

GENERAL ASSEMBLY HEARS 19 SPEAKERS ADDRESS 'CULTURE OF PEACE'

The General Assembly this morning took up its agenda item on a culture of peace, including the International Year for the Culture of Peace (2000), as well as the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World (2001-2010), which was proclaimed by the Assembly in 1998.

Nineteen speakers addressed the Assembly on a range of issues related to the Year and Decade, among them the critical place of education in building tolerance, the need for protecting children from violence and such illegal activities as prostitution, as well as the major role the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) had in building a global movement for a culture of peace.

The representative of Mongolia said children needed to grow up with a conviction that understanding, tolerance and solidarity were the real strengths that would leave the weapons of war to rust in peace. Durable peace could not be maintained through political settlements alone. The culture of peace, tolerance and non-violence ought to be nurtured in every individual from his or her early days. The Government of Mongolia, despite financial constraints, had envisaged an increase in the number of young people studying abroad on government scholarships, and she urged the international community to encourage such educational exchanges.

Egypt's representative echoed the importance of protecting children, saying that shocking numbers of children had been killed or wounded during armed conflict. Many children in today's society had been deprived of affection and lost their homes and years of study due to war. They had lost their youth. The protection of children was a common responsibility incumbent on all, he said.

The trafficking of children from poor nations for prostitution and other illegal activities was a grave matter that had to go beyond debates in the United Nations, said the representative of Bhutan. Governments and civil society must initiate deliberate and stern action to put an end to those practices. Simply saying that laws existed to prevent such practices was not adequate. The necessary economic and social conditions must be created, so children received a meaningful education, health facilities and a future to which they could look forward.

The whole objective of the Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World was the placing of children at the centre of activities for a culture of peace, said the representative of Bangladesh. By

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inculcating a culture of peace in future generations, the future of peace would be secured, he said.

Many representatives highlighted the important work of UNESCO and the its major role in building up a global movement for a culture of peace. Representatives suggested that UNESCO implement educational programmes in ways that promoted mutual understanding, peace and tolerance, and helped to prevent violence and conflict. UNESCO was also urged to develop strong partnerships with other organizations, particularly with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

Statements were also made this morning by the representatives of France, Belarus, India, Colombia, Guatemala, Philippines, Mozambique, El Salvador, Tunisia, Japan, Costa Rica, Nigeria, Cameroon and Nepal. The Permanent Observer of the Holy See also addressed the General Assembly. The representatives of Israel and Egypt exercised their right of reply.

The General Assembly will reconvene at 3 p.m. when it is expected to begin its review of the problem of human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) in all its aspects.

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Assembly Work Programme

The General Assembly met this morning to take up agenda items entitled "Culture of peace" and "Review of the problem of human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome in all its aspects".

Culture of peace

The Assembly had before it a report of the Secretary-General (document A/55/377) on the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World. The report states that the consideration of the culture of peace gains particular relevance during the year 2000, the International Year for the Culture of Peace. The International Decade (2001-2010) comes amid a number of other Decades, dedicated to bringing attention to important issues. The International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World can help set the course for the United Nations in the twenty-first century towards a just and peaceful global community, the report states.

The General Assembly, in resolution 53/243 B of 13 September 1999, calls for a global movement for a culture of peace and defines eight areas of action. These areas include: a culture of peace through education; sustainable economic and social development; respect for all human rights; equality between women and men; democratic participation; understanding, tolerance and solidarity; participatory communication and the free flow of information and knowledge; and international peace and security.

The report provides a discussion on how children can be set at the centre of actions for a culture of peace. This discussion is followed by the presentation of an organizational strategy for further development of the global movement for a culture of peace and a survey of the specific contributions to the Decade made by the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and other institutions of the United Nations system.

Also before the Assembly was a note by the Secretary-General (A/55/338) transmitting the report of the Director-General of UNESCO on the implementation of the Declaration of Principles on Tolerance and the Follow-up Plan of Action for the United Nations Year for Tolerance (1998-2000).

The United Nations Year for Tolerance was celebrated in 1995, on the initiative of UNESCO. That led to the adoption of the Declaration of Principles on Tolerance, the promotion of the International Day for Tolerance and the creation of regional networks for the promotion of tolerance, non-violence and solidarity. The General Assembly, in resolution 51/95 of 12 December 1996, requested UNESCO to make reports available to the General Assembly on a biennial basis on the implementation of the Declaration of Principles and the Follow-up Plan of Action. The overall objective of the programme of the Plan of Action is to educate, inform and empower individuals to assume the responsibilities of dialogue, mutual respect, toleration and non-violence, and to encourage pluralism and tolerance in the policies of Member States.

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The types of activities carried out by UNESCO are raising awareness and mobilization, including the aforementioned International Day for Tolerance, prizes, publications and research, policies and standard-setting activities, including regional networks for the promotion of non-violence, meetings and discussions. The themes of the activities cover a vast area. Tolerance is linked with, among others: inter-cultural and inter-community dialogue; the fight against discrimination, xenophobia and racism; human rights education; and the contribution of the different religions to the culture of peace.

Further sections of the report deal with the observance of the third International Day for Tolerance throughout the world (1998), the celebration of the fourth International Day for Tolerance in 1999, UNESCO prizes, awareness-raising activities, publications, printed and audiovisual media, regional networks to promote tolerance, non-violence and solidarity, and meetings and discussions.

Human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS)

Before the Assembly was a report of the Fifth Committee (Administrative and Budgetary) (document A/55/29).

The Assembly had also before it a draft resolution (document A/55/L.13) on the subject, sponsored by Austria, Azerbaijan, Cuba, Ecuador, Georgia, Greece, Ireland, Lithuania, Saint Kitts and Nevis and Ukraine.

By the terms of the draft resolution, the Assembly would decide to convene, as a matter of urgency, a special session of the General Assembly, from 25 to 27 June 2001, to review and address the problem of HIV/AIDS in all its aspects, as well as to secure a global commitment to enhance coordination and intensification of national, regional and international efforts to combat it in a comprehensive manner. It would also decide to invite States members of the specialized agencies that are not members of the United Nations to participate in the work of the special session in the capacity of observers.

It would further decide that the special session would discuss, amongst other issues, such topics as HIV/AIDS in Africa, international funding and cooperation, the social and economic impact of the epidemic, human rights and AIDS, gender specific impacts of AIDS, prevention, access to care and treatment, scientific research and vaccine development. The General Assembly would also decide to convene, within the framework for the special session, open-ended informal consultations of the plenary to undertake preparations for the special session, including the elaboration of a draft declaration.

By the same terms, the Assembly would decide to include in the agenda of its fifty-sixth session the item entitled "Review of the problem of human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome in all its aspects". Further to the draft resolution, the General Assembly would request the Secretary-General to make the necessary administrative arrangements towards convening the special session and also request him to make available all necessary documentation in a timely manner for the special session. The Secretary-General is also requested to, with the support of the Joint United

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Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, to provide substantive input to the preparatory process.

The General Assembly would further request the Secretary-General to present a comprehensive report describing, among other things, both the status of the epidemic and the status and level of national, regional and international response and cooperation. He would also be requested to ensure an effective and coordinated system-wide response to preparation for the special session, and to carry out a comprehensive public information programme to raise global HIV/AIDS awareness, while also building broad international support for the special session and its goals. The Secretary-General would also be requested to bring the present draft resolution to the attention of all governments, the relevant specialized agencies and programmes of the United Nations, international financial and trade organizations and other relevant civil society actors, as well as the business sector, including pharmaceutical companies.

The draft resolution would stress the importance of the full and active participation of all States, including least developed countries, in the preparatory consultations in order to provide substantive input to the special session and invites governments to make appropriate voluntary contributions to a trust fund to be established by the Secretary-General for that purpose, and requests the Secretary-General to make every effort to ensure mobilization of resources to the fund.

Statements on Culture of Peace

ANWARUL KARIM CHOWDHURY (Bangladesh) said the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace, adopted by the General Assembly in 1999, called for a global movement for a culture of peace and defined the areas of action that should guide governments, international organizations and civil society. For the success of the movement, a "grand alliance for a culture of peace had to be built". Civil society had a very important role in that alliance. Through the efforts of the United Nations, especially UNESCO, and through the widespread involvement of civil society, the movement had gathered a momentum that could not be reversed.

The Declaration and Programme of Action had provided a clear set of actions that should form the basis of the activities during the Decade, he continued. The objective of the Decade would be to place children at the centre of activities for a culture of peace. By inculcating a culture of peace in future generations, the future of peace would be secured. The objectives of the Decade could be further advanced through the strengthening of existing partnerships and networks and developing new ones, as well as through the full use of new information technology. The UNESCO should continue to play its important coordination role.

Further, he said, the role of UNICEF and that of the University for Peace would be of great significance, given the importance of education in the lives of children and young adults. Closer involvement of the various national committees and focal points, as well as the numerous civil society actors, would lie at the heart of the success of the Decade.

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PHILIPPE BOSSIERE (France) spoke on behalf of the European Union and associated countries. The Union thanked the Secretary-General for his report on the implementation of the International Decade. A non-conflict approach in international relations implied, in the spirit of the actors concerned, an ongoing willingness for the promotion of tolerance and mutual respect. As proclaimed in the founding act of UNESCO, wars were born in the minds of men, and it was in the minds of men that humanity must become students of peace. An international society of culture and peace must be built on tolerance, justice, human rights and democracy.

Continuing, the Union regarded education as the principal instrument of dissemination and promotion of those values, he continued. As the Secretary-General underscored in his report, tolerance, democracy and human rights must become the object of education and raising awareness among all institutions. The Union felt that UNESCO had an important role to play. The World Forum in Dakar on "Education for All" assigned to the international community the obligation of guaranteeing universal access to education for all and entrusted to UNESCO, in the next 15 years, the mandate to coordinate those initiatives in reaching that goal.

Tolerance, human rights and justice must become the essential component of a basic education, he stated. The Union called upon UNESCO to develop partnerships with organizations, which would carry out that mission, particularly UNICEF. In closing, he said the Union was happy to see an organization of the United Nations promoting those values to the international community.

SERGEI LING (Belarus) said the government of Belarus attached great importance to the item on a culture of peace. The history of Belarus had consisted of much suffering from war and conflict. He was, therefore, interested in promoting all ideas that ensured a peaceful future on the planet. At the Millennium Summit, heads of governments had confirmed their commitment to peace and identified the main areas of work. He hoped that the provisions of the Millennium Declaration would be implemented.

The idea of peace required more work in terms of prevention, he said. In order for prevention measures to work efficiently, it was necessary to promote the establishment of a culture of dialogue and compromise. In that connection, the work of the University of Peace was vital. It was important to remember that wars caused wounds to relationships that healed more slowly than physical wounds.

AHMED ABOULGHEIT (Egypt) said the item before the Assembly was one of the most important, referring to the very core of what the United Nations stood for. The United Nations, during the coming Decade for the Culture of Peace, was to decide to protect future generations from the scourge of war. In the recent past, there had been more crisis, religious and ethnic strife, a world suffering under nuclear threat and an irresponsible use of technology.

It was necessary to bring about a dialogue to reinforce the culture of peace, hence the proclamation of the Decade for the Culture of Peace. The world

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was determined to adopt a new path of common principles not separated by religion or culture. Following that path would make a direct contribution to setting up the concept of a culture of peace. Egypt believed in strengthening a culture for peace through everything that might remove obstacles to social and economic development, taking into account aspects such as trade and development, investment, and the dignity of the individual, and respect for the equal roles of men and women. It should be based on the sovereignty of States and non-intervention in internal matters.

A shocking number of children had been killed or wounded through armed conflict. Children had been deprived of affection and had lost their homes and years of study. They had lost their youth. That reaffirmed the importance of the resolution to declare the Decade a Decade of Peace and Non-violence for the children of the world. The protection of children was a common responsibility incumbent on all nations, he said.

In that context, he felt the need to express great anger at the continuation of Israeli occupation of territories of Palestine and Syria, despite the resolutions of the Security Council. Israeli forces were still killing civilians and children. One could not ignore the just appeals of the Palestinian people for help, living as they did under inhumane conditions. As part of a just and global peace, he called for withdrawal of Israeli forces from all occupied Palestinian territories and the Syrian Golan. He called for implementing the relevant United Nations resolutions and decisions. He also asked that all Israeli elements that had violated international law and human rights be identified, so that they could be brought to justice.

J.G. MOHANTA (India) said that the first of the eight areas of action identified by the General Assembly to promote a culture of peace was education. Steps had been taken throughout the world to put that principle into practise, but note must be taken of dangerous exceptions. The unending strife in Afghanistan was sustained by young men and women who as children were educated only in war, and into a culture of bigotry, intolerance and hatred. Volumes had been written about schools which exploited poverty to draw children into their fold, and train them to become cannon fodder in one war or another, falsely fomented and sustained in the name of religion. Their poison, first injected into Afghanistan, had now spread from it. India and other neighbours had borne the brunt; others were now becoming targets.

In the area of respect for human rights, progress had been uneven, she noted. The promotion of a narrow and selective interpretation of human rights had become a political tool of the powerful. Human rights had become an arena of conflict between nations; it would be simplistic to suggest that the friction was only between countries that promoted human rights and those that violated them. The tension was between those that preached about human rights, and those who resented self-serving advice. To promote a culture of peace, the international community must collectively -- and without any assumptions of moral or cultural superiority -- work to support the human rights of all. In regard to sexual equality, she continued, important groups of countries seemed to be reluctant to continue to honour commitments they had accepted at Beijing.

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Others were interested only in the promotion of an extremely shallow and provocative interpretation of women's rights.

Over the last decade democracy had become almost the norm of governance. India welcomed the emergence of new and restored democracies. Unfortunately, over the last two years, several countries newly emerged into democracy had relapsed into a totalitarian system of governance. Where there was no democracy, where governments were run by the military, it was unlikely that other areas of action needed to promote a culture of peace would get any attention. The attempt to promote dialogue among civilizations was a useful initiative, but it must be truly comprehensive. Experience had shown that even when such solidarity was most desperately needed, the international response was very skewed, and almost entirely determined by political considerations. What had been poignantly described as humanitarian favouritism did not promote the culture of peace.

What was particularly worrisome and dispiriting was that some of the nuclear-weapon States predicated their security on the first use of nuclear weapons, even against those who were not nuclear armed. That did not reflect a culture of peace, and it continuously undermined international peace and security. Increasingly, the United Nations believed that a peacekeeping operation would have lasting success only if it helped create and left behind a framework that promoted democracy and human rights. By definition, all that could be done only by peacekeeping forces that had domestic experience of such processes; it could not be done by military and police contingents from countries where there was no democratic tradition, or where the military had a practice of overthrowing democracy. To use such forces was to ensure that the objectives the United Nations wished to promote would in fact be subverted. That was self-evident, and India was astonished that the United Nations did not act upon it.

LYONPO OM PRADHAN (Bhutan) said that solutions, no matter how difficult, must be found through dialogue and peaceful means -- and not through the barrels of guns. However, when appeals for peaceful resolution of disputes did not have the desired effect and innocent people started to get killed or injured, there was no other way but to use force to put an end to violent disputes. The international community had utilized force in certain circumstances and might have to do so in the future. It must be remembered that such actions should be considered carefully, and should be used only as a last resort.

The trafficking of children from poor nations for prostitution and other illegal activities was a grave matter, which had to go beyond the debates in the United Nations. Governments and civil society must initiate deliberate and stern action to put an end to those practices. As had already been seen, simply saying that laws existed to prevent such practices was not adequate. It must be remembered that resources were needed for the establishment of the economic and social conditions that would help give children a meaningful education, health facilities and a future to look forward to. In particular, official development assistance (ODA) was needed, along with promises of good and responsible governance on the part of the countries concerned.

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ALFONSO VALDIVIESO (Colombia) stated that the unanimous decision of the fifty-second General Assembly to proclaim 2000 as the International Year of Peace pointed the way ahead at the beginning of the century, one in which the culture of war and violent conflicts would give way to the culture of peace and tolerance. Nevertheless, for that to become reality, humanity must learn to live together. No less important was the proclamation of the International Decade of the Culture of Peace and Nonviolence for the World's Children, also adopted by the Assembly. The exercise of peace could not simply be founded in political, economic and social agreements among governments or between parties in conflict. For peace to be strong and lasting, it must be based on intellectual and moral conviction -- in ethical behaviour.

He welcomed the large number of activities and wide dissemination that the United Nations system had provided on the theme of the culture of peace. In particular, he highlighted the work of UNESCO, which in 1946 initiated education as the basic instrument for teaching peace. In a regional context, Colombia had taken an initiative, with the help of UNESCO and the Organization of American States (OAS), in October 1999, where governmental experts were designing a programme on peace education in the hemisphere.

Furthermore, his country, having been in conflict for four decades, put forward a clear and precise mandate for peace three years ago when 10 million Colombians, exercising their rights as citizens, gave a clear mandate to a government to undertake a policy of peace. The Government of Colombia supported a negotiated solution for the current conflict. At the same time, as part of the International Year, almost one third of the Colombian people signed the 2000 Declaration, to put into practice the principles of culture and peace. Children were the greatest victims of armed violence in Colombia and were now the centre of attention, because their participation in violent conflicts must be stopped. In conclusion, the undertaking for peace by the Government of Colombia was unwavering. The United Nations must cement the culture of peace by promoting peace to future generations.

O. ENKHTSETSEG (Mongolia) said that Mongolia deemed it important that the activities under the Decade be further complemented by the upcoming international events, including the World Conference against Racism and the special session for the General Assembly for follow-up to the World Summit for Children. In addition to the programme of action referred to in the report at the levels of formal and non-formal education, she said that international educational exchange programs, especially at the undergraduate level could further contribute to the attainment of the Decade's goals. Her Government, despite financial constraints, had envisaged an increase in the number of young people studying abroad on government scholarships. She urged the international community, both through bilateral and multilateral channels, to encourage and support educational exchanges of children and youth from various cultures and countries, as part of the activities to be undertaken during the Decade.

In the national context, she said that education was accorded top priority by the newly-elected Government. The Government intended to increase and encourage public and private investment in education, improve management and the quality of education at both formal and non-formal levels, and expand pre-school

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education. Furthermore, the Government had the goal of computerizing all secondary schools in the country and providing Internet access.

Durable peace could not be maintained through political settlements alone, she said. The culture of peace, tolerance and non-violence ought to be nurtured in every individual from his or her early days. The future belonged to the children. They needed to grow up with a conviction that understanding, tolerance and solidarity were the real strengths and would leave the weapons of war to rust in peace.

LUIS CARRANZA-CIFUENTES (Guatemala) said in the International Year for the Culture of Peace the world must become even more aware of the importance of values, attitudes, traditions and ways of life that respect human beings and their rights. Freedom, justice, democracy, human rights, tolerance and solidarity were values that framed the goal of total rejection of violence.

He welcomed the steps taken by UNESCO and other agencies with regard to the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World. Guatemala was a country that had benefited from programmes of action for the Culture of Peace. Since the signing of the Peace Agreements in 1996, the country had been involved in projects for strengthening peace. The Agreements had created possibilities for institutional and non-institutional actors, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), men, women, girls, boys, businessmen and religious leaders to be involved in an effort to ensure that in daily life, democratic space would be strengthened. The project had helped create room for reflection on the culture of peace among teachers, youth leaders and community leaders. The culture of peace and democracy could also be included in educational curricula.

Through promoting citizens' responsibility and respect for pluralism the culture for peace was further strengthened, and would promote inter-cultural relations. The project had helped to train people to follow a culture for peace and reject violence in social interaction, particularly among young people. He welcomed the fact that the Secretary-General had proposed that UNESCO should continue as coordinator for the coming decade.

EVELYN AUSTRIA-GARCIA (Philippines) said that developments in the past two decades had raised hopes that peace could be within reach. Yet behind the rosy image of progress and prosperity, there hung in its shadows raging violence, deep discontent, deep-seated fear and a multitude of people living in poverty and squalor. Peace was not a new concept. It had been discussed for centuries. Philosophers and political scientists had dealt extensively with the subject of peace, undertaking studies that analysed even the minutest behaviour of humans in the attempt to find that missing link that would lead us to the peace that so eluded us. While the answer still seemed to evade the international community, it was comforting that firm determination to pursue the elimination of war had been shown. The declaration and programme of action on a culture of peace, and continued dialogue to sort out differences, were proof of the international community's commitment. All that had to be done now was to put words into deeds.

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The programme of action on a culture of peace underscored education as one of the core foundations for promoting a culture of peace in the minds of the world's peoples, she said. From the very start of human life, ways of peace should be introduced, and values moulded in children that taught respect for life and each and every person, the law and justice, and tolerance. The international community should cast away biases and prejudices that had built barriers in the world. Media should be used to promote the value of empathy, so that the world's children might be more than willing to understand others and accept differences. New information technologies should be made available for the promotion of a way of life that advocated and nurtured peace.

HIPOLITO PATRICIO (Mozambique) said that the report before the Assembly today provided a wide range of actions geared to bring children to the centre of the Decade. His country believed that it was an important step to put an end to the disproportionate suffering that children were subjected to through different forms of violence. Children were indeed gravely affected both in time of peace and war, namely by the consequences of natural disasters, genocide, armed conflict and humanitarian emergencies. The international community must spare no efforts in halting that situation, and not only ratify, but above all implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other relevant international legal instruments protecting children. The international community must work together to address the root causes of conflict, which brought untold suffering to innocent civilians and in particular to children, both as victims and instruments of violence.

Being from a country that had experienced a protracted war of aggression, but now enjoyed peace and stability, he could not but underline the value of the principle of forgiveness, tolerance and reconciliation as the cornerstones for the promotion of a durable peace. The story of success in the peace process in Mozambique reflected a deliberate choice made by the people to strengthen peace through a process of continuing dialogue in an environment of tolerance, unity in diversity and respect for individual choices and freedoms. The success of a Decade for a Culture of Peace required the full participation of governments, international organizations and civil society at all levels. His country supported the strategy outlined in the Secretary-General's report, and would continue to be an active partner of UNESCO and other United Nations agencies, in the promotion of peace in Mozambique and all over the world.

JOSE ROBERTO ANDINO SALAZAR (El Salvador) was pleased by the attention given to the culture of peace in the General Assembly. His country attached great importance to the theme of the culture of peace, following the armed conflict it faced in the 1980s and the broad experience it acquired in national reconstruction. In 1993, in San Salvador, a national forum on Education and the Culture of Peace was held under the auspices of UNESCO and other international organizations. That contributed to developing the theoretical bricks by which the international community could discuss and agree to a Declaration and Program of Action on the Culture of Peace. The main ideas giving rise to a culture of peace must set criteria so it would become a national undertaking. In that way, a new identity might emerge for human development.

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He did not think that a culture of peace would mean the disappearance of conflicts and differences that existed within societies and between nations. It would, however, offer alternative peaceful solutions based on common interests, in the hope of avoiding the disintegration of society and promoting the building of social relations favouring justice and equality. A culture of peace could not be created in a single act, or a sum of activities or projects. Rather, it was a permanent participatory process that was concerted, systematic and global. The culture of peace must internalize values, by demonstrating fundamental principles for the total respect for all human rights.

His Government was strongly committed to the culture of peace. It had encouraged its citizens in various ways, including: an annual peace festival in January stressing that people think about peace; a programme on the Culture of Peace and Democracy in Central America, directed by the University of Peace; the development of two military forums on the culture of peace and the consolidation of democracy; and the creation of a National Committee for the Culture of Peace. In conclusion, he said his country supported the objectives and principles of the United Nations in maintaining international peace and security. That was the first step for the international community in the construction of a culture of peace.

OTHMAN JERANDI (Tunisia) said the culture of peace was at the heart of the objectives of the United Nations. Each action that the United Nations was involved with tended towards serving peace. It was the right time for a culture of peace, a time when the international community was about to begin a Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World. There were other international events that gave a real boost to those efforts, such as the proclamation of 2001 as a Year of Dialogue among Civilizations and the World Conference against Racism.

High priority needed to be given to the transforming of attitudes, values and the peaceful interaction between groups, cultures and nations, he continued. Such a transformation would lead to positive benefits within all United Nations activities, from the peaceful settlement of disputes, to the promotion of democracy, human rights and the elimination of poverty and illiteracy. In order for those to build a real culture of peace, all forms of racism had to be eliminated. Furthermore, understanding between all cultures was required, including between religious, ethnic and linguistic minorities. It had to be a global initiative, involving not only governments, but also the civil sector and the media.

Many of those factors were complementary and interdependent, and needed to be treated as such, he said. Tunisia adopted that global and holistic approach in both its domestic and international affairs. It was true that there were many differences between peoples, but all had in common the values of freedom, justice, equality and peace. In order to preserve development and peace, no stone could be left unturned. The future of humanity was at stake.

HIDEAKI KOBAYASHI (Japan) said it was a deplorable reality that the international community continued to experience serious tragedies caused by conflicts, violence and discrimination. It was necessary to strengthen efforts

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to realize a world where every individual could live free of fear. Everyone had a responsibility to foster a culture of peace, particularly among the younger generations, whose members were to build the society of the future. In that connection, Japan had conducted a series of activities as a means of promoting a culture of peace.

At the governmental level, it had launched a publicity campaign to raise the consciousness and disseminate the concept of a culture of peace among the Japanese people. Last March, a symposium had been conducted as part of the Global Youth Exchange Programme 2000, which was a forum for youth from more than 40 countries around the world to discuss global issues. Japan also actively supported NGOs that had been playing an important role in promoting a culture of peace. The National Federation of UNESCO Associations in Japan had produced educational materials and textbooks for children on a culture of peace in Japanese. It had also participated actively in the "Manifesto 2000", an initiative that called for people to live lives of peace and non-violence.

He believed that a major role in building up a global movement for a culture of peace must be played by UNESCO. He hoped that UNESCO would have a leading role in implementing educational programmes in ways that promoted mutual understanding, peace and tolerance, and helped to prevent violence and conflict.

MARIA ELENA CHASSOUL (Costa Rica) said that for centuries society had lived under the shadow of the culture of war, destruction and death. Violence and hate had dominated humanity and nations had been torn apart by armed conflicts. "How many lives had been wasted?" she asked. "How much innocence had been lost and how much sadness created?" At the onset of a new millennium, humanity was in favourable circumstances for change and putting the culture of peace into place, because the shadow of the cold war and armed confrontation had been dispersed. Today, the world was a fertile ground for planting the seed of peace, substituting the excesses of destruction and conflict with the virtues of peace, tolerance and cooperation, she continued.

A global movement to promote the culture of peace was indispensable, she said. The first step must be the education of children, with the family role being fundamental. As the Secretary-General's report noted, it was through the family that children were taught basic values, notably tolerance, mutual respect and cooperation. If the family was weakened or broke down, future citizens would lack the necessary values for social coexistence. Thus, it was necessary to include teaching students about peace in the curricula. She welcomed the Secretary-General's strategy to educate young people to reject violence and to appreciate dialogue and negotiation.

True and sustainable peace could only be guaranteed by living standards in which all people lived at a sufficient economic level of development, she said. At the same time, respect and the promotion of human dignity and the search for common well-being were prerequisites for peace. International cooperation contributed directly to the culture of peace by aiding development, democratization and the promotion of human rights. For that reason, Costa Rica hoped that the international community would continue financial and political assistance. Those development programmes would help prevent future conflicts.

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Only by respecting democracy could a culture of peace exist, because democracy was the only political system guaranteeing true social peace. In closing, she stated that the promotion of peace would require a continued and sustained effort by humanity to create an environment of mutual respect and rejection of violence.

ARTHUR C. I. MBANEFO (Nigeria) said that the international community was concerned about new challenges that had emerged and were threatening the peace that was so cherished. Those were the challenges of poverty, new diseases and the proliferation of violence and internal conflicts, especially in Africa. The international community must rededicate itself to the ideals embodied in the Charter of the United Nations, by adopting the culture of peace. Nigeria subscribed to the notion that children and the innocent victims of conflicts should be at the centre of that noble objective. The elimination of violence was the best legacy that could be bequeathed to the world's children, and the march towards a culture of peace and non-violence could best be achieved and sustained when nurtured from childhood. Education for a culture of peace should not only be through formal education in schools, but through informal education.

Peace was not just the absence of violence and war, he continued. For the people of Nigeria and, he believed, in the developing countries, peace also meant freedom from want. His country reaffirmed its commitment to work with other nations to make the world a more peaceful and better place to live. Yet, he also wanted to use the opportunity to draw attention to the affect of the external debt on the ability of most developing countries to bring about meaningful changes for the well-being of their people. Poverty was the antithesis of peace. The poorer a country, the less it enjoyed peace. That truism was manifested in the growing number of conflicts in the developing countries. Nigeria, therefore, once again called on its creditor nations to consider debt cancellation as a sign of solidarity in the international community's collective efforts towards a culture of peace.

MARTIN BELINGA-EBOUTOU (Cameroon), quoting Saint Augustine, said peace was tranquility that came with order. But many African countries did not know order or peace. Many children there had not lived a single year of peace. The debate today also referred to the dream of the founding fathers of the Organization to build a world of peace. He called for a true political will to make that dream into reality.

The basic commitment made over half a century ago was that the people were resolved to preserve future generations from the scourge of war, he continued. Unfortunately, there was doubt about whether the human solidarity proclaimed in the Charter actually existed. Wealth was being frittered away, as was the environment. Fanaticism was increasing. That could no longer be tolerated. Conflict must end. Better still, by preventive action, the international community must make sure that conflict never recurred. For that to happen, the international community must invest in peace. The causes of war and conflict were well known, as were the ingredients for peace.

The culture of peace was the culture of life and hope, he said. Peace was more than the absence of war. It implied the existence of liberty and justice,

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so that all could live in harmony and fully develop their capacity. The year 2000 offered an opportunity to build an optimistic future. If everybody agreed on a culture of non-violence, that future could be built. To meet that challenge, the attitudes that promoted peace and social justice must be assumed. The imbalance characteristic of today's world threatened not only development and stability, but also -- and above all -- the world's very survival.

The twenty-first century would be a century of sharing or else it would simply not exist, he said. Cameroon had called for an ethical approach to international relations, a partnership based on true solidarity, a solidarity contract. The vicious cycle of confrontation must be ended. Weapons had to be traded in for words. At the social level, a solidarity contract would help to eliminate poverty, marginalization and exclusion.

MURARI RAJ SHARMA (Nepal) said human beings had experimented with varied security doctrines in past centuries. From isolation, expansion and balance of power to mutually assured destruction, all had been put into practice at different stages of evolution in security thinking. Yet peace had remained as elusive as ever. It was time to move beyond those traditional, flawed approaches and begin to explore and pursue a new path of peace.

It was axiomatic that violence beget violence, and that weapons triggered an arms race. The culture of peace was something that was novel, offering a moral anchor for forging conditions where disputes could be resolved peacefully. One might win inter-State wars with weapons, but internal conflicts were unwinnable with traditional means. New techniques and weapons to win such civil strife were needed. The Programme of Action pointed the way forward. It made sense to invest in sustainable economic and social development, so that increasing populations did not have to engage in deadly competition over shrinking resources, he said.

Steps to be taken to create a favourable environment for the culture of peace included complete nuclear disarmament, control of small arms and measures to build confidence between peoples and States. To work for a shared peace and prosperity, the gulf between national and global interests had to be bridged. Common humanity was the main strand that bound the different elements enshrined in the Charter and reaffirmed in the Millennium Declaration. He hoped that narrow national interests would not undermine larger global interests that benefited the peoples of the world, in whose name the Charter was written.

RENATO R. MARTINO, Permanent Observer of the Holy See, said the past century will be remembered as one of great scientific progress, but also as one of extraordinary violence. It was a century in which millions of people fell victim to wars and internal conflicts, a century of the Holocaust and of repeated genocide, of hatred and ethnic cleansing. The century which had just begun could yet become one of peace, he said. The family of nations must work to make the Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World a reality in order to give children, many of whom had known nothing but war, new hope and a new future.

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The first requirement of a culture of peace was to reaffirm the conviction that war was no longer the way to resolve conflicts between nations. A culture of peace must also be a culture of human rights. The recognition of the inalienable rights and dignity of each person represented the foundation of every authentically free political order. A culture of peace must be based on truth and justice and respect the rights of nations. A way must be found to establish a rule of law in international life, and conflict prevention must be fostered. A culture of peace would also reject the logic of the free flow of arms.

A culture of peace, he said, must begin in human hearts. Violence must be put aside in every aspect of human life. A true change of heart must begin in the home and in the family, and must be founded on a true respect of each and every person, and of each and every community. He concluded with the words of Pope John Paul II, who had told the Assembly at its fiftieth anniversary, "With the help of God's grace, we can build, in the next century and the next millennium, a civilization worthy of the human person, a true culture of freedom. We can and must do so! And in doing so, we shall see that the tears of this century have prepared the ground for a new spring time of the human spirit."

Right of Reply

CHAIM SHACHAM (Israel), exercising his right of reply in response to the statement made by Egypt, said that unfortunately the debate on the culture of peace had been used to voice a political attack against Israel. The attack sounded even more hollow on this day of sorrow. He regretted to inform the Assembly of the tragic terrorist attack that had taken place today, 3 p.m. local time, at the Yehuda market, killing two people and injuring several others. Israel had warned the Palestinian Authority that the release of over 100 Jihad and Hamas terrorists would lead to further attacks against Israel. The Palestinian Authority bore a heavy responsibility for the attack. Those people belonged behind bars.

It was unfortunate that the attack had taken place after an agreement had been made that included provisions to renew the Palestinian and Israeli security situation to the level before the outbreak of the Palestinian violence, the issuing of a joint statement calling for a halt to incitements and the joint call to President Clinton to convene the fact-finding committee, agreed upon at Sharm al-Sheik.

Only two weeks ago, Egypt had hosted the Sharm al-Sheik meeting, where it had been decided that neither side had the monopoly on victim status, he said. The words of the Egyptian statement had portrayed the Israelis as villains and leveled unfounded charges, which seemed contradictory, as Egypt had acted as a facilitator. Since Egypt had referred to the issue of peace in the region, the statement should have been used to encourage Palestinians to respond to Israeli peace offers, rather than to encourage them to reject it outright.

AMR ROSHDY (Egypt), exercising his right of reply, completely rejected the accusation that his delegation's statement was aggressive. His country had been

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the first one to extend the hand of peace 20 years ago, and had invested everything to reinforce the peace process. He said that the culture of peace would never exist if it was not a just peace that met the demands and interests of all parties -- not the extreme demands, but the just ones. The Fourth Geneva Convention was applicable to the Palestinian occupied territories. Violence bred violence, and that violence existed here was obvious. One had to look for the party that had initiated the provocation and thrown the region back into conflict.

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