

Towards a constructive pluralism

Report

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COMMONWEALTH SECRETARIAT

“UNESCO’s Constitution emphasises that a just and lasting peace in the world cannot be founded on economic and political arrangements alone, but requires the ‘intellectual and moral solidarity’ of humankind. This forms the basis of our ethical mandate to promote human rights and fundamental freedoms. It is the foundation of our Culture of Peace Programme. A culture of peace is both a living experience and an innovative approach to trying to make the social fabric of every society cohesive... It is this multi-faceted approach which can make peace, democracy and development truly interactive. And one of the keys to its success will be attitudes to human diversity, which will be a special issue in the year 2000, United Nations International Year for the Culture of Peace”.

Extract from opening address by Federico Mayor
Director-General, UNESCO

“Examples of the subversive and destabilising effects of ‘divisive pluralism’ abound. But it is also important that attention should be given to the alternative, positive, concept... Difference need not produce conflict, any more than sameness necessarily results in solidarity. The challenge is to devise a ‘vision’ of the way in which people can live together harmoniously in the larger society, while at the same time being able to maintain, rather than dilute or lose, a strong sense of belonging to their particular cultural, ethnic, religious or other community”.

Extract from opening address by Chief Emeka Anyaoku
Commonwealth Secretary-General

Foreword

This report is divided into two parts. The first contains official documents approved by UNESCO and the Commonwealth Secretariat and written for the colloquium, either by the participants or in the name of the two institutions. The second, an initiative of the Division of Cultural Pluralism of UNESCO, represents a synthesis of the main ideas mentioned by the participants in the papers which they submitted as well as during the course of the debates. It is, therefore, a free interpretation, for which the Commonwealth Secretariat and the quoted authors bear no responsibility, although it is entirely based on the ideas, themes and main points mentioned during the colloquium.

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Official Documents

BACKGROUND PAPER*

1 Why a Joint Colloquium?

The theme of cultural pluralism and its implications for inter- and intra-societal relations is one of the key features of the work of UNESCO and also a matter of great importance to the Commonwealth. The initiative for a joint colloquium entitled *Towards A Constructive Pluralism* arises from a shared commitment by the UNESCO Director-General, Mr Federico Mayor, and the Commonwealth Secretary-General, Chief Emeka Anyaoku, to address these challenges in a framework that encompasses both universal and particular values. Its purpose is to consider the nature of pluralism and the role of the state and civil society in preventing pluralism from becoming divisive, and assisting the building of a positive and constructive pluralism for the future. There exists a need to show that being part of a multicultural society is an enriching experience.

UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, is an intergovernmental organization with 186 member states dedicated to the development of international intellectual co-operation in order to build the “defences of peace in the minds of men”. Its role is to forge a community of ideas, knowledge and purpose; it is also to contribute to the progressive forging of a universal vision reflecting and drawing benefit from the sum of the differences. As an intellectual forum, it can help the international community to gain a better grasp of the changes occurring in the world today and to devise innovative strategies to meet emerging challenges in its fields of competence. Culture of peace and peace for development are the two main strands closely intertwined of UNESCO’s Medium-Term Strategy as it has been devised for the years 1996-2001. The main objectives underlying it are, in essence, to reach the unreached, to include the excluded, to facilitate the exercise of civil rights and the participation of everyone in development, and to learn to live together and to build together, despite disagreements and differences.

The Commonwealth is an intergovernmental organization with 54 member countries, drawn from all continents, interest-groups and levels of development and thus representing a global sub-system. Its members co-operate to promote such fundamental political values as democracy, human rights and the rule of law, as well as sustainable socio-economic development. While it counts

This background paper prepared by UNESCO and the Commonwealth Secretariat presents the motivations, objectives and main themes of the colloquium.

several large states among its members, small states represent a majority in the association and receive particular attention. The diversity and global reach of the Commonwealth, and its tradition of decision-making by consensus, make it an important international forum for policy development on global issues. Given its diverse membership and its central commitment to the promotion of unity in diversity, the Commonwealth is specially suited to make a meaningful contribution on the subject of this colloquium.

Both organisations hope that this colloquium will not only contribute to the ongoing dialogue about how to avoid conflict and promote constructive interaction among individuals and groups in plural societies, but also result in some practical suggestions about how to ensure that pluralism is harnessed in a positive way for the future.

2 Preliminary Observations

The incidence of post-Cold War conflicts between increasingly assertive and politically mobilized ethnic, national, religious, linguistic, and other culturally distinct groups produces pessimism about the viability of plural societies. In an increasingly interconnected world, one characterized by unprecedented inter-societal mobility, global communications, economic transactions, and inter-cultural contacts at every level, the challenge of managing diversity has come to the fore. The old conception of homogeneous, insulated and self-sufficient nation-states, which was perhaps always an unrealistic one, is now quite irrelevant.

The foregoing has multiple consequences both at policy level and in terms of daily life. Ideas about what characteristics are essential to individual identity and self-respect, and about how these qualities should be expressed in civic associations and political institutions, are evolving constantly. The approach of relegating particularism to the so-called private sphere and constructing a neutral civic identity completely devoid of cultural content has proved unrealistic and unviable. It is clear, perhaps especially in an era of perceived flux and instability, that individuals need a strong sense of belonging to anchor themselves in civil society and to identify with and accept the legitimacy of their political institutions. How specific must this sense of belonging be? Can an ideal of 'multicultural citizenship' provide individuals with a concrete enough sense of belonging? These are the kinds of questions this colloquium seeks to address.

For the moment, two general points should be emphasized. First, though it may seem obvious, it must be remembered that no society is ever truly homogeneous. Each individual is unique, and

our sense of group belonging depends on what shared characteristics are considered most salient in a given place and time. The elusive notion of identity stands at the intersection of self-perception (what we notice and consider important about ourselves) and other-perception (what others notice and consider important about us), neither of which is inherent or immutable. While admitting that even 'constructed' cultural or ethnic identities have tremendous resonance and can become imbued with 'reality', it does suggest a need for caution in accepting group identities as pre-given or fixed. Conceptualizing identity as multi-layered and dynamic, rather than monolithic and static, can help us move towards more flexible models of how to share public space while maintaining, rather than erasing, a strong sense of belonging to particular communities within a larger and more inclusive social context.

This leads to the second basic observation: diversity of identities and loyalties is not an 'obstacle' to 'overcome', or a 'problem' to be 'resolved'. The assumption that uniformity breeds solidarity is as simplistic as the conclusion that difference produces conflict. While group identities certainly can be and have been mobilized for various purposes, this can have both positive and negative effects. Some sense of group belonging is essential to social cohesion and interaction. Such belonging does not need to be monolithic, exclusive, or hostile to others. Hence the notion of the 'uses' and 'abuses' of personal and political identities, the question being how to shape and define these, not how to dilute or destroy them.

As the dialogue about cultural pluralism has developed, a consensus has emerged on the necessity of avoiding both the extreme of imposed homogeneity and that of forced heterogeneity. The next step is to develop more concrete strategies for bringing about a dynamic societal equilibrium that fosters unity without requiring uniformity. The very idea of 'constructive pluralism' as both a goal and a process highlights the preoccupation shared by the conference organizers, i.e. to channel pluralism in a positive fashion in order to facilitate the creation of state and societal mechanisms to promote harmonious interaction between cultures.

Clearly, there can be no magic formula for every situation; each society must work out its own model. But by showing how to cultivate the capacity for openness and constructive engagement on the personal, institutional, and societal levels, we can give plural societies the tools and support they need to find their own *modus vivendi*. This colloquium is certainly not the first reflection on this topic, nor will it be the last. But as policy-makers, academics, and other members of civil society have a particular interest in and experience of the challenges of pluralism, it is hoped that bringing them together will generate a number of proposals, as well as broader contributions to an ongoing and essential dialogue. All those invited to participate in this colloquium have special expertise through studying, living in, working with, and in a few cases actually governing plural societies. Collectively, therefore, they represent a rich resource-base. This brief document is designed to help make their discussions as focused and productive as possible.

3

Questions for Discussion

The Annotated Agenda provides a framework for the colloquium. The following supplementary observations highlight some of the important propositions to be considered:

Objective:

Developing Together or Not at All

International society and its institutions, particularly in this era of 'globalization', are often accused of promoting values which conflict with local circumstances. There may be some truth in this charge. But the rationale of cultural relativism can be equally questioned when used to justify practices that violate basic human rights. There is no escape from some basic common standards being agreed, including guidelines for development (for example, workers' rights, gender equality, and environmental protection). Because pluralism exists both within and between societies, many of the same questions arise on the national and international levels: how to ensure respect for difference without encouraging fragmentation and isolation, and how to promote consensus on values and projects while enabling individuals and groups to define and pursue their own self-chosen ideals?

Concepts:

Defining Pluralism

As noted earlier, different kinds of group affiliations can take on particular importance depending on the time and place. For a woman deeply involved in the women's rights movement, gender may be the most important consideration; in another situation, it may be religion or ethnicity. The phenomenon of hyphenated identities, for example 'African-American', suggests that dual or multiple loyalties can be complementary rather than competing and evokes the idea of 'borderlines', i.e. not belonging completely to any one group. At the individual level, the reality of cultural and ethnic mixing and cosmopolitan identities sits uncomfortably with the persistent tendency to categorize people according to their characteristics and origins. At the societal level, the idea that groups and associations might compete with the state for loyalty and power poses a particular challenge. Identifying which tensions are the most salient in a given society is the first step in moving towards a more nuanced and flexible societal model. Only after establishing the particular features of plural societies can we identify the strategies most suited to enhancing inter-cultural relations both within and between them.

Strategies:

State Mechanisms for Handling Pluralism

As it now stands, most governance-related decisions, about resource allocation, infrastructure, power-sharing and administration are made by governments. The territorially-based organization of administrative structures in a government is largely a matter of convenience, but the legitimacy of government is also based on the tacit assumption that populations living in a given territory or administrative unit are homogeneous enough to share political institutions which, assuming that they are representative in nature, are able to discern and represent the needs of the population as a whole. Calls for devolution and for other constitutional changes and legislation to protect the rights of minorities for example, stem from a recognition that in fact governments rarely, if ever, preside over homogeneous populations or communities. The challenge is to design legitimate institutions capable of representing individuals and groups with varied, and even profoundly divergent, values and ideals. More importantly, these formal institutions must be accompanied and reinforced by policies, and programmes (for example, in the domains of education and media) that promote inter-cultural knowledge, understanding and action.

To do this, we must establish what makes public institutions legitimate and effective, and how they can be made more fully representative without affecting the loyalty of the individuals they represent; what measures could help ensure the promotion of human dignity as a universal value without denying the importance of particular cultural identities; how different visions and ideals could be accommodated, not just when these diverge, but when they actively conflict; and whether there is proof of strategies that work, in the long term if not in the short term.

Strategies:

Societal Mechanisms for Handling Pluralism

While state mechanisms offer top-down opportunities for creating plural frameworks, civil society in its various manifestations (associations, non-governmental associations, private media, the business community, etc.) can offer indispensable bottom-up channels for forging common approaches and co-operative solutions. Without imposing sameness as a 'simple' solution, globalization can provide opportunities for creating inter-cultural contacts, especially with new communications technology. Again, a balance must be established between the benefits of inter-connectedness and the need for individuality.

As with the implementation of state mechanisms, each societal situation is highly specific, but sharing experiences of more and less successful strategies can help stimulate new approaches and experiments. In a fundamental sense, constructive pluralism depends on the attitude of each indi-

vidual or society towards their neighbours. Prejudices, stereotypes, and set patterns of behaviour can only be overcome with concrete examples and experiences of inter-cultural activities that work. The challenge is how to overcome initial reluctance or scepticism about inter-cultural endeavours, not assuming that negative attitudes will necessarily exist, but being prepared to transform them when they do arise.

4 Objectives and Outcome

During the colloquium, introductory presentations on each topic will be followed by substantial time for discussion which will generate recommendations. The outcome of the deliberations will be reflected in a final document. In consolidating both principles and policies, i.e. general guidelines as well as specific strategies, the meeting will suggest concrete ways of meeting the potential challenges of pluralism, as well as ways to take advantage of the richness offered by social diversity. It is recognised that such generic approaches are no substitute for each plural society developing its own ways of harnessing diversity in a constructive way. But the contribution of this colloquium and other collaborative endeavours can further sensitize the international community to the need to treat diversity as an asset and highlight the positive opportunities created by an increasingly inter-connected world.

OUTCOMES*

The colloquium *Towards a Constructive Pluralism* took place at the UNESCO Headquarters in Paris from Thursday 28th to Saturday 30th January 1999. There were 40 participants from 29 countries: politicians, academics and representatives of civil society.

The colloquium was organised by the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and the Commonwealth Secretariat. UNESCO, with its 186 member states, is dedicated to international intellectual co-operation to promote development for peace and peace for development. To this end, one of its key activities is the Culture of Peace Programme inspired by the universal values of liberty, justice, equality, solidarity and social and cultural dignity. The 54-member Commonwealth is united by a set of fundamental democratic and other values, as embodied in the 1991 Harare Commonwealth Declaration, and a commitment to sustainable development. Both of these inter-governmental organisations are committed to the promotion of unity in diversity.

PREAMBLE: The Challenge of Pluralism

Participants affirmed that ethnic, religious, cultural and other pluralism is a positive phenomenon, to be welcomed and celebrated. There was agreement that everything possible should be done to create conditions in which it can flourish within and between States.

At the same time, it was recognized that difference can be used to promote division and tension. It can be the excuse for marginalization, exclusion and oppression. And all too often it can be the occasion for violent conflict and even warfare. Participants gave examples of campaigns of genocide, civil war, and other violence which had claimed millions of lives. It was pointed out that, according to one study, 79 of the 82 conflicts around the world between 1989 and 1992 were intra-state in nature and that most of them were linked to ethnic, religious or cultural differences. It was argued that 'divisive pluralism' will constitute one of the key threats to peace in the twenty-first century unless appropriate action is taken. This document suggests ways to prevent such conflicts by promoting the positive alternative.

* This document was unanimously adopted at the end of the colloquium.

The colloquium recognised that approaches on this issue need to take account of the significant changes that have taken and are taking place in the world. In particular, it highlighted the dual forces of globalisation and fragmentation and the fact that the world is becoming increasingly homogeneous at a global level but more and more heterogeneous locally. This has important implications for attempts to accommodate the complexities and to meet the challenges of pluralism.

In this context, participants agreed on the importance of appreciating our common humanity and the shared and universal values this entails. Participants referred to the importance of respect for difference, equality and non-discrimination, the upholding of human rights, the democratic legitimacy of institutions, accountability, participation and qualitative representation. Participants argued that the aim should be equality and inclusiveness, not uniformity. The recognition of difference can strengthen unity by allowing individuals to enjoy the security of particular identities within an accepted social and constitutional framework.

The colloquium recognised the need to balance the affirmation of particular identities and the requirements of an increasingly inter-dependent world in which we all have to co-exist and co-operate.

Identities can be mobilised or exploited for either negative or positive purposes. Finding ways to encourage positive uses of identity is important for all countries, developed and developing, whether they are involved in conflict or are enjoying a measure of peace. This issue is relevant to everyone, as all countries are vulnerable to division.

Participants took a dynamic and positive view of ethnic, religious, cultural and other pluralism as an invitation for people to interact, to celebrate and to learn from difference, rather than a passive acceptance of the fact that pluralism simply exists. It was stressed that pluralism is enriching and that it can make an important contribution both to balanced development within particular countries and the building of positive relationships between countries. The colloquium acknowledged that particular identities and society's means of dealing with cultural and other forms of difference involve arrangements and attitudes which can be made and unmade. Consequently, there is always the possibility of improvement and dynamic evolution, whether this involves building new forms of identity or working with existing ones.

The colloquium recognised that there are problems of terminology and vocabulary and that lack of clarity can impede understanding and the development of consensus. For instance, terms such as facilitating, implementing, managing, accommodating, handling, empowering and sustaining were used and it was recognised that, while often relevant, each had its limitations. Participants also recognised that terminology might be a problem so far as the interpretation of this docu-

ment is concerned because there will be different understandings of pluralism in different contexts. They agreed, however, that none of the formulations used should be taken to suggest that there should be any national or international efforts to contain pluralism.

Finally, it was also recognised that greater clarity is needed regarding our understanding of the past and its relationship to the development of a constructive pluralism for the future.

1 Fields for action

While the fact of increasing pluralism was recognised as universal, it was also acknowledged that each society has its own particular character and history. Matters of pluralism within a state have also to be seen in the context of a wider international environment. This can take a positive form - for instance, by providing a good example or the promotion of intercontinental development through diasporas. Or it can take a negative form: e.g. nationalism in one country can have major implications for others - again through diasporas and the influence of neighbouring nations.

How to respond to pluralism is an issue for us all and needs to be addressed at the personal, social, cultural and political levels: the personal, because it is about who we are and how we define ourselves; the social, because it concerns how we interact with each other; the cultural, because it inevitably involves our beliefs, ideas and understandings; and the political because the accommodation of pluralism involves the distribution of power and access to resources. For this reason, participants considered the role of both the State and civil society.

2 The State

All participants recognised the important and positive role that the State can play - for instance, by promoting a sense of belonging and common citizenship in a democratic framework - and the continual need for the renewal of its role. But State institutions can also play a negative role if, in a pluralistic society, they only reflect the priorities of one dominant group. In most States the ethnic and cultural composition of populations is changing and there

is often an awakening of ethnic identities within these new demographic landscapes. There is no one particular model that can be applied in all circumstances, and participants stressed the need for a flexible approach.

To help make ethnically, religiously and culturally plural societies work effectively, it is important to address the following:

- processes of participation that include all groups and ensure qualitative, as opposed to merely quantitative, representation (i.e. such processes should not exclude minorities in the name of majority rule);
- inclusive and flexible approaches to constitution-making - and the working of constitutions - to ensure proper representation of all groups and full representation and participation by minority, deprived and marginalized groups;
- decentralised or devolved structures, as appropriate;
- sustainable development and equitable resource allocation;
- codes of conduct for politicians and other leaders;
- recognition and implementation of indigenous peoples' rights;
- the development of educational processes that promote understanding of pluralism and positive attitudes to people in other communities;
- providing conditions in which public and other media can reflect the diversity of society;
- facilitating the opportunities for inter-cultural contacts and equitable allocation of funding for cultural activities;
- a legal framework to safeguard rights;
- the building of oversight institutions such as human rights commissions and the ombudsman, so that they become important role players in maintaining democratic governance.

3 Civil Society

There is a key role for a vigorous democratic civil society in empowering pluralism (although it is, of course, possible for elements in civil society to exacerbate tensions and deepen divisions). Civil society organisations have the advantage of being flexible, creative and able to promote dialogue through their networks. The following component parts of civil society merit particular attention:

- community groups, and other NGOs, which can bridge cross-community divisions;
- local authorities, which can be effective instruments in strengthening intra-communal harmony;

- the media, in encouraging increased understanding of the realities and issues involved in constructive pluralism;
- professional associations, which can encourage communication and co-operation between different members of different cultures;
- businesses and trade unions, which can promote diversity in the workplace through inclusive working practices, diverse representation and culturally sensitive working arrangements;
- religious groups, which can encourage mutual respect and understanding if they emphasise the inclusive aspects of their respective traditions;
- the academic community, through the encouragement of greater understanding of the nature of pluralism;
- multi-cultural publications and media which provide for the positive self-expression of particular communities and combat divisions;
- increased cultural diversity in the market-place.

4

International bodies

While recognising that international interventions can sometimes be negative, the colloquium also recognised the important and sometimes decisive role that can be played by regional and international institutions and organisations in standing firm against the negative exploitation of pluralism and promoting appreciation and respect for human rights and ethnic, religious and cultural pluralism.

5

Recommendations

The colloquium recognised that all sections of society need to work in partnership to sustain policies which support, celebrate and popularise constructive pluralism. There is a particular need for positive leadership to make pluralism attractive and viable.

Participants urged UNESCO and the Commonwealth Secretariat, in conjunction with other organisations as appropriate, to:

- promote further discussion on issues of pluralism, including at regional level and through the media;
- review the work of organisations already involved in this area and construct a data-base of those with technical expertise in the promotion and implementation of pluralism (e.g. in combating stereotypes);
- produce a manual of 'best practice', a code of conduct and normative guidelines;
- promote international recognition of the examples of States and institutions which are following best practice;
- encourage the creation of 'early warning' mechanisms to detect incipient conflict in plural societies and combat divisiveness and ghettoisation;
- distribute this document as widely as possible.

It was suggested that this colloquium might be followed by a further small working group to explore these and other possibilities further.

Participants also stressed that:

- religious, ethnic, linguistic and other groups should be encouraged to emphasise those aspects in their traditions that foster mutual respect and understanding;
- where appropriate and requested, assistance should be given to individuals and communities in reconstructing their identities when these have been disrupted by migration and urbanisation;
- a range of educational processes should be developed to support interaction and encourage respect between communities;
- academics, policy makers and practitioners should be encouraged to engage in dialogue with each other to inform the debate on pluralism.

Finally, the colloquium underlined the importance of a number of areas in which further research should be undertaken. In this context, it was recognised that a number of bodies could assist in work addressing the following areas:

- the implications of globalisation on issues of identity and the capacity of groups to interact;
 - the impact of technological change on various levels of pluralism;
 - the affective as well as the rational dimensions of pluralism;
 - the challenge of pluralism at rural, urban, regional and global level;
 - the implications of cultural rights;
 - the effect of existing measures to promote equality and respect for human dignity.
-

Synthesis

PREAMBLE:

The constructive option

The presence of a plurality of cultures in a given society is a necessary but not a sufficient pre-condition for cultural pluralism. Necessary, because these cultures represent the raw materials, the basic elements which make up cultural pluralism; not sufficient, because a simple juxtaposition of diverse cultures does not in itself create the interconnections and bonds which characterize cultural interplay. It is perfectly possible for cultures to exist side by side and, yet, to remain ignorant of one another. Cultural pluralism is thus less about this coexistence of cultures than about an interaction which leads them to break out of their isolation and become part of a wider context. It is a dynamic process, a construction which may evolve and suffer setbacks. Consequently, as the construction of pluralism progresses, it is possible to distinguish a series of steps or a hierarchy of degrees which separate the basest form (indifferent coexistence) from the most developed (cross-cultural fertilization).

This vision of a dynamic process shows that it is possible to act, in at least some measure, to make the positive image of pluralism a reality. Pluralism should not be envisaged necessarily with fatalism, as a constraint imposed by historical circumstances, but also as an objective which has been chosen and

on whose development it is possible to exert influence. Thereafter, one is no longer condemned to be a passive observer of the development of cultural pluralism in a given society. It becomes equally possible to help bring about the kind of cultural pluralism that conforms to one's wishes by defining the aims and legitimacy of this construct, i.e. the type of edifice one wishes to build from cultural pluralism (first stage), the framework for the construction process or the conditions and principles on which the solidity of the edifice depends (second stage), and the respective roles of the different participants in the construction and the instruments to be used in achieving it (third stage).

Cultural pluralism is characterized by its polymorphic nature. It assumes a multiplicity of forms according to the criteria used in establishing the dividing line between different cultures. Most often, this is based on ethnic or religious differences, but it can also be founded on linguistic, geographic or sexual differences or indeed on any other form of particularity in ways of living or thinking. This diversity of elements which can make up cultural pluralism means that any definition of the term needs to be as broad as possible, including the totality of forms in which it manifests itself: it is not

* This synthesis is based on the ideas introduced by the participants, both in their written contributions (working documents and articles) and in the debates accompanying each of the colloquium's meetings. The ideas are organized around the central themes underlying the colloquium. The names stated in parentheses are those of the participants (refer to list of participants in appendix). A surname alone refers to the article submitted by the participant for the colloquium (refer to list of written contributions in appendix). A surname followed by the abbreviation "deb." refers to a contribution made by the participant in the course of the debates.

defined from the standpoint of fixed objective criteria, but from that of the perception (by an observer or by one of the parties involved) of a difference between at least two cultural forms recognized as being distinct from each other. This difference, however anodyne it may appear to an external observer, is sufficient to engender the feeling of a cultural divergence: violence and conflicts between population groups which are apparently very close indicate the importance of this subjective perception of difference in the definition of cultural pluralism.

This broadening of the field covered by the definition of pluralism is most apparent in contemporary societies, where multiculturalism is no longer the exception, but the rule. Nowadays, it is difficult, except at village level or in very isolated communities, to find culturally homogeneous societies which do not include any strand of cultural variety. In the context of increased globalization, the shrinking of spatial and temporal distance and population movements, both voluntary (in the case of immigrants) and involuntary (in the case of refugees) bring with them a multiplication of contacts between different countries, an internationalization of social movements and political ideas (via diasporas) and a diversification of cultural life within every State. "Among the 185 sovereign States, it has been estimated that there are about 4,000 ethno-cultural entities. Forty per cent of these States contain five or more such communities; less than a third have ethnic majorities; some, such as India and Nigeria, possess over one hundred each; others, such as Belgium, Fiji, Guyana, Northern Ireland and Trinidad and Tobago, are ethnically bipolar" [Premdas].

This phenomenon is observed particularly in large urban centres and their environs, which have

become cultural melting pots *par excellence*, a fact explained by their susceptibility to social trends and the presence within them of population groups from every corner of the globe. It is in the big towns that intercultural phenomena manifest themselves with the greatest intensity; each one is a "full-scale laboratory" [Winkin, deb.] which is at once both identical with every other, in that it contains a multiplicity of situations, and yet perfectly unique in the type of interactions it produces. "The idea of diversity contradicts one of the characteristic features of megapolitan landscapes, namely their soul-destroying monotony. But every megalopolis distils its own particular brand of monotony" [Haeringer], producing an "urban diversity" which varies according to the specific ingredients found in each city.

Behind the multiplicity of forms taken by cultural pluralism, one can perceive a number of general factors characteristic of the modern era. If cultural pluralism is not an invention of the twentieth century (within Europe, intercultural relations already existed between the very different peoples of the Roman, Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian Empires), today it is different in kind from that which existed in previous centuries. In addition to the new geopolitical context, characterized, at a global level, by the domination of the nation-state model and by the phenomenon of globalization, people living in the same society sometimes develop world views and value systems which are distant from one another, even to the point of being antagonistic. Contemporary multiculturalism also has a greater aspect of protest about it, which is linked to the spread of democratic ideas and to a heightened awareness of individual and collective rights, whereas "in pre-modern societies, minority groups generally accepted their subordinate condition and remained enclosed in the social and even geograph-

ical spaces assigned to them by the dominant group" [Parekh].

Cultural pluralism today enjoys a favourable image, having even become fashionable. The celebration of diversity and cultural crossbreeding has entered into the public sphere, become "politically correct" and gained exposure in official sloganeering. To temper this widespread, rose-tinted view, however, one should recall that cultural pluralism is not an end in itself, that it can lead to evil as well as good and that it acts all too often as a factor of division and of war. The list of crimes imputable to a conflictual interpretation of cultural pluralism is long. On a scale from "least worst" to the wholly bad, one could point out innumerable acts linked to a negative perception of cultural pluralism, evoking

instances of discrimination, repression, civil war and genocide [Mazrui, deb.]. Recalling the worst that can happen is a necessary precursor to any discussion of the virtues of cultural pluralism and it confers a legitimacy on, and a supplementary motivation for, the construction of a more harmonious pluralism. It is necessary to remain aware of the violence that cultural pluralism can engender, without losing sight of the hope it can convey. "Examples of the subversive and destabilizing effects of 'divisive pluralism' abound. But it is also important that attention should be given to the alternative, positive, concept" [Anyaoku]. In any case, the extremely bloody consequences of the destructive option should incite us to do everything to ensure that it is the constructive option that wins through.

1

Pluralism as a constructive force

CONSTRUCTING THE FUTURE

The debate on cultural pluralism should be viewed in the light of the gap between fact and theory. In fact, cultural pluralism is often a source of tension and conflict. In theory, when one views it in its ideal form, such as it can and must be, it appears as an opportunity for the future and a motor for the present. It is this potential to positively transform the future which gives it its reason for existing and which makes it a constructive force. Initially, it is therefore possible to highlight its positive character by analysing the role it plays in redefining the various fields in which it exerts its influence. It obliges us to reformulate the terms of the debate regarding

questions concerning the nature of personal and cultural identity and the most appropriate type of social system. Conceptual analysis, pushing the inherent potentialities of cultural pluralism to their limits, reveals the role that could be played by such pluralism in the evolution of a richer, more varied, wider world while an examination of factual evidence, supported by historical or contemporary examples, cannot help but show how it has come to be associated with sectarian division and the triumph of narrow-mindedness.

The construction of a true cultural pluralism thus supposes, in theory, the abandonment of inter-cultural antagonisms and the rise of a shared culture

based on the acceptance of diversity. Such an acceptance does not signify a levelling process, or suppressing or ignoring of differences, but the capacity to transform this diversity, maintained and recognized in its specificity, into an advantage and a factor of individual and collective enrichment. In this instance, cultural pluralism takes account of the negativity generated by the recognition of differences. It implies a form of latent or silent conflict and the overcoming of this conflict by rearrangement into new patterns. Different elements are not eliminated. Rather, they are used in the construction of a greater edifice. The role of the negative, here, is to inform the construction of cultural pluralism in order for itself to be surpassed. This way of thinking constitutes the recognition of the creative force and energy liberated by the interaction of differences, so long as those differences do not become rigid and form the basis for discord. It is thus important to recognize that negativity has its place (it guards against too facile, or too ecumenical, a vision of cultural pluralism) just as it is important to remember that conflict is a stage in the construction of pluralism, not its conclusion.

This pattern is particularly applicable to the type of social and political organization generated by the presence of cultural diversity. The establishment of harmonious intercultural relations does not mean that differences have to be forgotten. Such differences can continue to flourish without necessarily leading to a state of war between the various components of society. The fear of confrontation and the desire to protect one's own interests - often factors more evident than warmth or openness - mean that people tend to keep at a safe distance while evolving a *modus vivendi* that is mutually advantageous. At the very least, when it does not degenerate into conflict, cultural pluralism con-

tributes to the establishment of a climate of tolerance - a first step on the way to accepting diversity in the context of the social corpus. This simple tolerance, however, falls far short of what could be achieved through a more thoroughgoing development of the concept of cultural pluralism. It is no more than a state of non-belligerence, a precarious equilibrium of the forces there present, rather than a true acceptance of diversity. It is a defensive strategy aimed at avoiding conflict, rather than a manifestation of a true will to make diversity part of the definition of the socio-political system.

A more constructive view of cultural diversity is that it should not simply be tolerated, but fully recognized and integrated into the democratic game-plan. The ability to manage cultural pluralism determines the maturing of society and makes the latter evolve from a state of political unawareness to a rational choice of building a democratic society capable of integrating all differences. In this sense, "cultural diversity enriches and enlivens life in society: it is desirable not only for cultural minorities but for society as a whole" [Parekh]. From this point of view, accepting diversity is a preliminary step towards redefining society. Despite the all too evident risks of violent reaction, such an approach is essential for the construction of the democratic edifice. Paradoxically, despite the dangers involved - or thanks to an intelligent management of those dangers - it permits the construction of a stronger, more aware society which is more at peace with itself.

This re-organization of the political and social scene made possible by the presence of cultural pluralism has its equivalent at an individual level, in so far as contact with different cultures leads to a rethinking of the meaning of personal identity.

Consciousness of one's identity cannot be separated from the consciousness of others' existence. This is manifested by psychological processes such as identification with a group, comparison with other people and the interiorization of social categories which, in various ways, establish the existence of other people as self-awareness develops. According to this model, however, other people exist only as points of reference in the affirmation of individual identity. Cultural pluralism is thus internalized as the presence of individuals with clearly delineated identities who are either hostile or indifferent to one another. For pluralism to participate fully in the construction of personal identity, different cultures must not only play a referential role in the definition of identity, but become integral parts of it. That implies the existence of individuals capable of thinking beyond the limits of the culture assigned to them at the time of their birth, capable of stepping outside themselves and transcending the mindset whereby in affirming their own culture they reject others.

Cultural pluralism thus leads to a conception of personal identity open to the most diverse influences, using any of them according to its needs and free of the obligation to move within a single cultural sphere: "identities change, decompose, recombine. There is no unchanging identity, there is no trans-historical permanence in identities" [Badie, deb.]. By favouring the emergence of this open and dynamic identity, cultural pluralism makes possible a redefinition of the human being which avoids rigid compartmentalization and takes account of the multiplicity of life choices and ways of thinking that are open to an individual. Personal identity is thus no longer an immutable constant, but a construction that changes concomitantly with pluralism from which it draws its component parts. This is not

a matter of using references to cultural pluralism in order to define a mental attitude; that sort of approach would imply a risk of descending into the realm of facile pseudo-psychology. Rather, more fundamentally, it is to conceive the individual in his multifaceted reality, free of the conceptions which limit him to a single culture, most often determined by circumstances of birth.

The impact which cultural pluralism has on the construction of a more open personality and on more harmonious social relations leads at the same time to a transformation of cultures in contact. Admittedly, those cultures can remain closed while simultaneously evolving in a multicultural context. However, pluralism is only truly fertile if it engenders cross-cultural interplay. This becomes apparent in the emergence of new forms produced by hybridization or equally in the re-modelling of existing cultures. In the first instance, pluralism is the driving force for creativity and innovation, which tend to be blunted when cultures evolve without external influences. In the second, it invigorates old cultures exhausted by the ceaseless repetition of the same patterns and whose inability to rejuvenate themselves means that they risk fossilization, folklorization or straightforward extinction. Pluralism's constructive force here is a force for life, survival even, which permits the creation and/or regeneration of cultures. Openness to cultural diversity can thus save each particular culture from isolation, inertia and atrophy. Far from endangering them, this intercourse with others can breathe life into them by forcing them to face new challenges and find new solutions: "a society does not become strong by isolating itself or by adopting a fortress mentality, but by openness and interaction" [Mayor].

THE PRESENT RECONSTRUCTED

With all their potential, the constructive possibilities of cultural pluralism belong to a hypothetical future, and nothing guarantees that these ideals will ever become concrete reality. However, the constructive character of pluralism is not merely a promise. One can observe the effects in a whole series of contemporary phenomena which indicate the transformative power contained within cultural pluralism. In the large cities, the everyday contact with other cultures, in the workplace, at school, on public transport and in municipal housing, has overturned the old norms and transformed the popular view of foreigners among population groups more accustomed in the past to a certain homogeneity in their lives. Nowadays, the "foreigner" is no longer some remote, exotic being but a neighbour or work colleague. Despite difficulties and friction, there are, by choice, taste or unconscious habituation, encounters and exchanges which modify the social landscape and individual behaviour: "the lifestyles and consumer habits of an important section of the population are changing through the adoption of influences from cultures viewed as foreign and exotic, often as a result of immigration" [Martiniello].

These phenomena are readily observed in everyday life. The popularity of "ethnic" restaurants offering Chinese, Indian or Mexican cuisine and the spread of exotic fashions bear witness to a generalized pattern of cultural interchange. Once foreign elements of this kind have now so far entered into the way of life of the host countries as to become part of them. Similarly, the success of "world music" has allowed the sounds of Pakistan, Cuba and Cape Verde to travel far from their countries of origin to reach a whole new audience eager for novelty and

prepared to change listening habits and experiment with musical forms other than those of the dominant culture. The craze for non-Western forms of spirituality (whether Buddhism or the beliefs of the American Indians), when not distorted by oversimplification, is also a sign of the development of intercultural exchange which is not necessarily limited to mimicry and the clumsy re-enactment of a few badly learned rituals. The presence of cultural diversity in contemporary societies opens up a new range of gastronomic, religious and musical choices and thus increases the freedom of the individual by allowing him or her access to planet-wide variety.

The changes brought about by cultural pluralism are not merely those resulting from the adoption of modes of living from distant cultures but also by the development of hybrid forms resulting from a cross-pollination between the indigenous culture and imported ones. Cultural diversity effectively participates in the regeneration of artistic creativity and promotes a richer imaginative sphere, nourished by disparate influences. Such developments are given particular impetus in the big cities of the West by the presence of large immigrant populations. Placed at the centre of cultural interchange, often torn by a sense of belonging to two historically opposed civilizations, they increasingly act as a bridge between the culture of their country of origin (or their parents' country of origin) and that of the country in which they now live. This dual sense of belonging and, sometimes, the inner conflict which results from it, fosters a creativity that enriches the cultural life of the country in which it is manifested. Artists from ethnic minorities bring new approaches, references and themes to the spheres of music, art and cinematography. Young British-Asian or Franco-Maghrebin musicians are creating startling fusions of traditional Indian or

North African music and rock, techno and rap. Similarly, the vitality of contemporary Anglophone and Francophone literature can be largely attributed to writers who are at the confluence of several cultures and several languages, to immigrants or citizens of former colonies. Rooted in the Caribbean, Nigeria, India or Morocco, these authors, by appropriating English and French for their own ends, give these languages new energy through Creolization, introducing peculiarities of speech or phrasing and using neologisms.

The effects of cultural pluralism on the economy are also apparent. We can henceforward witness the evolution of a "multicultural market" [Martiniello] linked to the general spread of intercultural practices and to the diversification of demand emanating from ethnic or linguistic minorities whose needs are not yet catered for by the dominant culture. This is notable in the field of particularistic media and publishing, where considerable profits can be made while enabling members of minority groups to maintain intra-community solidarity. The world of work has likewise had to adapt to the new social set-up. Certain companies have realized that it is in their interest to follow emerging trends and have developed strategies to take advantage of the fashionability of all things "ethnic". They have done this by tailoring their products to a more diversified clientele and by identifying themselves with a joyous and playful image of cultural pluralism. They have even carried out corporate re-organization to cater for the needs of employees from minority groups, according to prin-

ciples of intercultural management. Cultural pluralism has thus become a core element in the pattern of development of capitalist societies. It is a key consideration in determining the way companies will develop, whether the aim is to improve profit margins or to organize working practices.

However, it is on individuals themselves that one observes the most profound effects of increased intercultural contacts. Nowadays, it is no longer rare to claim allegiance to several cultures simultaneously and to refuse to be restricted to one single culture. We are today witnessing the emergence of new forms of citizenship which call into question the necessity of having a single lifelong identity. The instances of dual nationality, split identities and competing loyalties have become common and are well suited to an age in which cultural and national frontiers are no longer considered to be insurmountable obstacles. Multicultural affinities favour bilingualism and a better understanding of other religions which one encounters in the intercultural setting. The children of immigrants and those from mixed marriages thus have several cultural identities: that of their parents, that of their country of ethnic origin, that of the country in which they live and that of countries where perhaps they would like to live. By personal choice, they can accumulate cultural references, selecting or discarding one or another as they see fit. Cultural pluralism thus shifts the way in which individuals see themselves in relation to the world. It leaves its mark on the present and moulds the image of the future.

2

Foundations: the pre-conditions for a constructive pluralism

PLURALISM AND THE DEMOCRATIC IDEAL

The constructive character of pluralism allows the creation of stronger and richer societies and individualities; however, this result is conditioned by certain principles and conditions which give pluralism its strength. In other words, to be constructive, pluralism must first itself be properly constructed. From this point of view, the primary condition allowing a constructive pluralism, indeed that which embodies all the others, is the achievement or at least the pursuit of a democratic ideal that is defined, in a very broad sense, by the capacity of a society to recognize individual and collective rights and to assure the full participation and representation of every section of society in political and economic life. For harmonious relations to become established between different communities, it is essential that each one of them is recognized in its individuality, while being integrated into public life and taking an active part in discussion and decision-making which affect society as a whole. In particular, it is necessary "to help elected leaders in developing countries understand that inclusion, participation and decentralization of decision-making must replace authoritarianism" [Perry]. Pluralism fails so long as any group feels itself to be excluded, marginalized or deprived of its rights.

The construction of pluralism therefore takes place in a context determined by the imperatives linked to respect for human rights and particularly the rights of minorities. The defence of cultural rights (or the right to a cultural identity), in partic-

ular the right to practise one's religion and to speak one's own language, is inseparable from this general defence of human rights and fundamental liberties. Conceived of in this way, culture is neither solely a form of capital accumulated by humanity over the centuries, nor yet the expression of artistic and scientific creativity, but rather "the sum total of the material and spiritual activities and products of a given social group which distinguishes it from other similar groups" [Stavenhagen]. Respect for cultural rights, acting as a gauge by which the level of recognition of the identities of various social groups and their participation in the democratic life of a society can be measured, thus forms the foundation on which one can hope to build a solid pluralist edifice capable of withstanding dissension and the attempts of one group to oppress another. These principles of respect, solidarity and justice which, ideally, should form the basis of relations between the different component groups of society, are illustrative of "an ethic of cultural pluralism" [Nethersole] without which no attempt at building a pluralistic society could work.

While the defence of cultural rights implies the recognition of individual rights, it also implies the recognition of a collective cultural identity. This is particularly applicable to the indigenous peoples, whose most basic rights continue to be flouted in a number of countries. Their current demands simultaneously express a will to benefit, on an individual level, from the same rights enjoyed by other citizens and the need to obtain reparation for unjust treatment suffered collectively. The inclusion of these

groups in national life therefore requires that their group identity be taken into account: "they have to be allotted a special status so that they are not simply regarded as just one more ethnic group among others" [Wilson, deb.]. This necessitates the recognition of an indigenous cultural identity and of the rich tangible and intangible heritage produced by these peoples. Their claim to ancestral territories, sometimes invested with a sacred character, also leads one to postulate their right to recover, within those territories from which they have been displaced, a form of sovereignty compatible with the definition of a unified nation-state. Where such populations exist, the way in which they have been integrated into national life or have continued to be excluded from it constitutes a touchstone for the evaluation of the level to which each country is committed to making cultural pluralism work.

While it is undoubtedly essential that cultural rights (regarding religious festivals, linguistic rights and artistic freedoms, for example) are recognized, this is merely one element among others in taking societal diversity into account. A "light multiculturalism" [Martiniello] which pays attention only to cultural symbols, obscures, whether by accident or design, the need for the recognition of the political rights of all communities. Such a strategy might even produce the reverse of the desired effect by aggravating intercultural tensions: "multiculturalism, understood only as cultural concessions for holidays, festivals and State subsidies granted to ethno-cultural associations, is merely decorative in effect and likely to be counter-productive in the long run instigating anger and alienation from disempowered and minority communities" [Premdas]. To forestall the attention given to purely cultural issues being used as an excuse or cover for political inertia and the perpetuation of exclusion, it must be

extended to include a real measure of power-sharing, even in sensitive areas: in political representation, including representation at leadership level, in the awarding of administrative posts, and in the allocation of financial, natural and territorial resources held by the social body as a whole.

Once the principle of power-sharing is accepted, cultural pluralism requires effective methods to be put into practice so that the interests of all communities can be taken into account. The reduction of the democratic ideal to the application of the law of the majority is particularly insidious in so far as this formal definition can serve to justify, behind a facade of legality, unjust treatment of minorities. In preference to a dictatorship of the majority, a constructive pluralism will favour seeking compromise, within the framework of contractual relations between majority and minorities in order to arrive, by negotiation, at solutions which are agreeable to all parties. The search for compromise based on exchange and adaptation to concrete situations, is part and parcel of a pragmatic vision of cultural pluralism. This search for compromise, rather than being an abstract desire to arrive at a consensus at all costs by fudging disagreements, is illustrative of the real process which takes place on the ground: "compromise itself, due to the give-and-take principle underlying its practice, reaches beyond consensus" [Nethersole]. It has to be acknowledged that such negotiation is never likely to end definitively. The fluctuating character of intercultural relations, the arising of unforeseen obstacles and the willingness or otherwise of the concerned parties to continue listening to their partners mean that negotiations have to remain permanently open: "the search for effective policy accommodation of cultural diversity is endless (...) Ethnic 'problems' are never 'solved'; policies

addressing multicultural realities cannot be fixed and rigid" [Young].

The acceptance of compromise and the pursuit of a necessarily shifting equilibrium is expressive of the will to construct a certain special form of relationship - a "consociation" - which is able to guarantee equitable power-sharing and the participation of all communities in democratic life. Thus, the complexity of intercultural relations in countries like Mauritius or Trinidad and Tobago has led these countries to put in place representational systems and forms of social organization which, despite their failings, demonstrate an effort to reconcile sometimes contradictory demands of the different communities. "Consociationist" elements are similarly present in the Swiss political system where "the taking into account of the most divergent and contradictory opinions ends, after general participative consultation, in compromise and pragmatism" [Windisch]. The possibility for compromise is, however, weakened when multiculturalism is reduced to a confrontation between two antagonistic groups reluctant to give ground: "a dualistic society puts the State in danger because it presents less sociological differentiation than is necessary to arrive at a compromise" [Mazrui]. By contrast, in pluralistic societies, the spreading out of tensions among several groups can defuse such potentially dangerous situations, while the formation of alliances and the use of mediation reduce the risk of direct confrontation. Pluralism is more difficult to construct in a dualistic society, as such a dichotomy can lead one group spontaneously to view the other as a danger, rather than one of the diverse possible incarnations of the human condition.

The democratic ideal which guides the construction of cultural pluralism will, however, remain

a pure abstraction if the taking into account of political differences is not accompanied by due attention to social inequality and the material circumstances of the most disadvantaged communities. "We have to see pluralism also in the context of economic, social and cultural rights, more than just civil and political rights" [Gawanas, deb.]. Ethnic minorities are often doubly excluded, with cultural and political discrimination being aggravated by socio-economic inequalities of which they are the primary victims. As long as it fails to take steps to combat social inequality, democracy remains an empty shell, all form but no content. "In effect, if social and economic splits and inequalities increase and if they become superimposed on ethno-cultural divergences, any attempt to build a democratic multicultural society will remain elusive. The more that socio-economic inequality and insecurity increases, the more numerous will be those who will seek refuge in exclusive but protective ethnic and cultural identities and the greater will be their tendency to reject anyone who is perceived as different" [Martiniello]. Long term economic planning and the prosperity of the whole of society cannot be dissociated from peaceful intercultural relations, as poverty and underdevelopment are factors in conflict and war. Constructive pluralism thus requires that the link between political and economic factors be restored, as much for the sake of political stability as for the correction of economic inequalities.

AFFIRMATION OF IDENTITY AND CITIZENSHIP

Contrary to the most pessimistic forecasts, globalization has not as yet resulted in a straightforward homogenization of behaviour and outlook. The results have been mixed. On the one hand, there has been a progression of certain homogenizing ten-

dencies, while on the other a resistance movement has developed in the form of a new growth of cultural awareness and demands for micro-cultural recognition. The post-modern age is thus characterized by a paradoxical sense of belonging to the whole of humanity while simultaneously affirming one's own uniqueness. This phenomenon of "cultural re-tribalization" [Premdas] may be viewed as a sign of a return to the old insular means of self-definition, but it also corresponds, in a less negative interpretation, to a need to find an anchorage point once again and to re-establish old solidarities, to understand where one comes from and with whom one shares one's history.

Attempts to build cultural pluralism by sweeping away all notion of individual cultures, ethnic groups or "tribes" of origin, by pretending to ignore them as if they consisted simply of now distant folk memories, offer little hope for the future in that they ignore the current reality. Thus we should reject "the illusion that ethnicity, as a form of 'primordial attachment', will be rapidly and easily replaced by the idea of citizenship, assimilated in the pride of belonging to a large, modern and complex civil society" [Cerroni-Long]. Pluralistic society is not constructed by eliminating idiosyncrasies and awareness of ethnic or other identity but by taking account of them and purging them of their destructive potential. Such affirmation of identity is perfectly legitimate when it allows rootless or deconstructed communities or individuals to know one another better, regain their dignity, establish links with others and to no longer feel isolated in the face of adversity. Far from necessarily representing a danger to pluralism, this can actually favour the cohesion and self-confidence of each community, making it more receptive and less timorous when faced with other cultures.

In the absence of safeguards, however, it must be said that this kind of passionate sense of identity all too often leads to the worst excesses, where finding one's place in the world is celebrated by the rejection of others. The result is a nationalist fervour whose bloody results have been all too evident in the twentieth century. Within each and every State, the pre-eminence of the feeling of belonging to an ethnic or religious community rather than to society on a supra-community level carries explosive risks and ends by endangering national unity. At the same time, this attitude threatens to turn against the interests of the communities themselves, when they become victims either of the violence they have encouraged or of their own narcissistic retreat into cultural ghettos, where they cannot grasp the necessity of forming relationships with the outside world, or appreciate the richness of cultural diversity. The construction of pluralism therefore requires the claim of cultural uniqueness of each community to be tempered by the sense of belonging to a greater whole and of sharing a number of references, ideals and values with other communities. While it is necessary to take account of diversity, it is also essential to pursue a unity capable of integrating different points of view, fostering their interaction and pointing them in a common direction which gives a renewed sense of legitimacy and value to each of them. Pluralism cannot ignore the strength of differences between peoples; but neither must it ignore that which unites them and which permits coherence to overcome the forces of disunity.

This argument usually emphasizes the existence of common universal values, on which all communities can agree. In particular, those who promote dialogue between different religions attempt to surmount historical antagonisms by

returning to the common denominators which, together, constitute a sort of minimal creed to which all confessions can subscribe. The very generality of these values (peace, justice, tolerance, etc.) certainly makes them acceptable to everyone, but also explains the fact that they are insufficient for tackling the concrete problems which result from intercultural divergences. Ecumenicism, declarations of good will and the citing of universal principles serve only to mask the persistence of conflict.

The search for unity cannot be founded merely on good will; it must be translated into political practice, via the establishment of mechanisms that will enable different communities to acquire full and complete citizenship. This is the key element whereby cultural barriers can be transcended, with each individual becoming part of an entity larger than the community of his or her origin and participating, with all other citizens in the attainment of a collective goal. The cohesion of this whole is determined, primarily, by the acceptance of the political principles which govern its organization. For example, "what holds Switzerland together is not the fact that a large proportion of Swiss citizens speak two, three or even four languages (...) but the fact that the Swiss share a common political culture" [Windisch]. Thus divisions are overcome by the creation of a political community which has, at least in its fundamental principles, the assent of each of its members, and this means that adjustments and the search for compromise can be accepted by all.

This political unity over and above community level is embodied in the idea of the nation. It occupies a central role in the construction of pluralism, in that the loyalty it attracts acts as a counterweight to sectarian demands. However, the unifying and mobilizing role of the nation-state tends today to

be overshadowed by a negative vision which associates the nation with a will to dominate and a tendency to use violence. Along with its unfavourable image, the nation-state often also seems anachronistic in the light of supra-national developments which have come with increased globalization. The model which came to prominence in the industrial age has shown itself to be at least in part ill-adapted to the electronic era, which is typically one of instantaneous communication and porous state frontiers. Despite being criticized and denounced for the crimes committed in its name, the nation still represents the place where affirmations of identity and aspirations of citizenship are most often voiced. How this is done determines the success or failure of the pluralist construction.

While it is necessary to guard against extreme nationalism, it must be said that the idea of a nation can serve to channel undirected energies and to unite people in pursuing common goals. Although it may be dangerous and criminal when the dreams of grandeur that it expresses are used to justify arrogance and persecution of other peoples, nationalism (perhaps the word patriotism would be more appropriate) fulfils a need when it pushes individuals to surpass themselves for an ideal or encourages oppressed people to struggle for their independence. In this context, nationalism has a "dual biography"; there is "predatory nationalism" and "emancipatory nationalism" [Appadurai]. Thus the nationalist idea should not be rejected wholesale, as it does not necessarily generate violence and can become a constructive force provided that it is redefined and allowed to play its integratory role to the full. This is particularly important in some Third World countries where it has lost all credibility, having so often been used as a pretext for crushing minorities. "What has gone wrong is not the pursuit

of national integration *per se* under the nation-state, but the manner in which it has been done (...) The challenge, therefore, is to manage pluralism without giving up the goal of national integration and without further emasculating the State" [Dubey].

This redefinition of the nation-state is achieved by reconciling the imperative of unity and respect for differences. It supposes that the idea of the nation is no longer wedded to the interests of a dominant group, but also takes account of the rights of all its minorities. By no longer being identified with a single culture, the State can represent all. Cultural hegemony is no longer pertinent when one has given up the idea that there should be a perfect coincidence, an "isomorphism" [Appadurai] between citizenship and belonging to a certain religious or ethnic group: one can be Indian without being Hindu, or Cameroonian without being black. This uncoupling or this delinkage between national allegiance and belonging to a specific community forms the basis of a definition of "cultural or multicultural citizenship" [Stavenhagen], and is of prime importance for the future as it permits each individual to feel represented within a State which has assumed a pluralist identity. Compared to the nation-state, the multicultural State carries the desire for the integration of cultural diversity much further. The unity achieved is the opposite of uniformity: "as a basis for its unity, a multicultural society needs not uniformity but cultural diversity and must not feel hostility or fear towards different cultures but must draw strength from them" [Parekh]. A multicultural State accommodates the diverse elements of society, without abandoning the idea of the nation.

Henceforth, cultural diversity no longer appears as a threat to national unity. It might even be better to ask if the opposite is true: "what if, today, diversity or even the encouragement of diversity was the best way to guarantee the unity of a country?" [Windisch]. This hypothesis is not as absurd as it sounds, in so far as it is precisely the presence of diversity which necessitates the setting up of unitary structures intended to regulate intercultural relations and preserve social cohesion. From this point of view, the affirmation of identity does not imply any form of ghettoization or insularity, but expresses the need for a concept of citizenship which is more open and which takes cultural diversity into account. The achievement of this multicultural citizenship may moreover give rise to feelings of attachment as strong as those fostered by nation-states in that the defence of individual cultural identities is bound up with it. Intercultural relations are thus no longer founded solely on the sharing of certain values, but on the emergence of a true common identity, in which all sensibilities can be accommodated.

This overall framework within which the construction of pluralism operates leaves unresolved the specific problems linked to the establishment of a concept of citizenship which respects cultural difference. While it is legitimate to defend in theory the cultural rights of minorities, one is obliged to recognize that certain customs of minority groups (polygamy, infant marriage, ritual drug-taking or female circumcision for example) may enter into conflict with the norms of the rest of society. Serious misunderstandings can even arise over apparently less controversial issues, such as the wearing of the Islamic veil, construction of places of worship or the practice of certain religious rites. Where, then, does one draw the line between cus-

toms which are compatible with the general interest and those which society cannot accept without infringing the rights of other communities or violating its own governing principles? Should we, in the context of multicultural society, condemn in the name of universalism all those practices which are adjudged unacceptable, or should we plead for tolerance, in the name of cultural relativism, with regard to practices which may have a sociological or historical justification in certain contexts?

The question is made more complicated by the fact that universalism is often viewed as nothing but a fashionable way of dressing up western values and imposing them on other cultures. These values are seen, then, as being universal in name only, and to be lacking in relevance in all but the societies in which they evolved. Amidst accusations of cultural imperialism on the one hand and of human rights abuses on the other, only a pragmatic approach

enables us to arrive at a compromise. A mid-point is found between the two extremes, where all manifestations of cultural identity save those which contradict the basic principles of a society are accepted (dietary customs, construction of places of worship, religious holidays), while those which threaten to undermine that society's foundations are not. In this context, "respect for the physical and psychological integrity of the human person could be seen to represent the lowest common denominator in evaluating the legitimacy of a community's cultural demands" [Martiniello]. When the most extreme views have been set aside, any disagreement involving the rights of a minority and the general laws of a society has to be resolved by contractual negotiation rather than by using a pre-prepared formula. It is in the pursuit of this ever-elusive balance between unity and diversity that the pluralistic edifice can be consolidated and brought to completion.

3

The means of building a constructive pluralism

STATE ACTION

The construction of pluralism takes place against a background of chronic instability. If cracks in intercultural relations are simply papered over, conflicts which were thought to have been long since buried have a tendency to burst through at the most unexpected moments. The real challenge, then, is not so much about preventing an explosion of old resentments in times of crisis as about putting in place the structures capable of ensuring that these latent resentments do not bubble to the surface in the

future at some time or another. The structure remains incomplete until a "sustainable pluralism" [Appadurai] has been established, one sufficiently solid to stand the test of time. Such an ambitious project requires that all available means be mobilized, that all the energy of society be harnessed and that new procedures be established.

In this context, to talk of the "management" of pluralism seems inappropriate, as it implies that the rules of the game are defined by those who hold power: "the danger is that it's the existing power

structures talking about how they manage pluralism" [Judd, deb.]. Furthermore, this metaphor suggests an instrumental use of intercultural relations and the possibility of reducing a complex, subtle, set of human relations to the status of an object which can be manipulated according to the will of a few more or less well-intentioned politicians. The cultural diversity of each individual society results from a coincidence of historical, political and demographic factors, which are the result of a unique evolutionary pattern and are not open to outside influence. We should therefore guard against any impulse toward "social engineering" as "States do not have the capacity to create, sustain or prevent diversity" [Nababsing, deb.]. Given these conditions, the most appropriate action would not be "management of cultural pluralism" (as one manages a business or a company stock), but an effort to encourage the emergence of a propitious climate which would facilitate, nurture and render more effective and durable intercultural understanding and the recognition of the rights of all communities.

Of all the parties engaged in the construction of pluralism, the State has the greatest leverage in arbitration, promoting action and initiating policy. While it is true that the State often reveals itself as being too weak or ineffective to resolve intercultural conflict, the absence of State structures in countries given to anarchy or banditry shows that it can still play an irreplaceable role in enforcing the rule of law and bringing people together. "It is only the State which has the capacity to construct, to preserve, to protect and, if need be, to enforce a multicultural reality. And the areas of the world where multicultural violence is most pronounced at the present times (former Yugoslavia, portions of the former Soviet Union, some areas of Africa, etc.) are

precisely the areas where States as organized entities have greatly weakened or even all but vanished" [Young, deb.].

Though the State plays a central role in the promotion of multiculturalism, that does not mean that the instances of State intervention should necessarily be multiplied. In certain cases, discretion and flexibility of State action can be more effective, as it avoids the imposition of solutions and lets society's auto-regulatory mechanism do its work. "To try to develop any clearly defined policy could do more harm (...), the absence of a policy sometimes is better in the sense that it doesn't unleash passions and tension" [Nababsing, deb.]. State intervention, therefore, should avoid being too rigid or too heavy-handed so as not to fan the flames of inter-community conflict and the resultant recriminations against the State.

To respond to the double aspirations to unity and diversity on which pluralism is founded, State action must balance respect for the identity of each individual community with integration of that community into the national whole. In parallel with the recognition of the cultural rights of each community, it is important not to neglect the symbols and rituals which contribute to the emergence of a national identity and which allow the federation of individual communities around a common set of ideas. Such is the role of national flags, anthems, commemoration days, national holidays which recall important moments in the life of a nation, and respect for historical figures or works of art which embody its genius. Behind all the grandiloquent speeches and apparently superfluous pomp and circumstance, lies the need to create a minimum common culture and a sense of belonging on a level above that of the micro-community. From this point

of view, one of the means of overcoming the dichotomy between encouraging diversity and constructing a national identity might be to accord a national dimension to events or occasions initially associated with minority communities (major religious festivals, for example): in a multicultural context, the participation of minority cultures in national cultural life allows each community, in one sense, to feel recognized by society as a whole, and in another, to see in the distinctive cultural features of other communities a particle of itself.

Beyond symbolism, the integration of individual cultures requires that they be represented at every level of national life. This is achieved by enshrining the multicultural character of society and the rights and duties of minorities in the constitution and fundamental laws of a State. This legislative and constitutional action is meaningful only if in practice attention is paid to the real degree to which different communities are represented within public institutions (the civil service, the police, the army, the judiciary, the political structures, etc.). To create such a democratic context entails putting in place machinery to enable minorities to make their distinctiveness and specific needs apparent. The State can make its mark in this area by choosing an electoral system which preserves the equilibrium of society and stops any group from feeling excluded. In this field, it is impossible to lay down *a priori* rules: it is up to each country to adopt the type of electoral system most appropriate to its particular needs. The proportional representation model current in some countries, direct democracy and the use of popular referendums in Switzerland, the system of "best losers" which, in Mauritius, allows for the selection of additional representatives chosen from those communities which are underrepresented in Parliament - all these are systems which,

without being intrinsically positive or negative, show at least an effort to ensure that every community participates as fully as possible within very different national contexts.

The credibility of State action rests on the guarantee of its impartiality. When it is perceived as being the agent of particular interests, the State loses all legitimacy in the eyes of other communities who are in danger of resorting to violence. This is particularly the case in situations where religious pluralism exists: the only way that the State can stay out of religious quarrels and preserve its role as mediator and arbiter is to observe a strict neutrality, by applying the principle of secularism which avoids all confusion between religion and politics. "If the State, in a multi-religious society, gives up secularism and tries to adopt the religion of the majority as the State religion, it is bound to affect the unity and cohesion of the nation and lead to instability and conflicts" [Dubey]. The necessity for impartiality must extend to rigour, transparency and accountability in the management of public institutions. "It is essential that these institutions are served by people of capability and integrity, that the exercise of power by these people is regulated by clear-cut guidelines, that their actions are above reproach and that any breach of impartiality is subjected to the strictest censure and the most rigorous sanction" [Parekh]. This requirement of an ethic in public life, in the current context, is less a moralistic obsession with the shady dealings of the State and more a desire to preserve intercultural equilibrium. Such an equilibrium is effectively made possible by the guarantee given to all communities that they will be treated equally, and is disturbed by partisan decisions made in the name of a theoretically neutral State.

Another key role of the State is to fight against all forms of cultural exclusion, whether these are outright manifestations of intolerance or cases where the exercise of multicultural citizenship founded on the principle of a flexible identity is impeded. This requires an active policy of vigilance with regard to physical or verbal violence in cross-community relations and also sometimes with regard to the actions of the State itself. The State is, in effect, the main agent in the construction of pluralism and its main obstacle; if it does not have the capacity to reform itself (which the practice of democracy allows), it can impede the necessary evolution. On the positive side, some countries already have anti-discriminatory laws for the protection of minorities, at least in theory, against any prejudicial treatment linked to race, religion, sex or sexuality. In some cases, legislation exists which allows for the prosecution of anyone stirring up racial hatred. This implies a judicial framework within which freedom of expression and freedom of the press have to meet minimal ethical standards.

However, the liveliest debates revolve around attempts to define the most suitable policy for the integration of minorities, and particularly immigrant communities, in the developed world. A contrast is often made, somewhat simplistically, between the American "communitarist" model which stresses the cohabitation of communities constituted according to cultural affinity and the French "assimilationist" model which favours the adoption of a single set of "republican" values by all. Ideally, a constructive pluralism does not have to choose between these models, rather it can take the best points of each - respect for cultural rights on the one hand and the granting of full citizenship on the other. In any case, policy on nationality and the reception given to immigrant populations can serve

as benchmarks to evaluate the degree of development of State action with regard to the construction of pluralism. In particular, such action can be judged by its capacity for encouraging a sense of multiple belonging and overcoming a narrow vision of nationality based on ethnic identity or some supposed blood right (which, in contrast to a birthright, is based on a biological concept of nationality). The mismatch between the increasingly cosmopolitan nature of contemporary societies and overcautious action by the State, buttressed by a mono-cultural concept of national identity, can only aggravate inter-community frustration and conflict.

Effective action against cultural exclusion requires the State to show true determination. Without a deliberate policy in their favour, underprivileged minorities would be condemned to reproduce the same pattern of exclusion to which they had been hitherto subjected. Affirmative action, as practised for example in India and the United States, aims to replace the abstract postulation of equality between communities by a recognition of initial disparities (in terms of economic opportunities or access to education) which prevent certain minorities from integrating into society with the same ease as others. If a theory of equality merely serves to justify the existence of inequalities in real life, then the role of the State lies in establishing true equality by encouraging the appointment of minorities to certain jobs or certain institutions, at least for a time, by means of a policy of quotas or reserved places. Sometimes denounced as encouraging incompetence and fostering resentment among those who feel disadvantaged by its application, affirmative action is far from universally accepted. It at least has the merit of stressing that State intervention can play a determining role in correcting imbalances which impede the construc-

tion of pluralism. To achieve this goal, the enactment of a social policy in favour of disadvantaged groups is even more effective than the policy of quotas. General socio-economic measures and political action to benefit the poorest in society are principal means at the State's disposal for influencing favourably the construction of pluralism and preventing poverty and marginalization from becoming the basis for revolt, where economic factors become identified with cultural ones.

This determination to act on the part of the State is also expressed in the attempt to involve minorities, as far as possible, in the decision-making process, above all regarding those issues which most directly concern them. The consultative role of those minorities may be institutionalized when representative bodies exist which are not subject to pressure from governmental authority. In cases where an excessive concentration of power progressively cuts the State off from the concerns expressed at the periphery or margins of the territory it controls, the options of decentralization and federalism may represent a means of ensuring that such concerns are not neglected or treated without discernment. The issue of federalism is bound up with the problem of pluralism, in that peripheral populations are sometimes ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities whose distance from the seat of central government may lead to a *de facto* exclusion from national life. In this context, the readiness of the State to give up part of its power in favour of regions and population groups which would then be left to manage their own affairs and establish the forms of cooperation the most suitable for themselves, can be a means of appeasing rancour and fostering the re-integration of these populations into the national fabric.

This development can succeed only if it does not challenge the territorial integrity of the State and does not lead to the construction of regional entities functioning in isolation and in contempt of democratic processes. Federalism, then, is not a solution that could be adapted to suit every country. It presupposes a State which is sufficiently strong not to fear delegating part of its authority and minority groups which are sufficiently responsible not to give way to the temptation of separatism. In other words, it rests on the ability to reconcile the authority of the State with the expression of cultural distinctness. If secession appears to certain communities as the only way to affirm and recover their rights, then this is a sign that the State has failed and that it is unable to create a flexible framework within which all forms of diversity can feel accommodated.

The modalities of this federalism vary according to individual context. Perhaps one can envisage the utility of creating "asymmetric federations" [Mazrui, *deb.*] which would not seek to impose the same system of government on all regions and which would accept distinctive systems in some of them, based on very strongly marked cultural features (in Quebec, for example). At an international level, the creation of broad federations linking several countries on a regional basis could allow the resolution of conflicts which, in these countries, pit one community against another. Some analysts have in this light pointed out the positive effects which would result from a federation grouping Rwanda and Burundi with Tanzania, in order to transcend the antagonism between the Hutus and the Tutsis in the first two countries [Mazrui, *deb.*]. By being integrated into a larger unit, by becoming components of a plural society, these communities might discover new opportunities and would no longer be in

a situation of perpetual confrontation which prevents old wounds from healing. The construction of pluralism, learning from the lessons of the past, can lead to the discovery of new solutions and new paths for conflict resolution. However, these depend on a redefinition of the geopolitical landscape which remains, for the moment, purely hypothetical.

THE ACTION OF CIVIL SOCIETY AND INTERNATIONAL ACTION

Important as it may be, State action has its limitations which make the participation of civil organizations governed by different rules and driven by a different logic indispensable. "Many (civic structures) have the capacity to act more radically and with more speed to address issues of pluralism than many state bodies that are often hampered by bureaucracy and politics alike" [Fitzduff]. The weight and slowness of the State apparatus, its distance from the concrete problems which people encounter in everyday life and electoral considerations which colour certain decisions, all feed a feeling of distrust towards the State and inhibit the efficacy of its actions. These failures aside, the very nature of State action explains its insufficiency with regard to the construction of pluralism. Intercultural understanding cannot result solely from "top-down" decision-making. It also demands initiatives coming from the sectors of the population which are themselves involved and from representative organizations in civil society. These "citizens' initiatives" contribute to "a growing sense of citizenship" [Mitterrand] because they are formulated by individuals who refuse to let their conduct be dictated by the State, still less by market forces and consumer values in a situation where the State itself seems to have lost control. By organizing them-

selves to combat intolerance, through local councils, through community and inter-community groups, individuals face up to their responsibilities and stop blaming the State for all the difficulties associated with the cohabitation of cultures.

In this context, no form of action is superfluous, as the State and civil organizations contribute, each according to its capabilities and in complementary fashion, to the construction of the pluralist edifice. This "organic approach to diversity" [Fitzduff] requires cooperation between all interested parties, originating from an attribution of roles adapted to the various stages of construction: at the highest level, the State defines a general policy and allots resources; at the intermediate level, the representatives of the State and of civil society evaluate what needs to be done and together design a strategy; at the local level, the options decided upon are put into practice in consultation with the concerned population groups. Such cooperation allows the State to implement a policy which corresponds to the needs expressed by civil society and permits the latter to benefit from State support in realizing its projects. At the same time, it is essential that each party keeps its autonomy, as too close a connection between the State and, for example, certain religious or ethno-cultural associations, can damage both the neutrality of the State and the independence of these associations. While it is wise, therefore, to remain prudent with regard to the nature of this cooperation - particularly where it concerns the payment of subsidies to some or other association - this should not prevent the State from selecting and supporting, financially if necessary, specific projects emanating from civil society and destined to reduce intercultural tension.

Among the interested parties in civil society, some play a preponderant role in the creation of a constructive pluralism: the media, non-governmental organizations, the church, business, the trade unions and academia can all be called on to contribute according to their area of expertise and specific capabilities. Each of these bodies possesses its particular strengths and weaknesses which, according to the particular national context, determine its influence and utility. In countries where religion remains a strong motive force, obtaining the support of the churches would be the priority for the promotion of inter-community understanding. Elsewhere, the trade unions or the media might prove to be more powerful allies, without neglecting the possibility of using all forms of leverage at the same time to obtain a more rapid result and more widespread support. The weaknesses of one of these bodies can moreover be offset by the strengths of another by virtue of their complementary roles. Thus, academia is well placed to analyse situations and propose valid long-term solutions (which many non-governmental organizations cannot do as they work in emergency conditions), non-governmental organizations bring to the table their knowledge of the situation on the ground and their evaluation of the real needs of the population (often little understood by academics or by the media, which tend towards oversimplification) while the churches carry moral authority which, though sometimes used to defend partisan interests, can be used to settle intercultural conflicts [Fitzduff].

The media play a particularly sensitive role in this sphere. Their ability to mobilize public opinion makes them a vital tool for informing and alerting society to the existence of intercultural problems. However, they can act also as instruments of propaganda capable of exacerbating resentments within

communities. The calls to murder launched on the airwaves by the sinister Radio Mille Collines in Rwanda are a reminder, given the use to which the media have been put to by every totalitarian regime of the century, of the way in which they can be twisted to be used as a vehicle of hate. On the other hand, the presence of increasingly well-organized diasporas in certain Western countries has been accompanied by a multiplication of particularistic media (newspapers, magazines, radio and television stations, web sites) through which minorities affirm their cultural identity, maintain links with their countries of origin and express the concerns which are not taken into account by the wider media: "particularistic media complement the role of institutions in charge of the custody and transmission of filiation and memory" [Dayan]. Thus, they contribute to the emergence of "micro public spheres" which cannot be considered independently from the national public sphere, as the two influence each other via a subtle process of exchange and infiltration of values and opinions between the majority and minority media. The undertaking by the general media to avoid representing minority groups in a stereotypical way and that of the micro-media to promote a sense of citizenship in a section of the public which is conscious of its cultural individuality contribute symmetrically to the construction of pluralism.

The role of non-governmental organizations in the settling of intercultural conflicts cannot be underestimated. These organizations are involved in every phase in the evolution of these conflicts: before they break out, because their proximity allows them to listen to the frustrations expressed by the population groups in question; during the development of the conflict, because their neutrality allows them to assume a mediatory role which

cannot be taken on by the State which is identified with the interests of a single group; after the conflict, because they are often the only ones remaining on the ground when all other parties have been eliminated or driven out. With flexible structures at their disposal and by remaining in contact with local populations, NGOs have a special place in multicultural contexts. One of the reasons for their success is their ability to take specialized forms of action in particular contexts, and this presupposes the existence of a number of possible strategies, capable of being used simultaneously or successively, as befits the nature of the problem in question: "the struggle to achieve the rule of law requires the introduction of polymorphous strategies. In order to be effective, NGOs specialize either in defending human rights or in educating the population in the universal values of peaceful coexistence" [Niyonzima]. This diversity of resources allows NGOs, considered collectively, to put forward solutions adapted to each type of problem, whether that entails educating the population, conciliation, lending assistance to minorities who are the victims of exclusion or participating in the reconstruction of war-damaged countries.

Neither State action nor that of civil society is sufficient, however, to tackle a number of intercultural problems whose scope lies beyond the national framework. Concerted action by several States or organs of civil society (principally NGOs) from different countries becomes imperative when inter-community conflicts concern several States at once or when the support and backing of the international community are required for the success of policies in favour of pluralism. International organizations are then the principal forum where strategies designed to encourage cultural pluralism and to resolve cultural differences between States are

framed. Direct bilateral or multilateral negotiations, the organization of regional conferences and meetings dealing with specific intercultural problems can also help to unblock situations which have apparently reached an impasse.

However, when such measures fail and when more stringent ones are required, the issue of whether it is legitimate to impose economic sanctions or even support armed intervention backed by the international community in countries which are oppressing their minorities or practising "ethnic cleansing" cannot be avoided. On this controversial point, it is difficult to choose between the right to interfere (in the name of universal enforcement of human rights) and the constraints of *realpolitik*, which cautions against interference in the domestic affairs of a country, especially a powerful one with which it is as well to avoid confrontation. International mobilization and the determination to safeguard a minimum standard, even by force of arms, in grave cases of human rights violations, are important instruments in resolving intercultural conflicts. Certainly, human rights are sometimes merely a pretext for military operations with less admissible aims, such as furthering the political or commercial interests of one nation or another. Nevertheless, even if it is still indispensable to define the precise terms, conditions and limits of its application, the right to interfere reflects a recognition, at an international level, of the intolerable nature of certain discriminatory practices. It can act as a deterrent to discourage criminal inclinations and can serve, too, as a reminder that not everything is permissible and that there exists a last resort - force - when certain boundaries are crossed.

For all that, coercion is not the only nor yet the principal form taken by international action. The

latter must also seek to establish preventive measures which act on the roots of intercultural conflicts, before these break out. In this scenario, it is essential to adopt a "pro-active" stance instead of simply observing situations as they develop. This requires keeping a constant eye on the risks of explosion which exist in multicultural societies, in order to prevent the accumulation of frustrations from turning into an outbreak of uncontrollable violence. It is necessary to be particularly attentive to the way in which intercultural relations are managed and organized in times of apparent calm, above all just after the cessation of conflicts which it has not been possible to avoid.

To meet this requirement, early warning systems need to be put in place, destined to prevent any outbreak of hostilities by means of intelligence-gathering in the at-risk countries. The establishment of these mechanisms might be accompanied by the deployment of observers charged with the task of watching over and analysing the development of intercultural relations in the most sensitive regions (particularly in certain frontier regions). This surveillance and anticipation has to be backed up by the use of preventive diplomacy capable, in the light of precise knowledge of each situation, of suggesting compromise solutions, fostering negotiation between the different communities, lowering tension and, at the very least, preventing the situation from deteriorating. In this context, it is up to the international community to define a code of conduct for the political management of intercultural relations, by establishing norms, procedures, means of control and sanctions to be used when dealing with countries which have broken this code. International action can thus influence the construction of pluralism within any given country. This means that what is at stake here is too important to

be left to the discretion of State governments alone: from the way in which intercultural relations are handled and the way minorities are treated, it is human nature itself which is really in question.

This ambitious project can be preceded by a number of more short-term actions, designed to take an inventory and analyse what has been tried and what has worked regarding the construction of a "sustainable pluralism". One could, for example examine how intercultural practices differ from place to place throughout the world and promote those practices which may serve as an example to other parts of the globe. Similarly, one could highlight the experience of certain States, institutions and political leaders who have been able to conceive courageous and novel solutions to tackle the intercultural conflicts with which they have been faced. The culture-specific ingredients which make up the diversity of each individual society rule out the possibility of models and solutions which are transposable from one country to another. One can nevertheless examine policies which have already been tried elsewhere to find equivalences that would be valid in a given situation and to avoid repeating errors. Finally, as a preliminary to any new project, it would be desirable to list those institutions already working, in one way or another, in favour of a constructive pluralism, in order to link them together in a network and build up a database which could give rise to ideas for collaboration and concerted action.

EDUCATION FOR PLURALISM

To devote oneself to the construction of pluralism is to conceive that it is possible to change the way people think and to promote a better understand-

ing of otherness and difference. But while legislative action and the adoption of preventive and coercive measures contribute to the regulation of intercultural relations, these measures are, in themselves, powerless to modify the perception of other people by the individual or to overcome the persistence of prejudice and irrational fear. In short, these measures strive to organize the space within which intercultural relations take place, but do not pretend to influence the individual. This "structural approach" will therefore have to be supplemented by a "psychocultural approach" [Fitzduff] taking into account psychological traits (distrust, resentment, fantasies) and the mental stereotypes which condition the misunderstandings arising between communities and individuals.

To overcome these misunderstandings and encourage a new attitude to otherness, it is necessary to plan for a mental shift which in turn presupposes educational action. This alone is capable of getting to the root of the problem and acting on the deep-seated causes of intercultural conflicts. The construction of pluralism first requires "education for pluralism" which can be promoted, variously, by the State, the interested parties in civil society and international organs. Such education for pluralism is conducted through the traditional educational channels (schools and universities), but it can also be implemented in less formal ways which are particularly important in putting across a positive image of other peoples and cultures. This informal education can take place in the workplace or the home, through all forms of artistic expression, in the media, advertising, museums and so on. Whatever method is used, the objective is obtained when cultural diversity ceases to be viewed as a threat.

Educational action is aimed at encouraging knowledge - and hence understanding - of other cultures. It is by allowing people to discover other cultures for themselves rather than by voicing platitudes, such as urging them to devote themselves to the cause of peace or to love their neighbours as themselves, that pluralism can best be encouraged. This approach requires "outlook teaching" [Dibie, deb.] which reveals how members of other cultures both resemble us and differ from us. Emphasis can thus be placed on shared features which bring out similarities between religious traditions and ethnic groups. Differences should not be played down, however, and no attempt should be made to dilute them in a bland consensus. It is perfectly possible to continue to affirm the reality of those differences, while at the same time emphasizing the principles which, in each tradition, are conducive to mutual comprehension and respect.

This outlook teaching avoids any temptation to impose an opinion on others. It is about putting one's own habits of thought on hold and learning to see the world through the eyes of others, finding in the process that, strange as it may seem, the alternative vision is not necessarily absurd and even possesses a logic of its own. With this objective in mind, "experimental *talking-points*" [Droit] could be organized, whereby one would "taste" the ideas, curiosities and motivations of others. Acquiring knowledge of others is not here a matter of cold, intellectual analysis, but an emotional receptiveness to the viewpoint of others: "the hermeneutic problem of interculturality is less a problem of intellectual comprehension than of affectivity. The question of determining to what extent individuals want to understand one another first requires an answer to another question, namely: at the affective level of their existential

feelings, are individuals inclined to openness?" [Brandner].

This knowledge of others is the surest means of deconstructing false representations, prejudices and stereotypes associated with each group. To achieve this, communication between different communities at work, at play, through the voluntary sector and at neighbourhood level must be encouraged. Working together, sharing emotions and debating openly build a day-to-day level of interculturality which can prove more fertile in the nurturing of pluralism than many other forms of more sophisticated action. This intuitive openness towards members of other cultures cannot, however, get rid of the most ingrained prejudices. It is also necessary to envisage an educational programme much larger in scope which aims at understanding each cultural tradition in the different phases of its development and to emphasize what each community has contributed to the intellectual and spiritual history of humanity, to the national heritage and to the creation of the living present.

This approach should give people an opportunity to listen to the music, appreciate the arts and read the texts, both classical and modern, of the minority communities, whether these works were created in the country of origin or in the host country, and to distribute them as widely as possible. The aim is to familiarize other communities with the minority's forms of expression and to situate these in the national cultural landscape. By presenting cultural traditions in their authenticity and continuity, by emphasizing the best of what they have produced and that which they can contribute to the future, by recalling the interpenetration of cultures through the ages and the mutual influences which unite them still, the tendency to view these tradi-

tions in an oversimplified way has more chances to be avoided (this tendency is particularly apparent in the way Islam is portrayed, at present, by the Western media). "There needs to be a sustained effort to undo negative stereotypes in the general media, particularly concerning the representation of other cultures. And one should strongly encourage them to dissociate culture and civilization from local events" [Nizami, deb.]. To further this educational process, initiatives by certain NGOs to seek out and denounce distortions and slurs against such and such a community in the press, in school textbooks or in administrative practice should be supported [Mazrui, deb.].

The effort to overcome intercultural prejudices leads us to ask why these prejudices have grown up and to identify the contentious issues that have divided communities in the course of history. Words unspoken, complicit silences, hidden fears can only delay or undermine the resolution of intercultural conflicts, as they leave to fester in the darkness thoughts or feelings which feed mutual suspicion. Education for pluralism therefore implies an exploration of the past, an exacting search for historical truth and a duty of remembrance in regard to crimes that may have been committed. It is not by masking their disagreements that communities become reconciled, but by lancing the abscess and, on the one hand, accepting responsibility for the mistakes of the past and undertaking to correct their legacy, and, on the other, working through the mourning process. This necessitates the paradoxical conjunction of a very clear recollection of past sufferings and a need to move forward by letting go of the obsessions of the past. It is not so much a matter of a desire to forget, but rather a desire to build a future and forge bonds, in some cases, with the enemies of yesterday: "if we stick to remembering

what wrong we did one to the other, we will never be able to live together" [Vassiliou, deb.]. Intercultural reconciliation is achieved by the necessary acceptance of an often painful truth, by victim and tormentor alike. Particular attention must therefore be paid to the way in which the history and development of intercultural relations are presented in the media and schoolbooks of countries which have participated in acts of violence or crimes. A truncated and denial-based history is full of menace for the future in that it reveals an inability to overcome the traumas of the past, with the persistence of rancour perhaps leading to new conflict.

The weight of this historical background in the construction of pluralism results in part from the place occupied by historical narrative in the formation of cultural identity. Nation and narration are closely linked, for it is through narrative that a nation acquires an awareness of itself and of its destiny. Similarly, on an individual level, "it is very important, when someone asks you who you are, to respond with some sort of story" [Dayan, deb.] because this is an enunciation of one's real or ideal self-image and a way to define oneself in relation to others. The role of education is to help reconstruct this narrative link, whenever it is threatened or broken. For it is precisely this link which is missing in those acculturated populations who have been victims of forced displacement or over-rapid urbanization, and also among some immigrant communities which have difficulty in reconciling themselves to their multiple cultural attachments, who have "lost the thread" of their own history and are not really sure of who they are, or to which culture they belong. The malaise of a number of young people who are the children of first-generation immigrants in Western countries (notably in the

French dormitory suburbs) is linked to this vacuity of identity which results from an inability to recognize themselves as belonging either to their parents' culture or to that of their adopted country. In such cases, the role of educational action consists in reconnecting people with the interrupted narrative, reconstructing these chaotic identities and rehabilitating the diverse cultures of which they are part, so as to re-create a sense of belonging to the community and to the nation as a whole.

National education systems can play a leading role in exposing and salving damaged identities. They are the motors of integration for pupils or students from minority communities, because they are responsible for passing on the standards and knowledge by which national identity is defined and they remain - despite a parallel tendency to reproduce elites - the principal vectors of social mobility. However, their often monolithic character and the uniformity of their programmes and curricula do not predispose them to tailor solutions to the specific educational needs of minorities. The success of an education policy aimed at fostering the integration of minorities rests, above all, on due acknowledgement of the inequalities of circumstance which impede access to education by certain marginalized groups or make the school environment more difficult (for economic, linguistic or other reasons) for immigrant children.

Integration will also fail if the school is seen solely as a mirror of the dominant culture which treats manifestations of minority cultures with indifference or contempt. In the context of the construction of pluralism, the education system therefore will have to be more open to the diversity of the cultures present in a given society. It will have to accord them a place in study programmes (par-

ticularly in the teaching of languages), while at the same time emphasizing the role played by these cultures in the history of ideas and recognizing the contribution of ethnic minorities and immigrant populations in every field of knowledge. Besides the fact that it enriches the educational process itself, such an approach fosters the construction of a sense of identity among youngsters from minority groups, as it enables them to know their own culture better and to internalize the concept of their multiple identity. In parallel, it helps to lend credibility to the desire of the school system for integration, particularly in the eyes of minorities who henceforth have an assurance that their specific cultural needs will be addressed.

The question may be asked, however, whether the school's role should really be to foster cultural individuality and the transmission of community consciousness. Does not the assumption of such a role risk compromising the capacity of the school to foster the integration of minorities? In concrete terms, is the unity of the nation best brought about by choosing a single system of education appropriate to all or by allowing the establishment of several programmes adapted to different groups? Should the education system favour a single language (which acts as a bridge linking all communities) or is it better, in a multicultural school environment, to allow, where the need arises, other languages to be used which are more familiar to the pupils, and in consequence, better suited to the demands of education? For example, in a State which has a majority of English speakers, is the use of Spanish to communicate with pupils who have Spanish as their mother tongue a factor leading to ghettoization or a means of integration into the national structure? There are strong arguments in favour of each option. The theoretical debate aside,

one could begin by evaluating and comparing the results of experiments which have been tried in this field in various parts of the world. These experiments concerning a diversified education, sometimes combining several types of education, sometimes bilingual and sometimes using the mother tongue (when it is not the national language) are worthy of study. They are important not solely from the strictly educational point of view (to determine the advantages and disadvantages in terms of pupils' levels of acquisition or learning patterns), but also from the perspective of their social and political consequences in building up the identity of minority groups, the capability of society to integrate its minorities and the strengthening (or erosion) of national unity.

Without calling into question the very foundations of the education system, it is possible henceforth to promote "education for pluralism" by supporting the reform of curricula and syllabuses and by redefining the scope and content of the different subjects taught. The latter should take greater account of the diversity of cultures and of the need to establish links and paths of communication between them. All disciplines can be modulated or adapted to respond to this requirement. Some, however, lend themselves more easily to an examination of the implications of cultural pluralism, particularly those which deal with varied cultural traditions and which are designed to establish relations between them. History, philosophy, anthropology, sociology and comparative literature are among those disciplines which should receive particular attention in the context of an education policy respectful of cultural diversity. The methodology implicit in them is as important as their actual content. "Injecting an anthropological component into multicultural education, especially as applied to

early schooling and to teacher-training programs, would immeasurably reduce the type of misunderstandings about diversity that may lead to conflict" [Cerroni-Long].

In order for these disciplines to modify intercultural perception, the way they are taught must not itself be a vehicle for ethnocentric prejudices. The quasi-systematic sidelining of Indian philosophy or Islamic thought in philosophy courses as they are taught in the West reduces the field of vision of this discipline and needs to be corrected by the creation of new teaching tools allowing a comparison of themes and outlooks characteristic of various philosophical traditions [Droit]. The education system must, then, in every field encourage the use of more balanced reference books, emphasizing the plurality of cultural traditions, and support the teaching of these subjects in countries which present risks of intercultural conflict.

In parallel with this redefinition of existing disciplines, the specific nature of intercultural problems requires a special syllabus - perhaps even an autonomous discipline - adapted to each context, and sometimes crossing interdisciplinary frontiers. The creation of university chairs of multicultural studies, above all in at-risk countries, and the pub-

lication of textbooks designed to provoke reflection and research into problem-solving (from the starting-point of an analysis of best practices) represent a form of educational action which is directly concerned with the problem of multiculturalism rather than considering this problem within the confines of other disciplines.

The efficacy of this action results from the precise definition of the objectives being pursued and of the target audience. In particular, it takes the form of education programmes which focus on concepts of citizenship and human rights and is primarily aimed at those who possess some influence on the way intercultural relations develop: politicians, but also cultural mediators responsible for promoting dialogue and a better understanding between communities. The placing of localized intercultural conflicts in a larger spatial and temporal context allows debate to become less heated and facilitates a calmer negotiation of a way out of the crisis. In this way, education for pluralism is a partner of political action for pluralism: by changing the way other people are perceived, it at the same time ushers in another way of behaving which is less focused on the defence of cultural individuality and more conscious of the link which, in spite of everything, continues to unite all human beings.

Appendices

1 AGENDA

Thursday 28 janvier

Welcome and Keynote Addresses

Mr Federico Mayor, Director-General of UNESCO and
His Excellency Chief Emeka Anyaoku, Secretary-General of Commonwealth

First session: The Challenge of Pluralism

Introduction by Professor Ali Mazrui and Mr Rudolph Brandner
Debate

Second session: The State and a Positive Vision of Pluralism

Introduction by Professors Muchkund Dubey and Liza Cerroni-Long
Debate

Reception held by the Commonwealth Secretariat and UNESCO

Friday 29th January

Third session: The Role of Civil Society in the Handling of Pluralism

Introduction by Professor Mari Fitzduff, Mr Marco Martiniello
and Mr Alexandre Niyonzima
Debate

Fourth session: The Future of Pluralism

Introduction by the Rapporteurs
Debate

Saturday 30th January (morning)

Discussion and adoption of the *Outcomes* document
Closure of the colloquium

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LIST OF THE PARTICIPANTS' WRITTEN CONTRIBUTIONS *

WORKING DOCUMENTS:

- 1 **Brandner, Rudolph:** *Interculturality: a philosophical approach*
- 2 **Cerroni-Long, Liza:** *Multiculturalism, education and the state: anthropological perspectives*
- 3 **Dubey, Muchkund:** *The state and the management of pluralism*
- 4 **Fitzduff, Mari:** *Strangers and friends: the challenge of diversity and the role of civic society*
- 5 **Martiniello, Marco:** *Etat et gestion de la diversité culturelle au quotidien : quelques exemples concrets (The State and the day-to-day management of cultural diversity: a few concrete examples)*
- 6 **Mazrui, Ali:** *Towards a constructive plural order: four principles of reform*
- 7 **Niyonzima, Alexandre:** *The role of NGOs in the building process of a constructive pluralism in contemporary multicultural societies*
- 8 **Haeringer, Philippe:** *Introduction à la diversité citadine (Introduction to urban diversity)*
- 9 **Mitterrand, Danielle:** *Le devenir citoyen (Developing a sense of citizenship)*
- 10 **Nababsing, Vidula:** *The limits of multi-cultural policies in Mauritius? Some reflections on recent ethnic tensions*
- 11 **Nethersole, Reingard:** *Reclaiming compromise as modus vivendi in pluralist societies*
- 12 **Parekh, Bhikhu:** *A commitment to cultural pluralism*
- 13 **Perry, Ruth:** *Towards a constructive pluralism: the Liberian experience*
- 14 **Premdas, Ralph:** *Public policy and ethnic conflict*
- 15 **Stavenhagen, Rodolfo:** *Cultural rights: a social science perspective*
- 16 **Wilson, Ronald:** *Towards a constructive pluralism: the Australian experience*
- 17 **Windisch, Uli:** *La Suisse plurilingue et pluriculturelle : une réalité culturelle et politique spécifique (Swiss plurilinguism and pluriculturalism: a specific cultural and political reality)*

PARTICIPANTS' PAPERS:

- 1 **Appadurai, Arjun:** *The grounds of the nation-state: identity, violence and territory*
- 2 **Dayan, Daniel:** *Particularistic media and diasporic communications*
- 3 **Droit, Roger-Pol:**
 - a) *Towards a pluri-cultural teaching of philosophy*
 - b) *Pluralisme et universalité d'un point de vue philosophique (Pluralism and universality from a philosophical perspective)*
- 4 **Haeringer, Philippe:** *Introduction à la diversité citadine (Introduction to urban diversity)*
- 5 **Mitterrand, Danielle:** *Le devenir citoyen (Developing a sense of citizenship)*
- 6 **Nababsing, Vidula:** *The limits of multi-cultural policies in Mauritius? Some reflections on recent ethnic tensions*
- 7 **Nethersole, Reingard:** *Reclaiming compromise as modus vivendi in pluralist societies*
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- 13 **Windisch, Uli:** *La Suisse plurilingue et pluriculturelle : une réalité culturelle et politique spécifique (Swiss plurilinguism and pluriculturalism: a specific cultural and political reality)*
- 14 **Winkin, Yves:** *Eating topics and taking food: conversational rules in a multicultural residential organization*
- 15 **Young, Crawford:** *Case studies in cultural diversity and public policy: comparative reflections*

* The titles are given in the original language used by the author, followed, if necessary, by a translation in parentheses.

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