

**INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON ETHICAL AND MORAL
DIMENSIONS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION AND SCIENCE IN
EUROPE**

UNESCO-CEPES/Academia Europensis with UNU

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“Culture of Peace in Higher Education”

Ethical dimensions of Culture of Peace in a global and reconfigured world. How to transmit it to students and academics.

- Knowledge and ethical guidelines

- The feasible and the admissible.

- Knowledge always positive –its application can be negative and even perverse.

In some occasions, science has been misused. But the misuse of power (oriented by its own growth) has been worse. Today we are witnessing a world governance based on muscle, on force, on imposition. The UN-system marginalized, “selective assassinations”, suicide terrorism, “preventive wars”... and the concentration of power –including the mediatic one – in some hands are leading to a world of fear, of somber horizons, of confusion.

The academia, the scientific community, the intellectuals, the artists, the writers... have the urgent responsibility of “moral solidarity” “to

build peace in the minds of men”, as stated so brilliantly in the UNESCO’s Constitution Preamble. And to build peace based on justice, freedom and equality –as stated too in the UNESCO’s Constitution – it’s indispensable to know, to be aware of. Reality cannot be transformed if it is not known in depth. For instance: when addressing the problem of Africa development, to whom does Africa belong? When dealing with multiculturalism, who decides on the uniformising mass-media, youth fashions? ... Who decides on speeding up the economy of war? on space missions... when thousands of people die every day of hunger and lack of access to water and “normal” therapies?

We live under “new threats and abuses”... but, again, the problem is the impunity at the supranational level of colossal corporations, the tax paradises, the trafficking of all kinds – including of people! - ... because of the non-existence of an international ethical and legal framework respected and supported by all countries. The dream of Franklin D. Roosevelt: “We, the people, have resolved to save the succeeding generations of the scourge of war”...

- Memory of the past – memory of the future

The essential reference: tomorrow’s world.

Some main guidelines and “ethically important moments”:

> 1948: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

> 1974: The Asilomar “cry” of Paul Berg.

> 1988: Gen-ethics: modifications with, modifications in ...

> 1993: The language of life. The genome decoded. Sharing preoccupations with HUGO. The International Committee on Bioethics. General agreement on the ethical implications of genetic engineering and cloning. The Universal Declaration on the Human

Genome and Human Rights, approved unanimously by the UNESCO's General Conference in November 1997 and by the UN General Assembly a year later. Cloning with human reproductive purposes is prohibited.

> 1995: Commitments on Social Development (Copenhagen Summit) and UNESCO's Declaration on Tolerance.

> 1996: The Earth Charter, compendium of the behavioural requirements of the Earth Summit (1992, Río) and of the Culture of Peace.

> 1998: Declaration of the World Conference on Higher Education (Paris).

> 1999: The Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace (UN General Assembly).

> 1999 onwards → The stem undifferentiated cells and other issues to be discussed by permanent interdisciplinary groups.

An important role of the scientific and academic community is to interact with the Parliaments in order to incorporate these declarations and similar guidelines into their national legislation.

- Role at the national, regional and international scale

After the Cold War, instead of the expected reinforcement of the United Nations system, the most advanced countries decided to take the world governance in their hands (G-7/G-8). When the international civil society was expecting the "peace dividends" and the promised subventions for endogenous development (instead of loans given under the draconian "structural adjustment" mechanism, which has been further widening the gap between the rich and the

poor) none of them were provided. Neither ideals nor ideologies! The laws of the market, a crucial error by which global governance becomes a plutocracy instead of a democracy guided by social principles and values, were applied everywhere (and in May 1996, one of the world “leaders” even said: “The solution is not only market economy ... but market – society and market democracy!” ...

In such a context, the advisory and prospective role of the universities and scientific institutions becomes more relevant than ever. Advise to the Parliaments, local councils, etc. on issues progressively specific (i.e.: ozone layer, prions and mad cows, SARS, AIDS...) And anticipation: is the greatest victory. To know to foresee; to foresee to prevent. At the dawn of the III Millenium, the predictive and preventive actions of universities result more urgent than ever before.

To fully accomplish these functions, universities must reform themselves for:

- global vision
- an interdisciplinary approach to cope with complexity
- farsightedness (next generations taken permanently into account; anticipatory measures; prevention)
- ethics of time: act timely, particularly in potentially irreversible phenomena.

The “knowledge based economy” –to counteract talents and patents “delocalisation”- depends on the promotion of basic research, of creativity, of the universities becoming promoters of world citizens able to participate, to express their views. Depends on the higher education institutions as the best democracy builders, being not only

economic actors but social actors, in order to contribute to uplifting quality of life worldwide. To form citizens with an international overview, able to mobilize themselves and many others, to join their hands and voices, to be heard and, perhaps, be listened.

Universities with capacity to become a permanent watch tower to alert, and warn of forthcoming events against human dignity.

Universities able to influence world opinion, determined not to remain silent and be the voice of the voiceless.

However, there is no excellence in the universities without excellent professors. It's the first issue to be addressed: the incorporation of professors and students to higher education, as established by the article 26.3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights must be "... based on merit". There is no excuse: based on merit.

The "tenure" must only be attained after a clear demonstration of the "merits". The competitiveness of universities with old-fashioned mechanisms of staff incorporation with those very selective is destined to fail.

On the other hand, students must be aware of their rights and responsibilities and not take for granted freedom, peace, access to water, health facilities... Ethics implies the duty of memory and comparison. To be aware of and committed to all those human beings of their same age: how they live; how they die ...

- Another world is possible. In the book "The world ahead" ("Un monde nouveau", 1999), I expressed the urgent need to establish four new "Contracts": a new social contract: a new environmental contract; a new cultural contract and a new moral contract. They could lead to a World Plan for Endogenous Development, to a transition from a culture of force, of imposition, of violence, of war,

to a culture of understanding, of dialogue, of conciliation, of peace. As stated in the Declaration of 1999, these goals can be achieved by education, freedom of expression, gender equality, human rights respect, sharing of knowledge, ...

The world today is not, unfortunately, “global” nor “reconfigured”... These are, precisely, the challenges we face.

Another world is possible. A world based on love, otherness, brotherhood. A world oriented by universal values and not by the shortsighted interests of the market, in order to narrow the present gaps in economy, address social exclusion and personal feelings of frustration and abandonment.

“Knowledge based economy” not only because of trade and productive objectives but because of ethical principles and better distribution of goods (including knowledge).

The educational system for world citizenship: global vision, global responsibility. Every human being able to create, to invent, to be free and to shape his/her own life.

“They can because they think they can”, wrote Virgil. The universities can. They can if they dare. If they do not remain silent. If they express their views against the wind. “Dare to know!” “Know how to dare!” Share and dare, basic pillars of ethics. Of a culture of peace.

I wish to express my thanks to Dr. Jan Sadlak, Director of UNESCO-CEPES, and to Prof. Raymond Daudel, President of the European Academy of Arts, Science and Humanities.

