Foreword

The Culture of Peace

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In 1945, after two world wars had exacted a devastating toll on humanity during the first half of the twentieth century, the combined will of 51 countries established an intergovernmental organization in an effort to spare future generations from the scourge of war. The United Nations was established "to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small; to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained; and to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom" (UN Charter, adopted June 26, 1945, preamble). To approach these goals, it was recognized that tolerance must be practiced and that living together in peace with one another as good neighbors was essential. This was not conceived to be the undertaking of a few nor was it to be a top-down process. To the contrary, it was envisioned that the combined strengths of humankind would be required to ensure long-term global peace and security.

In the nearly seven decades that have since transpired, it could be all too easy to think that not much has happened to progress toward these ends. One only needs to pick up the daily newspaper or tune into a newscast to realize that many people live in settings that are far from secure and desirable. Universal peace is still a very distant goal.

Here, I wish to put forth a different perspective: The task of uniting the strengths and capabilities of billions of individuals, so as to ensure long-term peace and security in our world, is very much underway. Focusing on that which binds us together as human beings, a culture—a set of values, attitudes, traditions and modes of behavior and ways of life—is being created to support the eventual realization of these goals. For this to be successful, however, each individual must be empowered to act according to fundamental principles. These principles must be evident in our actions (both individual and societal), and they must form the very basis upon which policies are formulated at local, regional, national, and international levels. By immersing ourselves in a culture that supports and promotes peace, individual efforts will, over time, unite to enable sustainable peace and security to emerge.

The Process

Wars are fought to settle border disputes, control resources, and exert or retain dominance over others. Wars are also fought and conflict perpetuated to exact financial gain. In current political jargon, there is a preference to use the term "civil conflict" instead of "war." However there is nothing "civil" about genocide, rape, kidnapping, senseless killing, lynching, or the dismemberment of fellow human beings. The fact that such atrocities are often directed toward people who live in the same community or region as those who perpetrate such acts is most disturbing. All too often, hatred and intolerance drive such acts, skewing a person's ability to perceive others as equals.

As the Cold War was winding down, recognition emerged that the traditional ways of addressing conflict or war (i.e., mediation, humanitarian interventions, peacekeeping missions, diplomacy) were insufficient to create a lasting peace in the world. Conflicts erupt, problems get addressed, peace treaties are signed, but society never peels back the layers of a conflict to examine why it emerged in the first place. The United Nations' focus on promoting "international peace" (i.e., peace between nations) was understood to be the absence of war between states. However, to understand peace as the opposite of war is fallacious: the absence of war or conflict may bring about a cessation of hostilities, but it is not synonymous with peace.

> A peace based exclusively upon the political and economic arrangements of governments would not be a peace which could secure the unanimous, lasting, and sincere support of the peoples of the world…peace must therefore be founded, if it is not to fail, upon the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind (UNESCO Constitution, adopted Nov. 16, 1945, p. 1).

To abolish conflict or war as a viable option for action, a concept of peace needs to be embraced that is inclusive and sustainable. Theoretically, this should be possible for the same species that invented war is surely capable of inventing peace (to paraphrase Margaret Mead).

To this end, my formal efforts began on July 31, 1997, when I approached the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, in my capacity as the UN ambassador from Bangladesh, to request that the concept of a "culture of peace" be included as an agenda topic for the plenary sessions of the UN General Assembly. As a result, in 1998 I was mandated by the President of the fifty-third regular session of the UN General Assembly, Mr. Didier Opertti of Argentina, to chair a committee, open to all member states, that would focus specifically on the concept of a culture of peace: its meanings and potential implications for humanity. Given the mission of the United Nations—"to save future generations from the scourge of war"—it was felt that a fundamental conceptualization of peace—one that would be accepted by consensus—was crucially needed to address existing and emerging global realities.

As you might appreciate, achieving consensus among thinking individuals, let alone between delegates who represent diverse member states in an inter-governmental setting, can be a difficult and excruciatingly complex undertaking. Indeed, as the committee began its deliberations, initial difficulties became apparent as we tried to reach agreement on basic concepts and perspectives. In the background was the fear that the committee's efforts would divert focus and energies away from human rights issues or possibly be used to advance national interests.

In an international organization such as the United Nations, political reality can mean that the interests of any given government in power may take precedence over that country's fundamental principles. The voting cycle of elected governments and their term limits create additional challenges, as issues that require long time frames for realization are generally avoided.

The committee acknowledged these realities from the outset and endeavored to elevate the discussion on the culture of peace to a level that would transcend national boundaries and concepts of time. The challenge was to get member states to understand that a fresh conceptualization of peace was in the interest of every country, government, and administration: this issue was fundamental to all of humankind, present and future. Our goal was to advance a concept that would not reflect any particular intercountry conflict, that would redirect efforts toward peace as an attainable goal (and not merely the absence of violence or war), and that would surpass all national interests in the best interest of humanity as a whole.

After nine months of intense, concentrated efforts, the committee's results were presented to the fifty-third session of the UN General Assembly on September 13, 1999. The Assembly's adoption by consensus of the committee's negotiated text resulted in a landmark, norm-setting resolution: the "Declaration and Program of Action on a Culture of Peace" (UN Resolution A/RES/53/243, adopted Sept. 13, 1999.

The Declaration

The "Declaration on a Culture of Peace" is a conceptual statement intended to guide governments, international organizations, civil society, and individuals. It lays forth fundamental principles of peace that derive from age-old values held in high esteem by all peoples and societies. It calls upon humankind to transform these principles into action, so as to promote a culture of peace in the new millennium.

It is important to note that *peace* is not understood to be merely the absence of conflict: It is a condition or state in which every person is empowered to develop to his or her full potential. It is a positive, dynamic participatory process wherein dialog is encouraged and conflicts are solved in a spirit of mutual understanding and cooperation.

The *culture of peace* is defined as "a set of values, attitudes, traditions, and modes of behavior and ways of life based on:

- Respect for life, ending of violence and promotion and practice of non-violence through education, dialog and cooperation.
- Full respect for the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of States and non-intervention in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any State, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and international law.
- Full respect for and promotion of all human rights and fundamental freedoms.
- Commitment to peaceful settlement of conflicts.
- Efforts to meet the developmental and environmental needs of present and future generations.
- Respect for and promotion of the right to development.
- Respect for and promotion of equal rights and opportunities for women and men.
- Respect for and promotion of the right of everyone to freedom of expression, opinion and information.
- Adherence to the principles of freedom, justice, democracy, tolerance, solidarity, cooperation, pluralism, cultural diversity, dialog and understanding at all levels of society and among nations; and fostered by an enabling national and international environment conducive to peace.

Clearly, for humanity to advance toward a culture of peace, corresponding values, attitudes, behavior, and ways of life are required. These must be realized and implemented by individuals, groups, and nations.

The development of a culture of peace is integrally linked to the peaceful settlement of conflicts, mutual respect, and international cooperation. To support this development, individuals need to have skills that promote dialog, consensus building, and peaceful resolution of differences. In addition, the following elements are crucial: Democracy is promoted as are human rights and fundamental freedoms. Participation in the development process must be accessible to all. Poverty, illiteracy, and inequalities must be eliminated; sustainable economic and social development must be promoted. Discrimination against women must cease, equal participation by women needs to be ensured on all decision-making levels, and the rights of children must be respected, promoted, and protected. Free flow of and access to information is imperative, as is the elimination of all forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerances. In short, understanding, tolerance, and solidarity among all societies, peoples, and cultures must be cultivated and advanced.

The process of creating and sustaining a culture of peace is, by nature, participatory. Governments play an essential role in securing the institutional frameworks needed to promote and strengthen the culture of peace. However, civil society must be fully engaged. The media is well positioned to make

integral contributions to inform and educate. Key roles must also be assumed by parents, caregivers, teachers, politicians, journalists, and religious leaders as well as by scientists, philosophers, artists, health workers, social workers, humanitarian agencies, and nongovernmental organizations.

The Declaration sets out the requisite norms, concepts, principles, and actors to the culture of peace, and the "Program of Action" delineates eight areas for prioritization at regional, national, and international levels:

1. Actions to foster a culture of peace through education.
2. Actions to promote sustainable economic and social development.
3. Actions to promote respect for all human rights.
4. Actions to ensure equality between women and men.
5. Actions to foster democratic participation.
6. Actions to advance understanding, tolerance and solidarity.
7. Actions to support participatory communication and the free flow of information and knowledge.
8. Actions to promote international peace and security.

Realizing the Culture of Peace

No one ever imagined that it would be simple to achieve a culture of peace. Humanity has a long history of resolving its differences through violence and has become used to a "culture of war." Transformation from this state to a culture of peace is not a matter of changing the mind-sets of groups of people or societies, but rather the mind-sets of individuals. By recognizing that peace begins with a single solitary person, we position ourselves better to accept the long-term scale that societal transformation may ultimately require. To transmute our individual thoughts, behavior, and actions, we must be able to address the challenges encountered in peaceful, nonaggressive ways. This requires each of us to be in a position of both opportunity and power to choose between options.

Violence and anger may be our first reaction to any hurdle; however, violence and anger do not always benefit us as individuals, especially when viewed on a long timescale. The attitudes and actions associated with violence and anger can actually work against us physically, mentally, and emotionally. Some of us may have grown up in environments where nonviolent solutions to conflicts with "others" were not taught. Indeed, the idea that unequal, intolerant treatment of certain people is a good strategy may actually be pursued in some settings. Thus, to acquire the necessary skills or transfer knowledge that can be used to revamp previous strategies or change old habits, education—in all of its forms—is essential. Education is needed to impart and instill fundamental principles. If our minds could be likened to a computer, then education

provides the software with which to "reboot" our priorities and actions away from violence, toward a culture of peace.

Every individual is important to the transformation required to secure a culture of peace in our world. This means that each person must realize that nonviolent, cooperative action is possible. If a person succeeds in resolving a conflict in a nonviolent manner at any point in time, this individual has made a great contribution, for this singular act has succeeded in transferring the spirit of nonviolence and cooperation to another individual. When repeated, this spirit will grow exponentially—a practice that will become easier each time the choice is made to resolve a conflict nonviolently. Inculcating the culture of peace within yourself, as evidenced through your actions, gives a pleasure that is simple, possible, and completely independent from anyone else's actions. It is a good that belongs to you—one that you are able to transfer and share with others; that is with your fellow citizens.

Each one of us is undoubtedly a citizen of a particular community and country. However, we are also all global citizens in that we all live together on this planet and thus face the corresponding responsibilities that are bound up with our shared environment. As global citizens, we need to take a broad view of how our global community interacts. Globalization has created many levels of interdependence and interconnectedness—some which were unthinkable a few generations ago. This makes the pursuance of objectives marked solely by national, cultural, economic, religious or other limited interests counterproductive. What happens in one part of the world is linked to another; sooner or later unrest, violence, environmental degradation, and other calamities will affect us all.

As global citizens we need to look beyond the interests of our immediate surroundings and realize that we are intrinsically connected to each other. This does not mean that we are alike, in the sense of cultural identity. It simply means that the obstacles we face are encountered by others. Together we can meet such challenges.

Call to Action

To transform our societies to an enduring culture of peace requires concerted action on many levels. We must build on the awareness gained thus far and define clear-cut pathways to move forward. Well-informed, sensitive, and responsive programs are needed to assist all people at different levels.

On the global level, many groups and individuals are working to further the concept of the culture of peace. The Global Movement for the Culture of Peace[1] is an example of an action-oriented coalition that has been successful in generating international attention to the issues, especially in terms of the roles

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[1]   http://www.gmcop.org/ (accessed June 15, 2014).

that women and young people can assume. Pathways to Peace[2] and the Peace Education Resource Center[3] devote their efforts to making peace a practical reality at local and global levels. I believe that a global network should be created to connect organizations, groups, and individuals around the world, to offset geographical isolation ~~and~~ unite efforts around common goals.

At the national level, advocacy must remain an important goal. Given electoral cycles and changing representation among national leaders, the transcendent nature of the culture of peace must be continually communicated to decision makers. Equally important, nongovernmental networks and partnerships are crucial in broadening outreach to individuals. By integrating the fundamental principles of the culture of peace into coalitions and alliances, more might be able to be realized with the same amount of resources.

At the community level, local-level governance determines policies for those living within the community. It has the reach, authority, and capacity to enact change and can determine the tone and direction for its populace. In addition, it influences others who come into contact with the community, transferring the values and priorities associated with the community. Utilizing the culture of peace as a "compass for guidance and a lens to see and understand differently,"[4] the city of Ashland, Oregon (population: ca. 20,300), has recently undertaken a citywide attempt to integrate these principals into governance structures and educational organizations. Its goal is to shift mind-sets and behavior by "enabling deeper connections and wider collaboration in creating a peace culture through local efforts in business, education, government, and environment."[5] This is a collaborative project with Pathways to Peace, and it is hoped that the experiences gleaned from the Ashland attempt will serve to guide other municipalities.

At the level of the individual, early childhood provides a unique opportunity to address issues that would contribute to transform the culture of war to a culture of peace. Different types of programs or interventions are needed to support this, particularly those which would provide appropriate educational curricula. The events that a child experiences early in life, the education that this child receives, and the community activities and sociocultural mind-set in which a child is immersed all contribute to how values, attitudes, traditions, modes of behavior, and ways of life develop. Early childhood affords a window of opportunity to instill the rudiments that each individual needs to become agents of peace and nonviolence.

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[2] http://pathwaystopeace.org/ (accessed June 26, 2014).

[3] http://perc4peace.org/ (accessed June 26, 2014).

[4] http://media.wix.com/ugd/4ec65f_3c632514d1d6499dac23b9961ef9487d.pdf (accessed June 15, 2014).

[5] http://pathwaystopeace.org/collaborate/; see also http://www.cpi-ashland.org (accessed June 15, 2014).

The task of uniting the strengths and capabilities of billions of individuals, so as to achieve long-term, sustainable peace and security in our world, is clearly underway. However at times, working toward this end can be frustrating and disappointing. It is easy to feel alone or to question if current affairs will ever change. Yet to alter the very foundation of an existing system requires time; transformation does not happen quickly. The key is not to be discouraged. Change will come through steadfast efforts.

As you read this volume, you will get a sense of the many different types of efforts that are ~~currently~~ underway to bring the experience of early childhood onto a path that will lead to a culture of peace. Many more efforts will undoubtedly be needed: Further evidence-based research will be imperative to inform the design of effective programs and interventions. The work of nongovernmental and international organizations will be crucial for such programs to be realized. Dedicated teachers and caregivers will be integral to implement these programs. Community leaders and policy makers are needed to ensure that the necessary frameworks are in place to support the transition toward the culture of peace. In support of all of these activities, the media could play an integral role.

In the end, however, this transformation ~~begins with~~ each one of us. In everything we do, in everything we say, and in every thought that we have, there is an opportunity to create a culture of peace. Let us work each day ~~with renewed commitment~~ to realize this. Let us choose strategies that require us to face each other with tolerance and mutual respect, viewing each other as fellow global citizens. Let us endeavor to build an inclusive world that respects and cherishes individual and group differences. And let us commit our efforts and resources to raise our children to be agents of the culture of peace.