

Handbook for Peace

*"We, the people ... determined
to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war."*

Beginning of the preamble to the United Nations Charter.

"There are no roads to peace; peace is the road," Mahatma Gandhi reminded us. A road oriented to principles and values. By justice, before all else. Peace is both a condition and a result, both seed and fruit. It is necessary to identify the causes of conflict to be able to prevent it. Avoiding conflict is the greatest victory.

UNESCO, the United Nations Organization charged explicitly with building peace through education, science, culture, and communication, recalls in the preamble of its Constitution that it is the "democratic principles" of justice, liberty, equality, and solidarity that must illuminate this great transition from a culture of violence and war to a culture of dialogue and reconciliation. The great programme "Towards a Culture of Peace", of the 1990s, was a UNESCO initiative.

The Declaration and Program of Action for a Culture of Peace, adopted by the UN-GA in September 1999, establishes that the culture of peace is an interweaving of values, attitudes, and behavior that reflect a respect for life, the human being, and human dignity. The Program of Action contains measures based on education, science, development, and freedom of expression that must be put into practice to bring about the great transition from force to word: to foster education in peace, human rights, democracy, mutual tolerance and comprehension at national and

international scale; to fight any form of discrimination; to promote democratic principles and practices in every area of society; to fight poverty and bring about a form of development that is endogenous and sustainable and that benefits everyone and grants all people a decent life; to mobilize society in order to ignite in the young a burning desire to find new ways of living based on reconciliation, tolerance and generosity, and to reject all forms of oppression and violence, the just distribution of wealth, the free flow of information and shared learning.

Force, violence and war have always predominated, to the point that history seems to be little more than an endless succession of battles and conflicts in which peace is a momentary break. So it has been century after century, with fleeting periodic attempts at emancipation.

Educated to use force, accustomed to heeding the law of the most powerful, trained in the use of the muscles more than of the mind, humanity has watched itself be dragged into the bloodiest possible conflicts. Enmity instead of friendship is the rule. Neighbors are not seen as brothers with whom we share a common destiny but as adversaries, enemies to be annihilated. And so our past is marked out by an endless chain of conflicts, attacks and reprisals, vanquished and victors, rancor and ill-will, physical and spiritual violence.

The time has come. The culture of war, the economy of war, and the hegemony of the "globalisers" have been a catastrophic failure and the cause of incalculable levels of suffering, hunger, extreme poverty and

social affliction. A "new beginning" is needed urgently here at the dawn of a new century and a new millennium.

The 2000 Manifesto of the International Year for a Culture of Peace, signed by more than 110 million people around the world, establishes "the commitment in my daily life, in my family, my community, and my region, to respect all lives, reject violence, free my generosity, safeguard the planet, reinvent solidarity, and listen to others in order to understand them". This should serve to involve us and implicate us personally in this process that can lead in a few years to a brightening of the horizons that are so dark today and make possible a peaceful coexistence of all inhabitants of the earth.

There have already been many regions, countries and municipalities that have incorporated the culture of peace into their constitutions and statutes. It is very important that this trend spread, though even more important is the awareness among people that the moment has come to stop accepting the imposition of and blind obedience to power. Citizens are ceasing to be spectators and becoming actors. They are abandoning silence and fear and becoming agents of peace instead of vassals.

The inertia of the vested interests and the resistance of the most prosperous to share more are an obstacle to the emergence of a culture of peace, the word, understanding, and the formation of alliances.

But soon this will change. The hour has come.

From spectators to protagonists who participate and who commit themselves daily to achieving the great transition from a secular culture of imposition, violence and war to a culture of dialogue, conciliation, alliance and peace.

These are the fundamental elements that make this radical change possible: a knowledge of reality on a worldwide scale, which enables us to make comparisons –one of the principal bases of ethics- to appreciate what we have and to understand our shortfalls and those of others; the increasing percentage of women participating in decision-making processes in a society in which men are still predominately in power; and for the first time in history, the capacity for distance participation, thanks to modern communications technologies (SMS, Internet).

Today long-distance participation has made possible a radical change in the fundamental component of all democracies, the expression of the will of the people. From mere subjects to citizens. Paraphrasing Kundera, from the unbearable lightness of many of the present democracies to democracies in which citizen participation is far-reaching and constant.

There are no longer any excuses for remaining silent. The time for silence is over. Citizen power, used wisely, can now express itself freely and without passively accepting the unacceptable.

In most cases the diagnosis has already been made. It is now time for action. It is time to restore social justice and Human Rights to their place at the center of economic policy from which they were erroneously displaced by the laws of the market, with the tragic results reflected in the

present financial, environmental, nutritional, democratic and ethical crises.

It is time for an urgent transition from a war economy (4 billion dollars spent daily, while thousands of human being dies from hunger and extreme poverty) to a sustainable global economy (renewable energy, food, water, health, and housing).

In summary, we cannot miss this opportunity to embark on a new beginning. In recent years a series of global threats have been recognized as potentially irreversible processes that need to be confronted and dealt with on time before it is too late.

The climate change has become an undeniable truth. This is the advice we should convey today through all media so that the “peoples” become aware of the situation humanity is facing for the first time in history. The Arctic Ocean has nearly disappeared and the Antarctic is starting to crack. We have not succeeded in our effort to reduce the emissions of “greenhouse” gases... and the habitability of Earth is experiencing a consistent deterioration. The implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) -wisely established by the United Nations General Assembly in October 2015 “to transform our world”- has not been carried out because it is not efficiently supported by big countries... and citizens are under the pressure of the gigantic media power that makes them confused and turns them into impassive spectators instead of responsible actors.

Neoliberalism -stubbornly lead by the United States Republican Party- has weakened the nation-State and has replaced the democratic multilateralism of United Nations by the governance of a few plutocratic oligarchic groups (G6, G7, G8, G20) responsible for the current drift that has placed GNP and international trade in the forefront... together with President Trump's discretionary power which no one dares to confront.

From force to word. From the plutocracy of G7, G8, G20... to efficient multilateralism, with a worldwide re-founding of the United Nations.

The most disturbing consequence is the way supremacism, racism, fanaticism, dogmatism are sprouting everywhere... without anyone seeming to recall what happened in 1933 and 1939... The vast majority of citizens are stunned and obsessed supporters of football teams, and are only worried with their immediate past and their present life; their demands -which are mainly based on the mistakes made by those who have ruled on one side and another- would be reasonable in less pressing situations, but they do not realize that today young and future generations are the only ones who deserve our attention if we want to keep the world afloat and bequeath these generations a dignified life.

Despite the fact that there is reason to dream with and fight for new ways of governance, that we are about to conquer at last what always seemed an impossible quest, the only true thing is that the time has come to join our hands and voices, instead of breaking up; the time has come for an efficient multilateralism with a planetary scale authority; the time for

genuine democracy... because otherwise devastation will be the irremediable consequence.

The time has come for mass media to convey accurate information about the Earth's sustainability and to alert the world, and to keep away from ill-meaning commercial and political news that urge them to do the opposite.

The time has come for major financial corporations to become aware that it is their historical responsibility, in no-return situations, to promote and encourage awareness instead of favouring confusion and overacting.

For peoples -"We, the peoples", as we were so wisely referred to at the beginning of the Charter of the United Nations- to take control, now that we are aware of what is going on and we can freely express ourselves, now that we have become men and women, of our common destiny.

The current major powers continue believing that military force is the only expression and reference of 'security'. Serious error, fling error that focuses exclusively on military aspects and leaves completely unassisted other multiple aspects of the 'human' security, that is, in any case, what really matters.

When we overlook the dramatic difference between the resources dedicated to potential clashes and these available for facing recurrent natural disasters (fire, floods, earthquakes, tsunamis,...) be note, with bemusement, that the concept of "security" that the producers of

armament continue promoting is not only anachronistic but highly harmful for the whole humanity, and that is urgent the adoption of a new concept of "security", under the careful supervision and direct involvement of the United Nations. Food, access to safe water, health services, rapid, coordinated and effective action in emergency situations... - this and not other is the kind of security is that "We, the peoples..." dream and deserve.

The current predictions concerning the "Anthropocene" –because for the first time in history mankind can influence conditions on Earth- may be irreversible and may prompt dramatic situations for human habitability. A collective outcry is essential to urgently demand democratic multilateralism and democratic systems at the regional and local levels that take into account the interests of the people, and to once and for all reject the manipulation emanating from the great domain (military, energy, financial and media) and groups of oligarchs.

We have to look our children and grandchildren in the eyes and not allow a few irresponsible people to prevent us from duly facing the great challenges of achieving a life of dignity for all, without exclusion, and a sustainable environment. Intergenerational solidarity: let there be hundreds in cyberspace demanding support for these protests and proposals.

I am quoting once again, because reading them was a crucial experience for me, the lines of José Ángel Valente's poem "On the present time":

"I am writing from a wrecked vessel,

I am writing about the latitude of pain,
about everything we have destroyed
above all within ourselves...

I am writing in the midst of the night,
in the midst of the roar of the hungry and the dead.
with the perspective of a hand that becomes a gloomy fist
...with the eyes of infinitely dead children,
...with the pain of a tree with wounded roots...

But I also write in the midst of life,
with its powerful cry
...with the voice of the suffering crowd...

I am writing, my brother, about a time to come”.

It is now essential and urgent for all of us to react, because we are all concerned, and otherwise we will not succeed in our intent of keeping safe in all its fullness the mystery of human existence. “Everything is still possible... but who will do it if not all of us?” said Miquel Martí i Pol.

Let’s find inspiration in Miquel Martí i Pol and José Ángel Valente, and let’s abandon all hostile attitudes against an adequate and peaceful navigation. In the new age what will prevail will not be the power of force but rather the power of reason, not weapons but words, not herd instinct but the capacity of each human being to create, to think and to take his own decisions.

Federico Mayor
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