden opportunity to open just a little bit of our minds and let some sunshine of tolerance and may be some little love come in.

I come from a country of some 160 million people – over 450 languages and ethnic groups; diverse cultures going far back into the millennium, full of songs and dances and a multiplicity of cultural manifestations. We have often been called the most happy people in the world. And also the most religious!

Currently we are 50% Muslims; 48% Christians; and 2% Traditional Religion.

But what is also true and real is that in spite of all we have to make us one united happy people, we have not been spared the agony of dissension in our society: we have not been safe from elements who from time to time rise against the society and choose their victims in the name of one religion or the other; they spread fear and havoc and leave victims in their trail.

We fought a 30-month civil war in the late 60s. We had the 'Maitatsine' religious uprising in the 1980s. And currently we have been facing the challenges posed by 'Boko Haram'.

But what I want to bring out here is that the same society that produces the intolerance that leads to dangerous conflict is also capable of producing the dedicated and devoted elements that work in the other direction - for tolerance, for mutual understanding and for the coming-together of the people.



Because of the nature of the people of the country, because of their diversity, multiplicity and its richness, this same society throws up, nurtures and produces the leaders who by their work and their lives are dedicated to the work of striving to bring people together, to work against intolerance hatred and religious antagonism.

I offer you just one example. When the Nigeria Inter-Religions Council (NIREC) was founded in 1999, it was very much in reaction to the persistent crisis of ethno religious nature that often disturbed the Peace of the nation. Its aim was to “serve as a platform for high level dialogue between the leaders of Christians and Moslems in Nigeria”. It organizes Conferences designed to promote understanding, appreciation of one another and the generation of mutual respect between Christians and Muslims.

The Council is made up of 25 Christians and 25 Muslims. It is co-chaired by two eminent Nigerians; the Sultan of Sokoto and President-General of the Nigeria Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (NSCIA), Alhaji Muhammad Saad Abubakar, and the Catholic Archbishop of Abuja and President of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Dr. John Onaiyekan (incidentally, he has just been named a Cardinal by the Pope),

In its quest for peace in the country NIREC has organized youth summits as a way of training the young on mutual co-existence, religious tolerance and harmony and interfaith dialogue. It informs, teaches and tries to calm the society at large during periods of crises, including even those whose business it is to spread terror.

The coming together of these leaders in itself, is a monumental lesson and example for their followers and also for the generality of the people.

Often, their voices are heard, in unison directing and guiding their people in the same direction. The significance of this must mean something. It must prove something. The hope is that the lesson that their leadership, strong and transparent, and the solidarity in their cooperation will be a bright star that shows the way to a more meaningful relationship between those who have otherwise been misled into ways of intolerance and hatred.

However, there are challenges:

- Politicization of religion for political gains.
- Erosion of the spiritual leadership of our traditional rulers.
- Who acts as mediator when the two leaders are towing religious lines when there is a conflict?
- Settler versus indigene syndrome.
- What happens when there is perceived impunity? Will there be reconciliation?
- What role does the media play in fanning the embers of religious and other conflicts?

Suggestions:

- 1). Education, the right education is like good nourishment for the mind. In the right hands Education and Information can work wonders. But in the wrong hands it spreads great disaster.  
I am talking about the right kind of education which must be inculcated in the child right early in its life. We as parents have a great responsibility in this regard, by making sure that the young and their malleable minds that are in our care are nourished with the right kind of attitude and moral. No child is too young to know right from wrong; and herein lies the critical

- importance of the parental role, long before the child is thrown into the wild and dangerous world.
- 2) Strengthen UNESCO's Culture of Peace Programme and include flagship programmes which promote the principles of learning to live together ; and curriculum enrichment to include teaching of tolerance.i
  - 3). Revive and strengthen UNESCO Clubs and the ASP-net as well as partnerships with Parliamentarians.
  - 4). Support the emergence of more community-based NGOs and FBOs.
  - 5). At the tertiary level, encourage training in peace studies and conflict resolution so as to have a critical mass of professionals who can provide early warning on potential conflict situations and be able to, if needs be, become objective arbiters.
  - 6). Training of journalists and the media in professional ethics and responsible reporting.

Excellencies, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, I thank you for your kind attention and may God bless us all. Ameen.

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## **NORWAY**

### **Mr Danker Vedeler, Deputy Permanent Delegate to UNESCO**

Introduction at the Intercultural and Interfaith Peace Dialogue: Overcoming crises through education.

A yu buwan, wannekam

Venerable master Chin Kung,  
Venerable member of the Buddhist Sanga, religious leaders, ambassadors, dear friends.

Living in a world with fewer wars and conflicts, fewer people living below defined poverty level, but inequalities are still increasing not sustainable President, peace is a prerequisite for sustainable development

Preparation

22. July 2011 - Hit the Norwegian society in away as a small scale 9.11

Bomblast in front of Prime Minister's Office - only 8 people killed - huge physical damages

1 hour later - Ruling party Youth Camp attacked - 69 young people from the age of 14 and above - cold bloodily shot, one by one - two hours

77 lives lost and many seriously injured

All done by one white ethnic Christian Norwegian man in his 30 with no criminal record

The person later labeled a terrorist, Anders Bering Breivik, has done this in his own words, as a crusade against Muslim influence and immigration into Europe - islamophobia

Just before, when leaving for the misdeeds, he published on the internet a 1500 page manifest, a justification for his actions in his weird virtual- using cut and paste from obscure racist scholars.

Hit surprise - unbelievable looked into a virtual world.

Why am I repeating this tragedy - some of the responses may be of general interest.

Immediate questions

- What Happened?
- How could this happen?
- Why would this happen in what we consider: a peaceful society

And then shortly afterwards

- How should we react as a nation - to this horrible crime

Short term

- Political parties united
- The king and prime minister met with the Imams
- Mobilisation of the Norwegian people - show their grief and sorrow
- Under the banner - more love and more openness - no cry for hatred and revenge or death penalty
- An ocean of roses parade in Oslo 100.000 1/5 of its population.

Intermediate term

- All schools should address what had happened

Longer term

- Legal process - transparent
- Independent Commission - report almost a year after - avoid, actions, lessons learned
- Using education for countering hatred

Conclusion lesson learned as a society

- One man work - no organisation - but why was he not detected - safety nets in general
- Not only to focus on more control
- What should the school do - subject learning about religion - campaign against bullying – not leaving any child out.
- But safeguard the open democratic Norwegian Society - more dialogue based on humanism.

Estuti - nandry - thank you!

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## **OMAN**

**H. E. Dr. Samira Mohamed Moosa Al Moosa, Ambassador,  
Permanent Delegate to UNESCO**

Islam – the path to peace and reconciliation

Bismillah! As-salam-alaikum (“Peace be upon you”)! As a Moslem I offer this greeting even when I enter my empty house and also when I encounter others such as you my fellow delegates. I salute you in this manner as a sign of good will, mutual respect, tranquility, serenity, stability, non-aggression, and happiness. These are principles very dear to us all as people and to me as a believer/Moslem. They ensure a peaceful coexistence in times of peace and following a return to peace and co-existence.

Salam or “peace” is a goal that most human beings and most of the world religions, be it Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Judaism, Hinduism, and so forth endlessly pursue. For without peace, there can be no happiness nor welfare nor prosperity nor progress. In the Qu’ran’s iqrah we are told to proclaim/read in order to acquire knowledge or enlightenment. That too is something that most people and world religions seek.

‘Salam’ (Peace) is an attribute of God (Qu’ran, 59:21), and it is also a synonym for Paradise (Qu’ran, 6:127), a place where many believers aspire to as their eternal home.

Islam is a peace loving religion with a merciful god that advocates justice and tolerance as well peaceful co-existence as history and the Qu’ran demonstrate. As far back as the 7<sup>th</sup> century, after Muhammed (peace be upon him) vanquished Mecca, he advocated peace, justice, mercy and forgiveness. Indeed, it is written that God prefers love and friendship between all, and is most forgiving, most merciful (Qu’ran, 60:7-9). Furthermore, believers are urged to accept other faiths and its practitioners (Qu’ran, 29:46). They are also expected to accept diversity in order to promote greater understanding and a peaceful co-existence (Qu’ran, 49:13). These are all features of Islam that continue to be relevant to us in the 21<sup>st</sup> century as we choose the path of multiculturalism in our various countries. We do this by social acceptance of differences of all sorts in our society, and by having legislation that promotes acceptance of diversity.

Believers are also urged to reconcile with those who have wronged them, and to ensure that they are just and tolerant because all people are created equal before God (Qu’ran, 4:1 and 49:13). As mentioned earlier, Muhammed (peace be upon him) did this in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, and so did Omar bin al-Khattab, second Moslem Caliph of the Islamic state who conquered Rome and Persia. Like Mohammed, he commanded his people to show mercy and be tolerant ensuring the human dignity of the conquered peoples. He mandated that the personal and material security as well the freedom of religious practice of the conquered be ensured.

Multiculturalism and the embrace of diversity in Islam is highly evident, for instance, in the diverse peoples performing the Hajj for instance, in Mecca today.

In conclusion, it is evident that advocating for equality of humanity, justice, tolerance, forgiveness and peaceful co-existence, is the true path to a more harmonious 21<sup>st</sup> century world community.

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## **SENEGAL**

**H. E. Mr Papa Momar Diop**  
**Ambassador, Permanent Delegate to UNESCO**

### **EXPERIENCE DU SENEGAL EN MATIERE DE DIALOGUE INTERRELIGIEUX**

Le Sénégal se compose d’une population de 12 millions d’habitants à 95% de musulmans, 4% de chrétiens (généralement catholiques) et 1% d’animistes.

Cette dernière tranche pratique l’Animisme, qui est la religion originelle et traditionnelle du Sénégal. Elle attribue une âme à tous les êtres (plantes, hommes animaux, objets) et à tous les phénomènes de la nature. Pour les animistes, quatre éléments fondamentaux composent la nature : l’eau, la terre, l’air et le feu. Ces éléments sont, chacun, sous le contrôle spécifique d’un dieu intermédiaire, ayant des fonctions particulières. L’Animisme peut ainsi être vu comme une relation triangulaire entre la nature, les êtres humains et le sacré.

Au fil de l'Histoire, l'animisme a cédé le terrain aux religions monothéistes à livres que sont l'Islam et le christianisme. En ce qui concerne l'Islam, il a été introduit au Sénégal, entre le XI<sup>e</sup> et le XII<sup>e</sup> siècle, dans le contexte du commerce caravanier transsaharien, par les Almoravides, une dynastie berbère maure, originaire de l'Adrar et qui nomadisaient entre l'actuel Sénégal et le sud du Maroc.

Le Christianisme, quant à lui, est arrivé au Sénégal avec les missions évangélistes européennes, principalement françaises, entre le XV<sup>e</sup> et le XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle.

Donc, la principale religion du Sénégal est l'Islam. L'Islam sénégalais présente deux particularités.

La première est qu'il se fonde sur les confréries qui sont au nombre de 4: la Quadiriyya, la Tidianiyya, la Mouriddiya et la Mahdiya Laayène. Ces deux confréries n'existent qu'au Sénégal. Les confréries regroupent les musulmans autour d'un guide commun : le Khalife Général. Celui-ci transmet à ses fidèles une méthode de pratique religieuse, appelée Tariqa (la voie).

La deuxième particularité de l'Islam sénégalais est qu'il est pratiqué dans le cadre d'un dialogue permanent avec le christianisme. Le mot dialogue paraît même assez faible. On peut parler d'une imbrication sociale et sociologique entre les deux religions. A cela, trois exemples.

Le premier exemple est qu'au sein d'une même famille, on peut retrouver à la fois des musulmans et des chrétiens. C'est le cas de la famille de Mgr. Hyacinthe THIANDOUM, archevêque de Dakar et premier cardinal sénégalais, dont le frère de mêmes père et mère était imam de mosquée.

Le deuxième exemple est que le premier Président du Sénégal, Léopold Sédar SENGHOR était chrétien, sa femme chrétienne. M. SENGHOR a gagné démocratiquement toutes les élections face à des opposants musulmans et, chaque fois, avec le soutien et la bénédiction des Khalifes Généraux des différentes confréries, alors que la population est musulmane dans son écrasante majorité.

Le troisième exemple est que les deux principales fêtes religieuses musulmanes et chrétiennes sont célébrées par toute la population sénégalaise : Noël et l'Aïd El Kébir sont les affaires de tous.

Pour conclure, ce que j'ai essayé de vous dire est que le Sénégal est un pays profondément musulman, où cohabitent trois religions dans une harmonie totale. Trois religions qui se vouent un respect total, vécu dans les familles et dans toutes les sphères sociales.

Un tel pays est naturellement ouvert à toutes les initiatives dans le sens de surmonter les crises à travers le monde par l'éducation et les fora interreligieux et partant, induire une paix durable et une société harmonieuse, comme le suggèrent l'UNESCO et le PURE LAND LEARNING COLLEGE sous l'égide du Très Vénérable Master Chin KUNG.

Je rêve qu'une édition d'Interfaith Forum puisse, un jour, être organisée au Sénégal.

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**SUDAN**  
**H. E. Mr. Khalid Mohamed Farah El Fahal**  
**Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to France**  
**Permanent Delegate to UNESCO**

The Culture of Peace in the Sudan and the role of UNESCO

The term “Culture of peace” was first coined and used in 1989, during the International Congress on Peace in the Minds of Men, which was held in Yamoussoukro, Cote d'Ivoire, and which witnessed the creation of the Houphouet Boigny Peace Prize. The idea was then adopted by UNESCO General Conference which established in 1993, a program for the culture of peace for the first time, within the regular programmes and budget.

Over the past two decades, this concept has come a long way, and has been gaining a progressive momentum ever since, albeit with certain difficulties and some discontinuity. Thus, in 1994, Federico Mayor, the former Director General of UNESCO, launched an international appeal on the establishment of a right to peace, in February 1994, UNESCO launched its Towards a Culture of Peace program, also in 1994, El Salvador hosted the 1st International Conference on the Culture of peace, while the 2<sup>nd</sup> one was held in Manila, Philippines in 1995, in 1997, the United Nations` General Assembly declared the year 2000 as the “International Year for the Culture of Peace” and in 1998, the same assembly declared the period 2001 – 2010 the “International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World”.

The expression “Culture of Peace”, as one UNESCO relevant document published in 1999 indicated, implies that peace in fact, means much more the absence of war, and that peace is considered as, and I quote: “a set of values, attitudes and modes of behavior promoting the peaceful settlement of conflicts and the quest for mutual understanding. In fact, peace is one way to live together”. Unquote.

However, from a practical point of view, or as a community based and targeting practice, a culture of peace program is that one which includes a specific set of social-development activities aimed at peace-building, as well as enhancing a peaceful social co-existence and interaction within a certain community.

A number of UNESCO member states have benefited from the UNESCO Culture of Peace programs, such as: El Salvador, the Philippines, Somalia, Sudan, Burundi, Rwanda, Mozambique, the RDC, Afghanistan and others.

However, as regards my country, the Sudan in particular, I would like to stress that Sudan was one of the first countries that have associated with the UNESCO program for the culture of peace. Thus, in April 1995, the Former DG of UNESCO, Mr. Federico Mayor visited Khartoum where he took part in the Regional Conference on the Culture of Peace, a conference in which delegations from: Chad, the Central African Republic, the RDC, Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia and Eritrea participated, besides Dr. Salim Ahmed Salim, the then Secretary General of the OAU.

Moreover, that Khartoum regional conference on the culture of peace, paved the way for the creation of a number of centers, think-tanks, NGOs and civil society organizations inside Sudan, which all started to deal with and practice the idea of the culture of peace, such as – among others -: The Peace Research centers of the Universities of Khartoum, Juba and Dilling, besides the establishment of UNESCO Chairs in the area of the culture of peace in a number of Sudanese universities.

Furthermore, having acquainted himself with the political and intellectual elite of the Sudan at that time, including the president Omar El Bashir, during his visit to Khartoum during the aforementioned regional conference, Mr. Mayor and UNESCO took the initiative of organizing of the Barcelona Symposium on the Fundamental problems in the Sudan, which was held in Barcelona, Spain from 23 to 26 September 1995. The participants in that symposium were a delegation of 15 members representing the Government of Sudan led by Dr. Ghazi Salahuddin, then Advisor to the President of the Republic, and another delegation composed of also 15 members representing the SPLA/SPLM, and led by Mr. Pagan Amom, besides some resource persons and the delegation of UNESCO under whose auspices the whole event was held.

The Barcelona meeting which took place thanks to the initiative of UNESCO, was indeed, held at a very crucial moment in the evolution of the conflict between the Sudan government and the former rebel movement of south Sudan, when dialogue and all contacts were virtually stopped. Therefore, it was UNESCO which took the initiative of re-establishing the contacts, brought the two parties together and convinced them to reengage in informal discussions about the fundamental issues, especially those related to UNESCO's mandate such as: education, culture, culture of peace, identity, cultural diversity and democracy, all as related to the issues of governance, tolerance and responsible citizenship.

The outcome of that very important encounter, was the Barcelona Declaration which was indeed, a land mark document, in the sense that it underlined the necessity of respecting and preserving the cultural, religious and linguistic diversity of the people of Sudan, a principle which is to be reflected later on by the CPA as well as the Transitional Constitution of the Sudan of 2005, respectively.

So, we wouldn't be exaggerating if we said that the Barcelona meeting of 1995, did play an essential role in breaking the ice and removing the psychological barrier between the Sudan government and the SPLA/SPLM, as well as in preparing the ground for all the subsequent rounds of negotiations which took place between the two parties and which were crowned by the conclusion of the Comprehensive peace Agreement, signed in Naivasha, Kenya on the 9<sup>th</sup> of January 2005, thus bringing to an end what is often described as the longest armed conflict in the African continent.

UNESCO's role was further extended to the areas of sectoral educational reform, inter-religious and inter-community dialogue as well as preservation of cultural heritage.

Conclusion and the way forward :

In the presence of the current state of turmoil and instability all over the world, we firmly believe that the necessity of reinvigorating and disseminating the culture of peace is needed more than any time in the past.

However, to conclude, we have the following recommendation and proposals to put forward:

On education, we believe that it is imperative to further reinforce education for the culture of peace and tolerance.

Revisit the issues of cultural, linguistic and religious diversity.

Enhancing inter-religious dialogue.

Deepening the reflection on the appropriate ways and means of dealing with extremism, by means other than the use of force and violence.

The promotion of the culture of accountability and mutual dialogue on the issues of identity, diversity, equity and justice from a culture of peace perspective. Promotion of free, responsible and accountable communication and media institutions with the aim of enhancing the culture of peace.

And last, but not least, the discourses of the culture of peace should be diversified and balanced and should not be only directed towards, the developing countries and communities as it now virtually is, but it should also include the advanced countries of the world as well.

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**THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA**  
**H. E. Mr Agron Budjaku**  
**Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to France**  
**Permanent Delegate to UNESCO**

Venerable Master Chin Kung,  
Excellencies, dear colleagues  
Ladies and Gentleman, dear friends

It is a great honour and privilege to participate in the Interfaith Forum dedicated to Overcoming Crises Through Education within the Intercultural and Interfaith Peace Dialogue, a topic of uttermost importance nowadays. I sincerely thank the venerable Master Chin Kung for the invitation and for his tireless efforts in building bridges of understanding between peoples through dialogue and education.

If you allow me, I would approach the topic from three different angles: general, personal/religious/regional and purely/intimate/personal.

Generally speaking, we are witnessing, worldwide, profound changes of unprecedented dynamics. The so-called globalization is bringing, in many areas of the world, rapid economic development but also decline in standard of living in other areas; the immediate communication worldwide through internet and other modern means and technologies connect people and facilitates exchanges and development but, at the same time, make possible dissemination of ideologies of hatred and intolerance; big scale social transformations are going on with hundreds of millions of people moving from rural to urban areas. Whereas the quantity of goods and services in many domains is rising, the income differences are widening, the planet is being ruthlessly polluted and people are being exposed to a new, different environment. Moreover, all these profound changes happen within the lifespan of one generation, which result in an ideological and value-system vacuum, since it is very difficult to acquire and establish real, long-lasting values when new generations are exposed to such rapid and, at the same time, profound changes. Hence the importance of the traditional and long-lasting values, the venerable Master Chin Kung is insisting, which would bring and keep peace and understanding among people of different backgrounds and religions.

Speaking from a personal/religious/regional point of view, I have been born Muslim in the Balkans, a disturbed region which produced the term “balkanization”, meaning conflicts and divisions which started at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and ended with its conclusion. Unfortunately, and this is often a case, people emphasize the negative characteristic rather than positive ones, as an old saying goes “people are more fascinated with the turbulent ocean than with the calm waters”: very rare you can hear someone speaking of the Balkans as the region where major religion and civilization meet, co-exist and enrich each



other. In the Balkans, and people tend to forget because it was long time ago when the region was not even considered as such and was not called Balkans, was born and flourished the ancient Greek civilization which enriched the whole humanity; people ignore that, while, in the mediaeval age in many areas of the world religion divisions and different conflict were taking place, the Balkans under the Ottoman Empire at its height, were enjoying an unseen period of tolerance based on mutual respect, characteristic of the Empire's tolerance toward peoples of the "Books", ie towards Christians and Jews. It is in such tradition that I have been raised and educated in my hometown, Diber, which is an example of peaceful co-existence between people of different ethnic and religious background, where everyone knows the language of the other, where everyone respect the tradition of the other. It is that tradition I would like to emphasize and keep in me, a tradition which enables me to understand and appreciate the Master's teachings on interfaith dialogue and the common values of different religions and beliefs.

And finally, allow me to share with you, dear friends, my personal experience, intimately speaking. I met for the first time the Venerable Master Chin Kung and the wonderful people of Pure Land last May in Bangkok where I was invited, with other UNESCO Ambassadors to a Buddhist gathering. In my age, I am 55, man starts to ponder on the meaning of life. I consider myself lucky that namely in this age I work in UNESCO and I have met the venerable Master, whom I have had the opportunity to listen on several occasions since. I was lucky because, although I like reading very much, I would not have enough time, according to a Chinese saying "listening to a wise man for two hours is like reading 1000 books", I repeat, I will not have enough time in my life to read so many books and learn as much as I have learned from him during this short period. As I said, I am fully aware of the complexity of the world today, I come from a complex region, I have had my personal experiences in life, complex in many ways; I am in an age which asks difficult questions as preparation for the inevitable end (I have been told will come). Suddenly, I have found myself in UNESCO, among people from all over the world, among educated people of different cultural background, people I appreciate and whose knowledge and experience means a lot to me. I consider myself lucky because the Master's teachings and the goodness and sincerity of Pure Land people, make me better person every day and have brought calmness in my heart and clearness in my mind. Thank You very much for everything Master Chin and I wish long life and good health to you and happiness to your devoted followers.

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