

Pax Forum—Appendix III

Building Peace: To Understand, So We Can Act

Weekly Summaries

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http://sympa.alliance21.org/forums/d_read/pax/participants/introductions/forum_coordination.htm

Summary 1 (December 6 – 16, 2001)

Participants Question the Concepts of Peace and Violence from a Broad Geocultural Basis

Abstract: *The Forum Coordination invited participants to introduce themselves before the debate opens to provide others with a better grasp as to why people might adopt a certain approach. The forum has assembled great diversity, both in terms of national and regional origins and with regard to social / professional backgrounds. All participants condemned the attacks but agreed that the construction of peace requires understanding the motives of terrorists. One of the questions asked was whether or not terrorism or violence could be considered, in certain cases, as justified, most notably in instances where an oppressed people only has this as its means to fight oppression. In a variety of forms, several participants discussed the idea that peace is defined by the dichotomy that separates the ideal concept of absolute peace and the reality of an imperfect, but attainable peace. All agreed that building peace is a duty that befalls all individuals.*

Introductions: A Better Grasp on Understanding

For the opening of the peace forum, the Forum Coordination invited the participants to introduce themselves before the debate opens. The rationale behind these informal introductions was that without the possibility of talking with and seeing one another, introductions help give a human face to this forum. In addition, they provide participants and listeners with a better grasp as to why people might adopt a certain approach. The Forum Coordination reminded the participants that personal introductions were a prerequisite to their first contribution, and mentioned that if they wished, they could send a photograph. All introductions and other useful documents are available on the Web site at http://mail.alliance21.org/forums/d_read/pax/

Going *around the table* we found great diversity, both in terms of national and regional origins and with regard to social / professional backgrounds. While some gave shorter, more traditional, introductions, several people chose to open themselves up, thus revealing some of their personal history. The contributions of this week came from several continents. Alongside North Americans (USA), other Americans responded, including Argentines, Chileans, and Brazilians. People from India, Senegal, Morocco, and Europe also participated in this first week of the forum, as well as someone writing from Kenya.

Several people chose to identify themselves beyond the strict boundaries of citizenship, illustrating the fact that the common practice of placing individuals into a strictly national mold of identification may not always tell the whole story. One person for example preferred to introduce himself as a citizen of the world. Several people from the United States gave their ethnic background or their country of origin. A woman from France described her aristocratic roots. Someone from Spain introduced himself as Catalan. Ages ranged from the early 20s to the 60s with a majority of baby-boomer participation. Some people were open about their political affiliations or non-affiliations. From a social-professional standpoint, several participants work or have worked with nongovernmental organizations, for the most part in development-related activities. But there were also civil servants and business persons, a couple of lawyers, an engineer, a student (university), a university professor, a poet, and a former member of the U.S. Marine Corps.

September 11 and beyond: Does Violence Really Beget Violence?

To launch this forum on the construction of peace, the Forum Coordination decided to ask participants about their feelings regarding the terrorist attacks on September 11, and more specifically how their outlook on the world may have been shaped by these events. This question provoked many responses and clearly hit a raw nerve. The great majority of responses were filled with a strong emotional element. Unanimously, people condemned the attacks while many displayed their disgust with terrorism. The old idea that *violence begets violence* still seems to resonate strongly today if this forum is any indication of peoples' feelings on the matter, though someone suggested that this assumption should also be questioned. Nevertheless, while the debate remained highly emotional, many tried to go beyond the horror of the attack. One person had the courage to say that the events actually caused a feeling of happiness, related to the fact that the *empire* (the United States) had shown its vulnerability. While this particularly strong reaction was isolated, a majority of people did display in one form or another the idea that the attacks had to be placed in a greater geopolitical context where the foreign policies of the United States are not always innocent or without dire consequences. It would be a bit of a stretch to write that most participants said the U.S. *had it coming*, but many did believe that the construction of peace goes beyond the punishment of terrorists and that one needs to understand the motives of terrorists in order to prevent terror attacks from happening.

Defining Terrorism, and Peace: Peace Must Come from the People

This brings us to two of the topics most discussed during this first week of the Peace Forum, namely terrorism and peace. With regard to terrorism, one of the questions asked by several participants was whether or not terrorism—or at least violence—could be considered, in certain cases, as justified, most notably in those instances where an oppressed people only has violence as its means to fight the oppressor. Using this argument on a large scale, this would signify that terror could be used against a state that oppresses other states. Again, the argument was made that the United States might be such a state, and this illustrates how important it is to define some of the key concepts we will be using throughout this forum. These concepts include such things as oppressor, oppressed, power, terrorism, peace, and human rights.

On the topic of peace, the debate centered on what peace is (or how it may be defined), and on how one may help to construct a lasting peace shared by all peoples. Many agreed that defining peace is difficult, and that it may be easier to define it by what it is not. Someone suggested, for example, that peace is not non-violence. In a variety of forms and using different approaches, several participants discussed the idea that peace is defined by the dichotomy that separates the ideal concept of absolute peace and the reality of an imperfect, but attainable peace.

Many participants acknowledged the difficulties that the task of building peace entails, yet all agreed that building peace is a duty that befalls all individuals. Someone suggested looking at the lessons given by nature in the area of cooperation. Cooperation is something that seems to occur even as complexity increases and this may lead us to the conclusion that *we must become the change we seek in the world*.

Several participants voiced the opinion that optimism and the belief that peace is possible should guide the actions of citizens all over the world who will, through the example of their lives, bring about the changes that will generate the conditions for a lasting peace. Many thought that problems of inequality were at the root of the violence that flares up everywhere, meaning that resolving this problem might do more for peace than the traditional response to violence through violence. The idea that governments and transnational organizations are ineffectual in fostering peace was a recurring theme, as was the related idea that peace must come from the bottom (the people) rather than from the top (the governments). One participant suggested that the World Assembly for a responsible, plural and united world be used as a launching pad for the mobilization of people interested in building peace in a different and novel manner.

These were, in the proverbial nutshell, some of the ideas discussed this week that served to initiate this Forum on the construction of peace.

Summary 2 (December 17 – 23, 2001) Can We Turn Conflict into Peace?

Abstract: *New introductions showed this week that the geography of peace is very diverse as new participants hail from all the continents, a majority of them, however, men. All seem in one way or an-*

other committed to fostering peace in the world, with many active in work related to social issues. One person is founder of an international center for cooperation and conflict resolution, another devotes his work to nonviolence and education for peace. This week's focus was the problem of terrorism. Several condemned the events that followed the September attacks and raised the question of the legitimacy of violence in general, including when used by a state. This crucial issue raises the problem of democracy: Has it failed to achieve its primary goals? One participant underscored that globalization has fostered unequal development, producing tensions and conflict. Promoting sustainable development under the concept of planetization, he argues, should help to enhance democracy, freedom, and peace. Another thought presented is that, conflicts being inevitable, the major question is how to solve them short of violence. Until the end of January we are expecting your input on the agenda planned from February to June.

More Introductions from People in Africa, America, Asia, and Europe Working for Peace

This week saw plenty of participants introducing themselves to Forum Pax. Again, a great number chose to give more than just a formal introduction and many shared with all of us the strong feelings for peace, inner or outer, by which they are moved. The *geography of peace* was again very diverse as new participants hailed from several continents. Europe was well represented with several people from France, and also Spain, the Netherlands, and Belgium. There were two people from Africa, specifically from Cameroon and Benin, as well as one from Morocco in North Africa, one from Bangladesh, one from Pakistan and one from the United States. This week, a majority of the participants who "spoke" were men. There were a couple of students as well as retirees, with ages ranging from late teens to mid-sixties. A couple of people briefly shared with us their experience living in another country: a person from Cameroon who moved north to the United States and a Frenchman who went south to Argentina more than fifteen years ago.

In terms of their activities, a brief perusal through this week's introductions illustrates how individuals in today's world are more than likely to embrace several career paths. Indeed, several participants have had rich and diverse experiences in the professional arena. Some are leading very active lives that include both professional activities and community service, usually – but not always – in related areas. All participants seem in one way or another committed to enhancing peace in the world. A great majority was eager to share their thoughts regarding the many ways in which to do this in a productive manner. While most displayed a dislike for the manner in which governments traditionally solve conflict situations, all were somewhat optimistic that positive changes might be possible, which would improve a distressing situation.

It is therefore not a surprise that we may count many activists among these new participants, whether they work with NGOs or with various types of grassroots organizations active in different areas. Among the areas mentioned were social work, urbanism, immigration, employment, education, social justice, local governance, and social society. Academics were also represented, as well as intellectuals. One participant is working on a translation of the Bible in Mina (Ewe), an African language spoken in West Africa by peoples of Benin, Togo, and Ghana. There are several people who work in areas directly linked to the promotion of peace. One person founded an international center for cooperation and conflict resolution, another devotes his work to nonviolence and education for peace.

A Reminder from the Forum Coordination: Discussion of the Agenda

The first point on the agenda, which we shall remain until the end of January, is:

- a—to introduce oneself and send a photograph if you have one handy in digital format
- b—to make a statement, if you wish, on what the September 11th events have meant to you
- c—to give us your thoughts on the agenda that is planned from February to June.

Point (c) had not been responded to at the end of this second week, but some of the questions raised in the messages have given us leads for our future work.

Thoughts on September 11th: Zooming in on Violence, Wherever It Comes from

Before answering the question asked regarding September 11th and how it affected our lives, several participants showed how their lives had taken on new meaning with the events linked to the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington. This week's contributions were generally more focused than those of the week before and they dealt almost exclusively with the problem of terrorism.

All of the participants joined in condemning the September 11 attacks as an appalling event that will undoubtedly mark a stain in history. Generally, participants this week saw no redeeming element in the use of terrorism as a tool for the struggle against oppression, as was the case last week. Moreover, several condemned the events that *followed* the September attacks and raised the question of the legitimacy of violence in general. In other words, is violence used by a state more legitimate than the violence used by a group, be it terrorist or other? While all agreed that this important question goes to the heart of the matter, it was understood that answering the question is no easy matter.

Following through on the question of legitimacy, one participant made an interesting point concerning the people's responsibilities (regarding peace and violence), in particular in those countries where governments are elected by the people and where they should, in theory, represent their will. The question of legitimacy led to the issue of empowerment (of the people). Underpinning this participant's thought lay the idea that people make rational choices, more rational perhaps than governments which often have their own agenda.

This crucial issue brings us back to the philosophers of the eighteenth century who were among the first to identify the problem and who saw democracy as the way to solve it.

→ Can we say thus that democracy has failed to achieve its primary goals? We shall certainly have to debate this point in greater depth during the month of April (under "Governance").

One thing that a participant suggested *has* failed, is globalization. Globalization, he says, has fostered unequal development, which in turn has produced tensions and conflict on many levels. Promoting sustainable development under the concept of *planetization* rather than globalization, both in the so-called developed and developing worlds, should help to dismantle the hierarchies of power while enhancing democracy, freedom, and peace. The problem of terrorism is directly linked to globalization as it is born from the tensions created by the form of modernization, the inequalities and the injustices that it produces. For that, those deeper problems mentioned above need imperatively to be addressed.

→ In short, *the antidote to terrorism is sustainable development*. This will be one of the topics we shall work on in greater detail during the month of February (under "Humanity and the Biosphere"), for some of its aspects, as well as in March (under "Society and Economy in Solidarity") for others.

Conflicts Are Inevitable: How Can We Make Them Productive Rather Than Deadly?

Moving along from the specific issue of terrorism to the general idea of peace, someone argued (in his introduction) that conflicts are inevitable, so the major question is how to solve them short of violence. Regarding violence, someone else suggested that perhaps one should launch a broad-based pacifist movement that refuses violence in all its manifestations, be it terrorism, or retaliation in Afghanistan and Palestine. This brings us full circle to the essential question raised by this week's participants, namely how to define the roles that individuals, communities and governments should play in order to solve what may be the greatest problem ever faced by humankind: violence. To illustrate one of the points made this week and last, we shall leave you to ponder this unlikely quote by a man famous for promoting the absolute power of the government, the sixteenth-century political philosopher Niccolò Machiavelli: "The people being less inclined to be mistaken than the Prince, one can trust the former more than one can the latter." [*Discourse on the First Decade of Titus Livius*, 1518]

Summary 3 (December 24 – 30, 2001) Attempting to Zero in on Solutions to Violence

Abstract: *A French painter, a future priest from Gabon (Africa), a teacher from the Balearic Islands (Europe) and an ordinary citizen from Venezuela (Latin America) introduced themselves to the forum this week. Attempts at explaining the root causes of terrorism pointed, once again, to the enormous inequities produced both by the dominant world economic system and by the high concentration of power in the hands of the few. To some, building a culture of peace is something that appears as possible, to others, it seems a daunting, almost impossible enterprise, but everyone appears to have expectations from this forum. Many see education as being the strongest vector for promoting peace. A number of questions have been raised, which will serve to guide our work from February to June (see below). Your input and comments for the agenda are more than welcome until January 27. And a Happy New Year to all!*

A few new introductions were made during this last week of 2001, which also saw active debate among a few participants, though a majority of the forum didn't chime in on the debates, absent perhaps due to holiday festivities.

New Introductions: a Painter, a Future Priest, a Teacher, and a "Simple Person"

Four participants introduced themselves, among them one woman. Despite being small in number, the new introductions rendered large in diversity, both in terms of background as well as geographic location. The tacks on the map this week include the Central African country of Gabon, the Balearic Islands of Spain, France, and Venezuela. For this small sample of people, the average age was relatively high.

Our participant from France is a well-traveled artist (painter) living on welfare who spends some of his leisure time auditing courses in Anthropology. Our contributor from Gabon, a well-educated student of theology soon to become a priest, has been very active in a number of community activities both in his home country and abroad, including the organization of dialogues and forums on the general topic of religion and peace culture. Having lived, studied, and worked abroad, this individual has a strong sense of what is meant by intercultural communication. Logically, it follows that he is committed to developing intercultural understanding and dialogue in various forms. Another among the new participants is a schoolteacher who also shares a strong commitment for promoting peace education. As a technical adviser for the educational system of the Balearic Islands, this person has organized a course for students designed to introduce young minds to the area concept of peace and cooperation. With several decades of experience in the area of peace culture and human rights, this individual's contributions should be interesting for all of us adults, too. Our final participant modestly presented herself as *a simple inhabitant of the world*, reminding us of an important, yet often overlooked, fact: *most of the world is inhabited by simple people like me* [her].

Violence and Terrorism are the Result of Economic Disparities, but Also of Inequalities of Power

For this third week of discussions on the September 11 events, we found no significant breakthroughs relative to what was said previously. In our opinion, the most forceful statement was made by someone in Senegal condemning without reservation the terrorist attacks, something that no other participant had done so far. In general, this week's contributions can be subdivided into two large categories (with frequent overlaps). There is the emotional dismay and disgust with the terrorist acts on the one hand, and there are the attempts at explaining the root causes of terrorism, and violence in general, on the other. With regards to the latter, the most frequently heard opinion focuses on the issue of inequalities. These inequalities are multi-layered. They concern the most basic economic inequities separating the rich and the poor, but they also include inequalities of power. Many feel that the United States, and to a certain degree Europe as well, should stop exploiting their advantages and start reflecting on how they could, or should, transform the very structure of their international ties with other countries—indeed, we found that many participants were adamant in their condemnation of US policies, past and present.

Those who argue along these lines seem to ask for a total overhaul of international relations in a way that would yield real positive peace, not just band-aid solutions that hypocritically sweep violence under the rug. Still on the topic of inequality, several participants raised an important point, namely the unequal treatment which violence receives through the media, and consequently through the policies of the major powers. To simply illustrate the point, the attacks on the World Trade Center (3000 victims) have yielded much greater attention than the civil wars that have dramatically affected the Great Lakes Region of Africa (Congo, Rwanda, Burundi) and caused millions of deaths in only a few months.

Yet, someone pointed to the fact that the terrorist bombings are not only horrific because they caused so many innocent people to die, but also because they act as a symbol, the value and consequences of which are greater than the aggregate sum of the victims. In this light, it is clear that this type of extreme gratuitous violence can only beget violence and nothing else—a far cry from peace.

Which brings us back to the topic of peace. We found that this week, perhaps even more than the last two, there seemed to be a wide gap between what we could call the *optimists* and the *pessimists*. Furthermore, we found that, in general, those people who work as activists in the area of peace promotion seem to be a bit more optimistic than the other participants. The activists tend to see some results coming out of their work, be it small and incremental, while the others tend to see peace as a

problem so daunting as to be practically unattainable. Yet, in both cases, people seem to genuinely expect tangible things to come out of this forum.

Is Education a Solution?

This week's debate included the perennial discussion as to what causes violence, and in which manner one can resolve it. The issue of humankind's inherent violent nature and will to dominate was raised, a topic that has fascinated political philosophers and scientists for centuries. Is man impossible to reform as the English seventeenth-century philosopher and mathematician Thomas Hobbes suggests, destined to lead a life that is "solitary, nasty, brutish and short" (*The Leviathan*, 1651) or can he be transformed, as European eighteenth-century philosophers such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Condorcet argued forcefully in their writings? Reading this week's contributions, as well as those of the previous weeks, there seems to be a great majority who think that education is indeed an important element, perhaps even the most important element, in the peace equation. The topic of education is vast and takes many different forms. Someone argued, for example, that what is needed is a new human awareness. Some participants shared their experience as peace educators and how it ties into the whole idea of creating a culture of peace.

In short, these contributions touched upon the entire spectrum of human activities as they relate to peace, from the reform of international relations to the education of young children.

Questions for the Agenda

During this week several questions were raised that might serve to elaborate the agenda of the next few months. Most pertain to the area of "Humanity and the Biosphere," with a couple of questions relating to "Economy and Society in Solidarity" and to "Governance," with overlaps of course, especially in the first two categories.

1) Humanity and the Biosphere

a) The future

Will the future involve a quantum leap in the evolution of our human consciousness leading to a higher, more complex, sustainable, holistic human system, a *culture of peace*? Or, rather, will it involve a sudden breakdown (disorganization) of our current short-sighted, atomistic system, throwing us down the ladder of evolution and civilization, with great human pain and suffering, even the possible extinction of the human species, let alone a myriad other innocent species?

b) Inequality and the abusive use of natural resources in the richer countries: how did this situation come about and what are the reasons that the situation (especially in the US) has not changed significantly?

More specifically:

- What is the role of the media, advertising and transnational corporations like McDonalds?
- Do the IMF, the World Bank and banking conglomerates have a role in this? If yes, which?
- Is the present economic system contributing to the problem somehow?
- Are the present systems we use for organizing societies responsive enough to the issues before us today (if they are responsive at all) and are there alternatives?
- Can any person be expected to "strive" for peace within him or herself first if his or her basic needs are not met?
- Can there ever be world peace if massive inequalities are not addressed?

2) Economy and Society in Solidarity

In which manner is economic inequality to blame for violence and conflict?

3) Governance

To whom do we leave the question of violence?

Is peace utopian?

How do we address the fact that the weak continue to be under the domination of the laws of the powerful?

→ Your input and comments for the agenda till the end of June is welcome, and now is the time to do this (till January 27).

On that note, we wish all of you a very Happy New Year!

Summary 4 (December 31, 2001— January 6, 2002) Seeking the Feasible Roads to Building Peace

Abstract: *We are witnessing an increasing amount of interactivity, with reactions to previous messages. An issue was raised regarding the necessity for this forum to find a balance between idealistic goals and practical results when trying to attain an understanding of peace and its feasibility. Three new participants introduced themselves: a woman from the Philippines who was previously involved in an underground revolutionary movement, a man from Switzerland who expressed his hope that the forum will produce something more than “bar-room talk,” and a man from France who stated that for him, transformation of the world begins with transformation of his life. While concern over the war looming between India and Pakistan is raised, the responsibilities of governments were underscored, along with the question: What can we do to reform them so that they behave rationally to seek peace? A reason to believe that they can do this is that European governments are steadfastly building cooperation in a previously war-torn region.*

Interactivity, Reasonable Solutions for Peace

For this first week of the New Year, three participants introduced themselves to the forum and a total of eight messages were received. As we enter the second month of the peace forum, we are witnessing an increasing amount of interactivity with reactions to previous messages and responses to questions raised by participants during the previous weeks. In general, the topic of terrorism was still high on the agenda. Several participants raised an issue that will loom larger as time passes, namely the necessity for this forum to find a balance between idealistic goals and practical results when trying to attain a greater understanding of peace and its realization. This means, in short, that problems and solutions that fall within the boundaries of reason and feasibility need to be defined.

Newcomers from the Philippines, Switzerland, and France

The three new introductions illustrated once again the great diversity of participation. A woman from the Philippines shared with us her commitment to religion and social change in her country. She also revealed how she was part, for seventeen years, of an underground revolutionary movement. This unique experience should make a good contribution to the discussions we have been having regarding the legitimacy of violence and alternative sources of political power. Another participant introduced himself from Switzerland, the world's oldest democracy and a country known for its long commitment to peace. From the cold climes of the Alps, this gentleman gave warm words of encouragement to the forum, warning however that *the path is sowed with ambushes; we must make sure not to sink either into angelism nor into “bar-room talk” because the process will be vain unless it results in the concrete.* These words of advice summarize what many participants have voiced in one way or another.

Finally, from close by in France hailed our third participant, an agricultural engineer with experience in development. His words of introduction also illustrated what many of us have said in our presentations. He stated that he carries in him the values of the universal, that *he feels like a citizen of the world, and wishes to participate in the construction of a responsible and united plural world. To complete this world he looks at his life and transforms it so that this world comes gradually.*

Debate, Legitimacy of Violence, Dysfunctional Nature of the World

This week's discussion was largely confined to debate with fewer questions raised than during the last session. More reactions surfaced regarding terrorism. One participant reacted forcefully to the issue raised earlier about the possible legitimacy of terrorist acts, arguing that no act of terrorism is ever justified, regardless of the circumstances. Another shared his emotions on the September 11 events, both in terms of his dismay at the bombings and his understanding of why such a thing might have happened, considering the dysfunctional nature of the world.

A War Looming between India and Pakistan

If the September 11 events still remain fresh on everybody's minds, another potentially deadly event is raising concerns among the participants. This potential human disaster is the conflict between India and Pakistan, which has heated up to dangerous levels during the past few weeks and which might

explode at any time. Knowing that the two countries have developed nuclear arms programs, the prospects of war are a bit scary and all too real, even if such weapons would probably not be used. In any case, one contributor intelligently opposed this dire situation with the arrival of the Euro, a single currency for twelve European countries: one event symbolizing conflict and war; the other the potential for cooperation in a region with a very long history of warfare. Another participant suggested that the forum begin an action to help, in any manner, to thwart this war that is looming in the horizon.

The Question of the Role and Responsibility of Governments

This old conflict between two emerging nations illustrates, as several contributors pointed out, the central role that governments play in the struggle for power, a game that for all intents and purposes seems utterly idiotic and in defiance of any kind of reason. This realization brings forth an essential question at the crux of the peace equation:

→ By what means can governments be reformed to behave like rational entities seeking peace? This question was also raised in earlier discussions. It is clearly one of the issues this forum should discuss in detail, under “Governance” in April, but will most certainly come up in connection to the other main themes.

Summary 5 (January 7 – 13, 2002) To Understand So We Can Act, We First Have to Be Informed

Abstract: *First of all, a warm welcome to Delphine Astier who has joined the Forum Coordination as editor and translator of your messages. Until the end of January, we shall still be publishing your introductions and your statements on post-September 11. You may introduce yourself any time before the end of June, but your introduction is required before any contribution to the debate. In February, we shall open the debate on the first of the next five items on the agenda. Your questions for these five items ought to be submitted now. Throughout the entire debate, you may send us a report on your experience in actions for peace: it could inspire the rest of us to do something similar. There were four new introductions this week, including three women. Newcomers come from three continents and the following countries: Canada, Spain, United States, and Pakistan. One of the participants witnessed first hand the horrific attack on the World Trade Center. The main topic of the week touched upon the issue of information and misinformation, and how they affect global human understanding. The question of definitions regarding terrorism and violence was raised once again as was the issue of bad government. The need for a dialogue with scientists rounded up this week’s debate.*

This week saw a new round of introductions and the continuation of our debate. But before going into the heart of the matter, we shall invite all of you to go through some shop-keeping business, including some important reminders on the way the forum has evolved thus far and where it is headed.

Growth of the Forum Coordination

First, we would like to extend a warm welcome to Delphine Astier, who joined Marina Urquidi (moderator and coordinator) and myself on the Forum Coordination last week. She will be in charge of laying out your messages, running them through the machine-translation program, and post-editing them.

There are two weeks left for the first item on the agenda, which includes: your introductions, your feelings on September 11, your questions for the agenda from February to June, and your reports on “actions for peace.”

Last Call for Statements on September 11

As we write, 39 persons presently subscribed have sent their introductions. Since the beginning of the forum, new people have continued to sign up, a few people have canceled their subscription, and the total number of us has gone up from 139 to 155. You are not required to introduce yourself now... or ever. However, if you decide to send a message, your previous introduction is required—so that we can have a sense of who you are when you take the floor—and this can be any time from now until the end of June.

If you have a digital photo of yourself, we would love to see what you look like, so send it. Your statements on how you think the world (inner, outer, yours, your country's, humankind's...) has changed, however, will be accepted only until January 27.

More Questions Than Answers

Most of us probably have more questions than answers. If this is your case, now is the time to ask them, and we shall attempt to formulate answers to them between February and the end of June with the help of those among us who have knowledge in specific areas.

Actions for Peace?

Throughout the entire debate, we are eager to hear of your experiences in "actions for peace." We shall publish them as they arrive on the forum Web site, and publish them on the mailing list during our "coffee breaks" (last week of each item on the agenda).

More Women Introduced Themselves

This week a higher number of female participants introduced themselves (3 out of 4) than the previous weeks with ages ranging from the thirties to the late sixties. Our first newcomer of the week wrote to us from Canada, more specifically from French-speaking Quebec. She has a lot of experience in community-building circles, street work with young people, poverty, and marginality. They have convinced her that *it is indispensable to weave a canvas of solidarity throughout the world than can slow down our self-destructive escalation.*

Our second participant lives in Palencia (Spain). She is a soon-to-retire teacher in a Superior Technical School of Agrarian Engineering and is eager to become more active with issues such as those dealt with in this forum.

Our third is an environmental lawyer working as a consultant with the United Nations Development Program on energy projects and policies for sustainable development. A New Yorker, she witnessed first hand the horrific events of September 11. The short account she gives is enough to remind us of the chilling reality of violence and terrorism: "I live in New York very close to the World Trade Center site. On September 11, I evacuated my home and ran with my ten-year-old son from his school as the second tower collapsed behind us. Our neighborhood has become a scene of mass death and destruction. It was many weeks before we could return to our home, and our lives have been changed forever." Despite the emotional shock, she remains hopeful that a solution to violence and war is ultimately possible.

Finally, writing from Pakistan, another area that has been in the news lately, our fourth participant is a human-rights lawyer and activist who is currently working on civil-society-building projects.

Misuse of Information by Governments

The main topic of discussion this week centered on the issue of information and misinformation. Information is the key to understanding complex problems such as those that pertain to conflict, conflict resolution, and peace. It helps people to comprehend their governments' policies, as well as to get a better grasp of what other peoples' perspectives may be, bridge cross-cultural barriers, and solve many misunderstandings that could escalate to open conflict.

On the other hand, misinformation is a tool for governments or political groups who want to enact their own policies and to do so, need to manipulate public opinion. In this regard, misinformation is as old as politics itself and still remains one of the most effective tools in the trade. To illustrate the mechanisms of misinformation in a democratic state, one participant referred to a pedophilia scandal in Belgium. While the specific topic of pedophilia is not the subject of this forum, this story illustrates how governments are able to organize internal psychological propaganda operations and how far they are willing to bend the rules of democracy in order to protect themselves and hide their deficiencies.

To corroborate this point, another participant highlighted the importance of information in the era of globalization, or, if one prefers, the post-cold war era. The global village, he suggested, is gaining momentum and is becoming a reality. The opening up of the world after 1989 has served the cause of international human rights and, perhaps more importantly, has raised the awareness of people across the world that peaceful coexistence is not only necessary, but possible. This trend has given people more power and changed the rules of the game, which is no longer guided only by strict conceptions,

national interest, and narrow strategies. However, for the people to be able to capitalize on this openness, a willingness to gain a better understanding of the problems affecting the world is an absolute necessity.

In order to do this, one must access new sources of information, not just those fed by national media outfits, which generally express one line of opinions. Americans and Europeans, for example, should open up to other media outlets, particularly in developing countries, in order to gain a greater awareness of their global environment. As this person suggests, "You must first educate yourselves, increase your awareness to next of kin and in the locality," adding that today, "actual wars are fought on the print and electronic media and their proxies on the battle grounds."

Does the State Have a Monopoly on Violence?

These two were not the only voices this week to make a strong charge against governments. One woman, critical of the U.S. response to the September attack, strongly advocates the empowerment of the people who *know that man should be learning to be human*. This would result in putting pressure on governments to force them to make less disingenuous decisions. Using a children's parable to illustrate her point, she ends her story with an optimistic note: "The girl began to be proud of belonging to humankind, because next to corrupt and selfish men and women, there were people of good will."

Another participant raised definition issues on the terms *terrorism* and *violence*, echoing a concern already brought to the table the past weeks. These problems of definition, he suggests, push us to question the notion that "the state" has the sole monopoly on violence and the right to preserve itself with any means necessary.

A Scientific Approach to Global Awareness

Changing gears a bit, but staying within the general realm of information and education, a participant chose to go into more detail on the issue of Humanity and the Biosphere, arguing that growing sectors of humanity are becoming increasingly conscious of the fact that the Biosphere is an organic, dynamic system, and that we are all part of this system, a system that some leading-edge scientists call Planetary Consciousness. In this light, he proposes that we consider the benefits of establishing a link with Science toward the further understanding of the nature of this transformational, collective consciousness—the empowering global knowledge of being *one with the world*. This link would enhance the building of a culture of peace and could take the following forms:

- accessing information via the Web on the principles of Planetary Consciousness
- sharing information with scientists
- organizing a debate on such issues as the role of human consciousness in shaping a Culture of Peace and the future of the Biosphere.
- formulating unresolved questions raised during the debate and submitting them to scientists for clarification.

These, in a nutshell, were some of the issues and questions raised during the past week.

Summary 6 (January 14 – 20, 2002) The Role of Civil Society in Promoting a Culture of Peace

Abstract: *Six new participants joined the forum from Brazil, France, Spain, Greece and Japan. Among them, two directors of peace organizations, a student, and several people active in non-profit organizations. A seventh participant also introduced itself, the Ecole de la Paix, which on top of its duties as coordinator will also participate in the debate.*

This week's debate touched on many topics including the legitimacy (or lack thereof) of war, the problem of clandestine immigration, humanity's blindness before environmental waste, the lack of competent political leadership and problems related to debt and the North-South gap of economic wealth. Questions were raised regarding the use of force employed by the U.S. to respond to what amounts to a crime but not a war. There were other questions regarding the feasibility of a sustainable peace and the role of civil society in promoting a culture of peace. The first item of our agenda is due to close on January 27, after which we shall enjoy our first well-deserved week-long "coffee break."

Participants Involved in Alternative Education, Education for Peace, International Solidarity, and Development Cooperation

This week saw six new persons introduce themselves to the forum. A 59-year-old librarian from Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) describes her work with a non-profit outfit called PACS, created in 1986 and devoted to the education, to the research and the shared construction of alternative practices, in narrow collaboration with social movements.

Another participant joining us is the director of the Ecole de la paix (School of Peace), the organization in charge of coordinating this forum, located at the foot of the French Alps. He is 55, and he shared with us his professional progression from banking to peace education. Raised in Vietnam and having lived there during the turmoil of two successive wars, he is more than aware of the destruction brought about by armed conflict and the challenges raised by the establishment and maintenance of peace. His commitment to peace expresses itself in a variety of fields, including his duties as co-facilitator of the Peace Program at the Charles Léopold Mayer Foundation and his work as a book editor.

Another participant from France, at age 47, has been working in the field of education, with special training in mediation and conflict resolution. Currently learning Arabic as a way to reach out to others, she is following a training course in management of development projects in international solidarity. She is also working now on a pilot project on education in citizenship and development in a difficult district.

A Spanish student currently in Great Britain, our fourth participant, is enrolled in a masters program on rural development and plans to work later in the area of development cooperation.

The fifth person on our list of new participants is a 37-year-old mother of two from Greece who has been working on projects focusing on environmental education. This experience, she suggests, has broadened her outlook through the many exchanges she has been able to establish with people from different cultures. It has led her to believe that opening up to others is a prerequisite for the establishment of a culture of peace.

Another president of a peace organization will be with us, this time from Japan. The organization she heads, the Peace Studies Association of Japan [<http://www.soc.nii.ac.jp/psaj/about-e.html>], was created in 1973. It is an interdisciplinary academic association of 800 members. She is also the Co-Chair of Japan Network on Debt & Poverty [<http://www.jca.ax.apc.org/~kitazawa/LetterNo1.htm>], a network composed of Catholics, Protestants, Buddhists, Trade Unions, women, lawyers, academics, and NGOs. In 2000, it adopted an Appeal to the G7 Leaders, which was presented to the G7 Summit Meeting in Okinawa.

The Ecole de la Paix in Grenoble

Last but not least, we will finish this week's round of presentation with the Ecole de la Paix [School of Peace <http://www.ecoledelapaix.org>] which, on top of its duties with the Forum Coordination, will participate regularly to share with us their experiences and their knowledge in this field. Following is a brief description of the school and its history.

An initiative of the civil society, with the support of several organizations, is at the origin of the creation in Grenoble, in 1998, with the official support of the township of this city, of a permanent establishment named Ecole de la Paix.

This establishment is devoted to the information and the education of citizens in order to promote more pacific social relations at local, national and international levels.

Its objective is twofold:

- to answer specific needs of education for all ages and for all actors of society,
- to play on both imagination and opinion while giving a concrete form to the conviction that the art of peace must be part of general knowledge.

The activities of the school aim to meet the challenge of "living together," both "here" and "over there." There are three types of activities:

1—Information and communication at the service of a peace culture through specialized documentation and experience sharing

2—Educational facilitation and training in the culture of peace

3—Mediation, with local contributions but also in international solidarity, for example in favor of the Peace Communities in Colombia

Seeking Ways to Cultivate Peace

The debate this week was focused on general problems regarding such things as the legitimacy (or lack thereof) of war, the problem of clandestine immigration, humanity's blindness to environmental waste, the lack of competent political leadership, and problems related to debt and the North-South gap of economic wealth. Starting with the debate on semantics, one person chose to describe the September 11 attack as a crime, a crime against humanity. In this light, the U.S. response is an inadequate one, since the attack on the World Trade Center was not an act of war. This person argued further that it was also an illegal response, judged by the standards of international law and the U.N. Charter.

Another concern voiced this week touched upon the limited resources of the earth. In this domain, education should become a priority to enlighten people as to the risks before us. Using the analogy of a spaceship, one contributor suggested that the earth constitutes a closed system similar to a space ship. If the passengers of that ship do not learn how to recycle waste, a moment will come when raw materials will disappear and the ship will simply be full of waste.

Questions for the Agenda

Many questions were raised this week, too many, in fact, to list in this short summary. To take an example among many, one person asked how nations and ethnic groups separated by history and political choices might learn to live together in peace. More general questions touched upon the feasibility of sustainable peace or the types of initiatives that might be taken by civil society in order to contribute to cultivate peace, to promote cultural exchanges and development projects.

Finally, someone suggested that a manner in which to begin working on the immense task before us might be to link and tie all the efforts, like ours, that are made around the world to comprehend, promote and cultivate peace.

In any case, the Forum Coordination is currently working to add your questions to the different items of the agenda, and will let you know when they are all published on the Web site.

A final reminder: the first item of the agenda (introductions + feelings on September 11 + questions for the agenda) is due to close at the end of this week on January 27, after which we shall enjoy our first, well-deserved "coffee break": a week's worth of informal discussion and a moment to share our specific actions for peace.

Summary 7 (January 21 – 27, 2002) So What Do We Do about Violence?

Abstract: *Three newcomers joined the forum this week: a retired engineer from France who does volunteer work at the Ecole de la paix, a former executive member of the Goethe institute from Germany and an agricultural economist working with the FAO in his home country of Honduras. The main topic of discussion this week centered on aggressiveness and violence. What are the roots of violence? How can we make humanity less violent? These were some of the questions posed by participants. The topic of terrorism was also on this week's agenda. The main problem raised concerned our ability to turn this horrific event into a call for peace. Finally, a participant addressed the issue of the relevance of conventions and treaties, concluding that there is an absolute need to make international agreements enforceable.*

Introductions from the School of Peace, from Germany, and Honduras

This week started with three introductions. Our first newcomer was a retired engineer. This 62-year-old volunteer at the Ecole de la Paix has a vast international experience in North America, Scandinavia, Central and Eastern Europe, and Russia, among other places. Personal and tragic family experiences during World War II have convinced him that it is not the forgetting that can break the sequence of "violence begets violence," but rather the integration of all memories in an educational method for peace, which includes among its methods the sharing of experiences. He has applied the method by participating in trips to Germany where meetings are organized between professors and students of junior high schools and former prisoners of concentration camps. With the Ecole de la Paix, he is involved in projects focusing on the development of the educational methods of peace and in outreaching programs for the search of new partners.

Our second new participant is from Germany. Sixty-eight years old, he is a former executive member of Goethe Institute. He took part in a workgroup on governance at the Peles/Sinaia European conference in June 2001 [of the Alliance for a Responsible, Plural and United World]. He is a member of Mehr Demokratie e.V. in Germany, of Network Direct Democracy in Europe (NDDIE) and of World Direct Democratic Movement (WDDM). His interests lie in the general area of democratization of the European Union and the its peaceful relations with the world.

The third and final newcomer is, at 53, the youngest. He writes to us from Tegucigalpa, in Honduras, where he works as an agricultural economist, more specifically as Officer of Operations and Programs in the Representation of the FAO [United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization]. He has worked most of his professional life in agencies of a public nature (governments, NGOs, and international organizations) and has been tied to the search for solutions to rural poverty. As a student in the United States in the 1960s, he participated actively in the peace movements against the Vietnam War. These turbulent times taught him an important lesson, namely that wars are not won, but that, in fact, it is peace that is to be won.

Aggressiveness Is Inherent in Human Beings, But Does Not Have to Lead to Violence

This week's debate centered mainly on the topic of human violence. Other topics included the future of terrorism and supranational conventions. The following is what transcribed from the discussion.

The eternal topic of violence is at the core of the peace/war predicament. Philosophers, statesmen and scientists have discussed it since the beginnings of civilization. It has already been a topic of discussion earlier in the forum. Our interpretation of humanity's violent streak lies in the biological, the cultural, and the religious spheres (the concept of original sin). The combination of all three elements points to the influence of our environment. This environment, regardless of the engines behind it, should be studied more carefully in order to find more practical solutions for reforming turbulent, troubled situations. This process starts by asking questions such as: Why does the United States have a much greater level of criminality than its European counterparts or Japan? A more difficult question might be: Are women really much less violent than men, and if so, why? Questions such as these—and there are countless others—point to longstanding mysteries that should be looked into very carefully. With the tools that we now possess, including those of the hard sciences and those of the social sciences, we should indeed be able to better our understanding in these matters.

Perhaps one way to start is to accept the fact that a certain amount of aggression is inherent in human beings. It even serves active life and development and does not lead to violence if it is regulated by our socialization. But apt socialization can only take place when children are brought up with the right amounts of challenge, security, and love. This socialization is difficult in a world of greed, competitiveness, envy, and fear, but the results are worth the immense efforts.

What does this mean in practical terms? The following is an example of the type of approach we could try to adopt:

- 1) Learn how to socialize our own selves, and never stop fine-tuning the results.
- 2) Try to educate our children in such a way that they will master their aggressiveness and become democratic citizens.
- 3) Shape the surrounding conditions: be active politically, participate in forming better institutions, care for social equalization, and make never-ending efforts for justice.

Terrorism: The Absolute Antithesis of Mutual Tolerance and Peace

Terrorism, of course, represents this leap from aggressiveness to indiscriminate violence. Often, as in the case of the September 11 events, its nature is nihilistic, nihilism being the absolute antithesis of a world built on mutual tolerance and peace. Such an act of violence should have no future. It is not carried by any other cause than nothingness and was only possible through the mental manipulation of a few men.

September 11, 2001 should become a lesson for all. Out of all the sadness and shock, perhaps a positive outcome can be found: a general sense of awareness, and a desire for greater solidarity around the world. In this sense, the horrific events may have provoked a strong call for peace around the world, but the events should not allow us to forget the basic moral principles upon which democracy and liberty were built. Excessive use of force and greater control over the freedom of individuals should not become the new norm as we try to prevent such acts as this one.

Enforcing International Conventions

For this reason, conventions, treaties or charters should bear greater weight than they do now by being put into practice. New ideas should also be tested such as the proposal for a World Parliament put forth at the World Assembly of Lille. Of course, a World Parliament is an idea that is just hatching at this point, and we must all unite our forces to push the idea through and make it a reality. In many ways, the future is in our hands. To be able to shape it, one must also understand the present, and the past.

Summary 8 (January 28 – February 1, 2002) Resisting against Violence's Becoming Commonplace

[Future "coffee breaks" will not be summarized. In this case, Arnaud Blin listened in on our informal coffee-break discussions and decided to sum them up for us. So we thank him from the bottom of our hearts for this extra work.]

Abstract: *Many participants chose to attend this first "coffee break" session. Many topics were discussed including how different types of inequalities are perceived, how short-term solutions to violent conflict differ from long term peace-building processes, and how human responsibility is a key element in our collective refusal to see violence destroy our hopes for peace.*

From Washington

Dear Forum friends, it is from Washington that I am writing this week's summary of events. It had been a few months since I was last in the United States, since September 11th, to be exact, when, by pure coincidence, I took the last transatlantic flight before the terrorist attacks. I must say that it is a very different country I encounter today than the one I left just a few months ago. Since we often talk about perceptions, the ones I have sensed here are very different from the ones I have seen in Europe, where I now live. The U.S. is still under shock and very much living through the nightmare of the attacks and their aftermath. War is very much the order of the day and there is much speculation about a possible attack against Iraq. As always, the political leadership is capitalizing on the event to enact those policies they sought to apply the day they stepped into the White House. This makes me think that all the talk we have had on the topic of governance is indeed of great relevance. Since this was our "coffee break" week, I thought I could take the (unusual) liberty to share these personal thoughts with all of you.

Informal Debate

Since making a summary of a coffee break is a somewhat unusual exercise, this week's summary will be a bit different, in effect reflecting the informal debate that took place and which allowed us to look back at the first phase of the forum. There were no introductions of new participants this time and the agenda was a very open one. Perhaps because we shall be moving on to a new topic next week a great many people were present for what actually became a very lively and interesting discussion on numerous issues, old and new. Since so many different ideas were thrown into the discussion, I will apologize in advance for not giving all of them the space they deserve but which is unfortunately lacking in this short summary page.

Topics Discussed

Aside from various specific announcements, a discussion on semantics (on war, terrorism and resistance), and short dialogues between participants, which we will not discuss here, there were significant contributions on some of the fundamental topics we have been discussing lately. One of those topics regards what many of us consider a major moral shortcoming of the contemporary scene, which was highlighted by September 11, namely the inequality of coverage of the world's miseries. While no one questions that the terrorist attacks deserve the coverage they got from the media and the attention from the politicians, it seems a bit baffling that other catastrophes, like the AIDS epidemic in Africa, or simply world hunger, get so little attention when they affect so many individuals. Everyday, 10 times as many children die of hunger as there were victims at the World Trade Center. But this harsh reality has

almost become banal and, for the media, showing the plight of these children does not produce the same ratings as the burning of the Twin Towers.

This incapacity to establish a clear hierarchy of urgency for current and future problems—which will always retain some measure of subjectivity—is truly one of the big concerns of many participants. But, as one participant suggested, in the end, violence is always unjust and each human life has the same value. That we find horrific that 3000 people died in a nihilistic act in New York does not mean that we do not care about 3000 people who may have died unjustly somewhere else in the world.

Another related issue concerns the gap many of us perceive exists between, on the one hand, the long process of building a strong positive peace, and on the other, the urgent needs of ending conflicts that are taking place today. How does one reconcile these two opposite problems? Indeed, short-term solutions to violent conflict often command the use of violence and force while true peace cannot be established with any kind of measure of violence. The U.S. response in Afghanistan is, in that matter, a case in point. And since violence begets violence, how does one in effect construct a real culture of peace? This particular problem is one many of us sense as being very difficult to solve. But as most of us seem to be optimists, we see the solution in a combination and multiplication of many different initiatives great and small which, in the end, add up to something tangible. To illustrate the point, I will list a few of the recommendations given by one participant.

- The establishment of a minimum of ethical values common to every culture
- The democratization of international relations
- The creation of international mechanisms to reduce economic inequalities
- The support to the establishment of systems of positive discrimination for the media and the educational systems that generate alternative visions, different from the one of the powers in place.
- The creation of an overall system of resolution of conflicts—New definition of development based on quality and not on quantity
- Deepening of the establishment of conditions that allow to recover and even to reinvent lifestyles from different cultures that in turn allow to *democratize culturally* the model initially based on Western rationalism.

Others had more specific suggestions, such as the quick development of an international legal infrastructure designed to deal with the type of situation we faced after Sept 11.

Peace, many of us agree, is in many ways a perpetual struggle. As someone suggested, the September attacks damaged more the movements that fight for justice and balance than those that it sought to damage symbolically (the international stock market, American military power). That the attacks pleased so many people on the planet is a clear sign this kind of nihilistic senseless madness can take root and be perceived as a means to find solutions to some of today's problems. This horrific perspective defies reason, which a majority of us think is the path to solving the complex problems we have identified. Abandoning reason seems in many ways like a collective way to give up and, ultimately, to commit suicide. A first step, therefore, is to assume responsibility for resisting this approach. This responsibility concerns all the citizens who not only must resist the kind of violence perpetrated in New York but also question the inadequate responses of their governments to that violence. As one participant cleverly suggested, playing on the famous words of a Mexican song ("life is worth nothing"): "nothingness is not worth life." Making humankind understand this fundamental concept may be the challenge for the future.

Summary 9 (February 4 – 10, 2002) **Sustainable Development, Survival of the Planet, and Lasting Peace**

Abstract: *We are now launching the debate on "Humanity and the Biosphere." Starting at the beginning of last week, and until midnight (GMT) on February 24, we will discuss the following question: What does the way in which we humans relate to our biosphere have to do with building lasting peace? Three newcomers have manifested themselves including, at 82 years of age, the new "elder" of the forum. They are writing to us from Mexico, The United States, and Spain. The debate looks at two related topics, sustainable development and the survival of the planet, and how they are intimately linked to peace. Is it realistic to think that we may become collectively aware of our role in preserving the planet? This is one of the key questions addressed this week. In fact, individual, socially responsible action, NGOs, and civil society may have a greater role to play in fostering environmental awareness and a sustainable future*

than governments, which, without grassroots pressure, will apply their own agenda: fighting for control over natural resources.

New Topic, New Questions: Does Our Individual Action Make Any Difference?

This past week launched the official discussion on humanity and the biosphere. Until midnight (GMT) on February 24, we shall discuss the following question:

What does the way in which we humans relate to our biosphere have to do with building lasting peace?

To be a bit more specific, we can start asking ourselves such questions as:

- Is sustainable development truly related to peace, and in which way?
- Is sustainable development realistic? Are there any real signs that we are heading in that direction, or in the balance, is non-sustainable development simply irreversible?
- How can individuals contribute, on a daily basis, by their attitude, to sustainable development and to the resolution of the world's imbalances? For instance, does saving energy, water, and other non-renewable resources individually really make any difference?
- Is it realistic to believe that high-consumption lifestyles in the rich countries will change, and that their societies will be able to live with less heat, less light, less water, less comfort, less fuel?
- Are there any measurable signs that environmental education is becoming part of education in any significant way?
- The biosphere is an organic system of which we are all a part. Is the awakening of a "planetary awareness" really a path toward building peace?
- The earth cannot generate "new matter" or exchange matter with matter outside of it. This means we have to keep recycling what we have. Why, then, is it so difficult to make countries adopt veritable recycling policies?
- How can economic exigencies be conciliated with environmental conservation?
- What is the link between conflicts, research, and the control of energy sources and distribution in the world? Is there an energy war?

New Introductions from Participants in Europe and America

As we enter a new phase in the discussion, new faces have appeared in the crowd. We will start the new introductions with the new "elder" of the forum. At 82 years, this Mexican gentleman has a long international experience to share with all of us. Born shortly after the end of World War I, he studied economics in London before working for the World Bank, the public-service sector in Mexico, and for the Economic Commission for Latin America, after which he devoted his time to research and teaching in the field of economics and social development. An active member of the Club of Rome, collaborating with its Mexican chapter, and a professor emeritus of The Colegio de Mexico, he is currently studying the complexities of sustainable and fair development, in the global, regional, national, and local-urban areas, with special attention to environmental policies. Having witnessed most of the turbulent twentieth century, he is nevertheless very interested in the future of humankind and of the planet.

Our second newcomer is also from North America, but from the colder climes of Wisconsin. At 58, he is a bit younger but also has garnered a vast professional experience, as a carpenter, mechanic, farmer, and family counselor. Going back to one of the founding texts of Western Civilization, Plato's *Republic*, he suggests looking at the central concept of virtue, as understood by Plato, through the voice of Socrates, as an ideal which might help us understand the essence of peace and the manner in which to implement it. Plato used the concept of virtue as a means to understand justice (the main theme of his book). Perhaps is it also at the heart of the war/peace conundrum. Is virtue relevant today? Could we implement peace without virtue? Those are questions we must ask ourselves today and attempt to answer.

Still younger at 43, our third new participant is from Barcelona, Spain. After working as a business executive and collaborating with NGOs, she decided three years ago to reorient her career toward social work, mediation, and conflict resolution, an area in which she is now getting a post-graduate degree. Very eager to learn more about peace culture, she has participated in seminars with a peace foundation. She sees the building of a peace culture as along process that must begin with the education of future generations.

Debate: The Realities of Living on an Orbital Station ...

The debate this week started with the assumption that sustainable development—development that does not compromise the future of the Planet—is a condition of peace, in the same manner that other forms of individual and collective mutual respect are a condition of peace.

Sustainable development is a condition of survival for our planet. We could say that, in this light, our planet is the *orbital station* of our star, the sun.

Individual and Collective Action Makes a Difference ...

In the industrially developed world, every citizen has to be actively involved in saving energy. And the attitude of the citizens influences the attitude of the leaders. Should we not strive to establish a global survival strategy linked with growth? In this way, economic growth would function in a manner that would benefit the disadvantaged regions rather than continue to over-equip the industrially developed world. At the current pace, consumption levels of the developed world applied globally would quickly suffocate the planet (let us imagine China or India using Western energy consumption levels per capita). Though it may seem trivial, individual action on a global scale to save water, to sort out recyclable waste, to avoid overconsumption, and to contribute to sustainable development would lead to real changes if everyone of us applied these principles or commandments.

Such grassroots collective action would undoubtedly influence political leaders, who may then be keener to respect international agreements such as those of the Kyoto Protocol, designed to check the greenhouse-gas emissions that are producing the global climate change that is presently endangering the whole planet. In effect, this would amount to a global awareness of human responsibility in the area of sustainable growth and survival of the planet. This awareness brings us back to an earlier point made about the need to educate, particularly the future generations.

... Or Does It?

But are such appeals realistic? Since wars are often violent competitions for resources, and since the demand for natural resources is ever greater while supplies are dwindling, we may have reason for pessimism. Will we only learn our lessons after some cataclysmic conflict? Or will we be able to control this fight for resources? While governments seem, at this point, ineffectual in grasping this fundamental problem of our age, the actions of individuals and nongovernmental organizations may be our only hope. To enact changes at this level, information and communication are the keys to success. On a practical level, one could work actively by speaking, writing, belonging to or supporting NGOs, collecting signatures, demonstrating in a peaceful way.

The role of civil society, which seems to have been “reborn” with the transition to democracy of former European Communist states after 1991, is now considered by many experts to be the prerequisite to democratization and progress. As such, civil society is now deemed to become the major social force for the twenty-first century. Its role in preserving the environment will be crucial in the future.

Summary 10 (February 11 – 17, 2002) Peace Is Definitely Related to the Future of the Environment, but What Can We Do about It?

Abstract: *Our sole newcomer this week is a hydraulic engineer. His introduction is timely as water is one of the topics discussed this week. Thought of by many as a source of war, water can act as a force for peace. Like other energy sources, such as solar energy, water is environment friendly. It is part of our future, just as non-renewable resources such as oil, gas and coal should be part of our past. We are all gradually acknowledging that our future, including the future of peace, is linked to the manner in which we manage to protect our environment. This can be done on several levels, macro and micro, global and local. Will this future integrate technological progress, in its positive and negative forms, or should it be conceived as a return to a simpler past where humankind was in greater harmony with its natural environment? These questions and more were raised this week in the debate and through a personal testimony.*

This week's summary of our second discussion—on humankind, the biosphere, and peace—features one introduction, debate, and a personal testimony.

Water Is as Much a Peace Factor As a War Factor

Our sole newcomer of the week is a sixty-year-old engineer who specializes in large hydraulic projects. He has traveled all over the world and his vast international experience in hydraulic engineering has given him a rather optimistic outlook on the importance of water for humankind. He suggests that if water has recently been a hot topic among international relations specialists, who have focused on its role as a source of conflict, there may be more than meets the eye. Indeed, water might be just as much a force for peace as a trigger for war. In other words, it depends on how you look at the (very big) cup . half empty or half full.

Civil Society Must Become a Guardian of Nature

The debate this week centers mainly on the relationship between peace and sustainable development, and on our need for new sources of energy to replace older costly and destructive sources. Somehow the destruction of the environment should be given an economic cost. The environment should be thought of as a global commodity. Therefore, not one industry or one country holds the rights to benefit from the destruction of any part of the environment. Going a step further, one could say that sustainable development will be possible only in an environment safe from humankind's aggressive behavior. Using the example of Africa, one could see how conflicts might be caused by the exportation of waste by industrial nations to Africa. This means that sustainable development is a global effort. In this instance, the industrialized nations should help other countries in Africa, or elsewhere, to safeguard their environment for sustainable development. While governments have an important role to play, it is also civil society that must come forth as a guardian of nature. Peace is therefore tied to the environment, and vice versa (as we have seen recently in the Great Lakes region of Africa). To look at both elements separately, as we have done until very recently, would be to miss the global picture.

One of the ideas put forth by several participants this week is related to the fact that one should exploit rather than fight forces, such as those produced by globalization, to generate progress in the area of environmental protection. Someone appropriately used the metaphor of martial arts, such as Jujitsu or Aikido, which exploit an opponent's strength to one's own advantage. For in the end, ecology is one of the main hopes for peace for our planet. In order to be progressive, ecology must integrate technical, scientific and industrial progress. The future of ecology does not lie in the return of an imaginary golden age of the past that may have been a figment of our imagination and certainly would be impossible to go back to. Let us imagine one moment how much most of us would fare without electricity, or, for that matter, the Internet.

One of the main problems today regards the types of energy we have used since the industrial revolution. In their great majority, these sources of energy, like coal, natural gas, or petroleum oil, are non-renewable. We should therefore look at other sources. Solar power is such a source, although many of us are unfamiliar with its technology. Water is another such source and it has largely been overlooked.

Of course, providing water, including drinking water, on a global scale is expensive. The World Bank estimates that 850 billion USD would be the cost of water for all. At the conference of The Hague (March 2000), the World Water Council estimated that in order to give drinking water to the whole planet, we would have to spend an (infrastructure) investments cost of 4,500 billion USD until 2025, that is to say 180 billion USD per year (30 USD per capita). These are big numbers. But they are still relative. They are dwarfed by global annual defense spending, which hovers around 2,000 billion USD. The U.S. defense budget requested by George W. Bush a couple of weeks ago is close to a staggering 380 billion USD! In short, the will to change is as important as the means applied in order to enact these changes.

We Can Build Peace through the Way We Live Our Daily Lives

One participant decided to offer a personal testimony about building peace in our daily lives. This testimony does not exactly illustrate the points made above. In certain ways, it is a negative counterpoint to the idea that we must look ahead toward progress in a positive way while integrating the current evolution, good or bad, of the world. Certainly, to some it will evoke this return to a golden past discussed earlier. This particular approach starts with a global critique of the current state of the world. While some of us probably do not agree with the extent of this critique, it nevertheless reiterates many of

the points debated so far in this forum. The overall message given by the author of the testimony, however, is positive. It suggests that peace is possible and that we can build it in our daily life, at a micro level. It also shows that there are many different approaches to dealing with the question of environment and peace, and many levels of analysis.

I will attempt now the task of summarizing this account. For fear of misinterpreting the message, I invite you to check the original text at:

http://www.alliance21.org/forums/d_read/pax/actions/Ranque.htm.

Nearly a decade ago, this couple decided, by means of a spiritual walk, to exert a critique of their lives and their environment, and this led them to conquer hidden truths. The world they saw around them seemed ugly and full of hypocrisy and corruption. But they also discovered that another world was being built. It was a world of universal conscience, of solidarity, dignity, integrity, justice, dialogue, freedom, and simplicity. This discovery led them to believe that in order to build peace, they needed to live in a synergetic way, united in mind with humankind. With their children, they decided to build a life of self-sufficiency, in terms of work (agriculture), food, education, and leisure. Still dependent on cars, electricity, computers, they continue to strive towards moving away from this dependency and towards a simpler way of life. Active in work, with farmers and in politics, their action is primarily local. This approach, in their minds, is a stepping-stone toward the resolution of the global problems discussed above.

A Safe Environment Requires Cleaning up the Government

Another participant forwarded an interesting account of the connection between political corruption and environmental pollution. This account, which takes place in a country beleaguered of late with problems, Argentina, might interest many of you. It is an unfortunately not uncommon case in which a factory producing toxic waste leading to serious health hazards, disease, and even deaths, has managed to ignore orders to shut down thanks to privileged and corrupt connections with local authorities. This both shows how governance, the environment, social well-being, and peace are intimately related, and underscores the complex battle that lies ahead in that area. Since it is difficult to summarize, I will again suggest you look directly at this account at:

<http://www.alliance21.org/forums/arc/pax/2002-02/msg00020.html>.

This week's contributions have highlighted that our struggle for peace appears to lie both in how we live our daily lives, and how prepared we are to support political action that will put an end to political abuse and dangerous policies at different levels: micro, local, national, regional, and global.

Summary 11 (February 18 – 22, 2002) Environmental Awareness Is a Way to Building Peace

Abstract: *This was the last week of discussion on Humankind, the Biosphere and Peace. Three newcomers joined the forum, from Mexico, Paraguay and Belgium. The debate starts with the negative role of politicians in environmental policies and the need to empower simple citizens. Education is once again at the center of this debate. A fundamental question was put to the forum: Is the awakening of a planetary awareness really a path toward building peace? Yes? No? Opinions varied although it was agreed that planetary awareness and sustainable development are fundamental parts of our future. Finally, one participant linked the first two topics of discussion of the forum by sharing with us how she gained a greater sense of environmental awareness through the September 11 events.*

This past week was the last week of our debate on "Humankind, the Biosphere, and Peace." This week is devoted to our "coffee break" before we move on to the next phase of the forum. The new discussion will be focusing on **Socioeconomy of Solidarity and Peace**.

The Question Returns: Do Some Contexts Justify the Use of Violence as a Means to Building Peace?

This week witnessed a round of three interesting introductions, this time from Latin America and Europe. Writing from Mexico was a 59-year-old industrial chemical engineer with an academic background and a long and varied experience working in the areas of petroleum chemistry, rural electrifica-

tion, and training in human resources. Much traveled and having studied Economic and Social development in Paris, Sinology in China, and Islam in Saudi Arabia, he has been involved with peace organizations and has served as International Peace Secretary for SERVAS International, an NGO that promotes understanding among people of different cultures through person-to-person contacts. Also a prolific writer, he is currently working on two projects: "Modernization in China" and "The structure of the World Power."

From Paraguay, our second newcomer is a farmer who has also acquired a rich life experience. Born in Caacupé 68 years ago in a family of landless farmers, this father of 12 children started as a seminary student before becoming a metallurgist union militant in Argentina and a leader of the organization Ligas Agrarias Cristianas [Agrarian Christian Leagues] in the 70s and 80s in Paraguay. In backdrop of the Stroessner dictatorship, these activities led him to be jailed for three years where he courageously led three successive hunger strikes. After eleven years in exile, he is now active in a rural organization where he specializes in popular education and health. A lover of peace, he nevertheless believes that a context of institutionalized injustice and legalized inequality is one inhabited by war. In order to break open the repressive system, he believes the oppressed must sometimes resort to arms, the only manner in which to begin the peace process.

→ We feel that this question should be discussed further, and shall not fail to bring it up again in May, when we shall be dealing with "Education, Art, Culture, and Values" as related to building a culture of peace.

The third new participant was born 27 years ago in Belgium but has lived and traveled abroad. A mechanical engineer by training who also studied environmental policies and management, she is currently working in the area of environment, focusing on climate change policy. She works with a private consultancy in the UK, dealing both with the public sectors, the governments of Europe, and the private sector. She also served as a volunteer with the international civil service (in Belgium) on projects relating to peace building. She is proud to be driven by her ideal vision of *a world where human beings will have the space to give the best out of themselves*.

Our Shared Planetary Consciousness May Be Our Hope for the Future

This week's debate starts with the role of politics in their relationship with environmental policy. We thoroughly discussed the fundamental flaws of politicians during the first phase of the forum. These flaws are nowhere more apparent than in the area of environmental consciousness. Since politicians will always be politicians, it is therefore with the citizen that the health of the planet resides. But simple citizens are too often isolated and they get access to information through politicians and the media, another group with many shortcomings. In this context, awareness must come from other citizens who have gained a certain level of knowledge and who have a duty to educate their brethren. Education and advocacy can have an effect on public and private decisions, locally as well as internationally. With an educated public, those empowered with the protection of the environment will be more careful to do their work correctly. The future of the planet resides in a bottom-up process, not the reverse. It is the actions of individuals that can help bring about change.

Is the awakening of a planetary awareness really a path toward building peace? That is one of the questions put to the forum this week. For some, the answer is an enthusiastic yes. Each of us do our bit in provoking a revolution of consciousness, a revolution that might indicate that humanity may be about taking a great evolutionary leap forward. Each of us longs in the end for universal peace. Having realized this common goal, our shared planetary consciousness is joining us all together. This collective consciousness is our great hope for the future of humanity and the biosphere.

It Should at Least Produce More Fairness and Less Reasons for Conflict

Through scientific models, we arrive at a similar conclusion. Applying general systems and chaos theory, and watching the dynamics and evolution of complex systems in states and conditions that are far from equilibrium (including, of course, the biosphere and humankind), we will observe that a system will continuously adapt itself to the destabilizing stresses it encounters along the way.

For others, even if sustainable development were fully embraced as a goal by the entire world, it would not eliminate the causes of war. What it might achieve is a greater degree of fairness in access to basic resources for a decent life, which is an important end in itself and might reduce certain frictions that can translate into conflict. It could also lead to a greater respect for the natural world, on which we all depend for survival.

The gaining of a greater awareness can affect each of us, and can be triggered by an infinite number of events. One participant tells how the September 11 events, which she witnessed first hand, made her realize how important her own work was in the context of the terrorist attacks. Working with the U.N. on bringing non-polluting technologies to poorer countries that have no access to electricity, or to fuels other than firewood and agricultural wastes, and having participated on projects promoting alternative energy sources, she realized the importance of these issues in today's political context. For instance, one can ask how much U.S. involvement in the Persian Gulf is directly related to its dependence on imported oil to fuel its economy? In this light, the work promoting alternative energy sources seems as important as ever, in terms of promoting both peace and environmental protection.

And Can Always Be Translated into Some Form of Action

Last week, we focused on the fact that one should think globally and act locally. This same participant is illustrating this point. Involved in the rebuilding of lower Manhattan, she would like the new site which will replace the fallen towers to show how the awareness of the United States and its commitment to sustainable development concepts: reducing wasteful consumption of resources, showing that new ideas and renewable energy technologies can provide comfort in zero-emissions buildings, and providing a model for planning livable cities based on participatory processes.

Many questions were asked at the beginning of this debate. Some of these initiatives do provide a concrete answer to some of the issues raised.

Summary 12 (February 23 – 24, 2002) A Holistic Vision of Sustainable Development

Abstract: *Three introductions from India, Spain and Brazil. There was again a general consensus among the participants that our (humankind's) global approach to sustainable development must be strongly altered, if not revolutionized. As a species, we have become out-of-synch with our environment. Several contributors pointed to the fact that sustainable development can only be thought of in a holistic manner. Fixing the economy and global inequities, for example is not sufficient, even if we seriously started protecting the environment. Sustainable development should be thought of as an integral concept. It is not just based on economic and social development with a sensitivity to environmental protection. It must face the problems and setbacks of the human condition. Above all, it must integrate the challenges raised by a new type of governance. A political process of strong will is what will establish new conditions for a dramatic modification of International relations. A long lasting and global peace will not be possible without a more equitable distribution of wealth worldwide. We end this summary with a quote from Ervin Laszlo.*

For this second part of the summary of our third and final week's debate on Humanity, the Biosphere, and Peace, you will find a summary of three introductions and the continuation of the debate discussed in the first part of the week's summary. The themes discussed here complement the first part of the week's debate with a few overlaps.

A Full-time Eco-activist, a University Student, and a Human Rights Lawyer

From India, one of the new participants is a full-time eco-activist working on urban environmental issues with a special focus on water pollution. For eight years, he has been involved in the ecological health restoration of the river Ganges in India. Another participant introducing himself this week is a young university student from Spain who has studied both zoology and telecommunication engineering. He has been very active in international student meetings. Finally, writing to us from Rio, in Brazil, is a lawyer and human rights activist.

With Proper Information, We Can All Become Environment-friendly Consumers

There was again a general consensus among the participants that our (humankind's) global approach to sustainable development must be strongly altered, if not revolutionized. Obviously, this revolution must first come from a growing awareness that there are many things in the world today that must be changed. The skewed relationship between the North and South is one of those problems, often pointed out, that not only affect everyone economically but also contribute to the deterioration of the environment and to potential conflicts. An example of this is the manner in which industrialized countries manufacture products in developing countries, which allows companies to escape paying for the costs of environmental clean-up. Deteriorating the neighbor's back yard seems to be a tolerable thing these days, even when one combines it with an official rhetoric on the preservation of the environment. In these matters, hypocrisy runs high. Also, one can see that sustainable development in the South is tied to control of demographics while in the North, it is linked to an overgrowth of consumerism. Thus, while a global approach is needed, it must be tailored to fit a variety of situations.

Education, at the individual and collective levels, is a crucial element of the equation. For my part, I learned this week that my inkjet printer consumes only ten percent of the electricity of a laser printer. You may rightly say that this is "small potatoes" on a global scale. But this knowledge will certainly guide my choice when I purchase a new printer. There are probably thousands of bits of information like this that could make us more environment-friendly consumers. One contributor described technologies for the desalinization of water. Another mentioned wind energy. In terms of our daily lives, our motor vehicles are certainly a big contribution to the deterioration of the environment. A participant described the situation, both comical and pathetic, of a person driving several miles to the fitness center to ride a stationary bicycle for half an hour. Having personally witnessed this scene on a quasi daily basis, I must admit that I came to forget how ridiculous this must seem to a majority of people.

This situation illustrates how we, as a species, have become out-of-synch with our natural environment. One participant told of how envisioning humans as one among many species provides us with a much different, perhaps clearer, view of ourselves. This is one way to look at things from a different angle. Several contributors pointed to the fact that sustainable development can only be thought of in a holistic manner. Fixing the economy and global inequities, for example, is not sufficient, even if we seriously started protecting the environment.

Is Negative Growth the Solution? No

Sustainable development is an integral concept. It is not only based on economic and social development with a sensitivity to environmental protection. Certainly, it takes into account environmental problems and calls into question the whole economic system as we know it today. But sustainable development must also face the problems and setbacks of the human condition. Above all, it must integrate the challenges raised by a new type of governance. On this latter point, we should be aware of the fact that sustainable development will also be a political process of strong will, which will establish new conditions for a dramatic modification of International relations. The Kyoto Protocol was mentioned several times in the discussion, as was the International Penal Tribunal. These types of international and trans-national initiatives—all too often beleaguered by strong opposition from states, including powerful states—need to grow, multiply, and work in coordination with one another. Only then will sustainable development, and the prospects for a positive peace, be a real possibility for future generations, and not just wishful thinking.

On the question relating to the relationship between sustainable development and peace, one participant echoed a feeling that many have expressed in one way or another during the past weeks, namely that long-lasting and global peace will not be possible without a more equitable distribution of wealth worldwide. This widely shared opinion is based on the premise that non-sustainable development always benefits a few at the expense of a vast number of others. Is negative growth the solution? While some people have forwarded this idea, one participant suggests, this solution is unfeasible in the real world, where history cannot move backward.

Our Body is Part of the Biosphere and Our Mind is Part of Our Body

To end this part of the debate, I propose that we read a quote from Ervin Laszlo, philosopher and president of the Club of Budapest, which is taken from his latest book and which, even though he is not a member of this forum, he sent to us for our consideration. I find that it illustrates this issue well:

"The universe is a seamless whole, evolving over eons of cosmic time and producing conditions where life, and then mind, can emerge. Life is an intimate web of relations that evolves in its own right, interfacing and integrating its myriad diverse elements. The biosphere is born within the womb of the

universe, and mind and consciousness are born in the womb of the biosphere. Nothing is independent of any other thing. Our body is part of the biosphere, and it resonates with the web of life on this planet. Our mind is part of our body, and it is in touch with other minds as well as with the biosphere.”

Summary 13 (March 6 – 17, 2002)

Economic Solidarity and Fair Trade Are Realistic Instruments for Building Lasting Peace

Abstract: *This is the first summary of the debate on the “Socioeconomy of Solidarity and Peace.” We started with a few questions and two new presentations. The debate points to one of the great problems of our time: justice, most notably justice as fairness. In the present economic context, fair trade is a notion that needs to be encouraged and developed. Is the socioeconomy of solidarity an alternative to liberal and neo-liberal conceptions of the economy? Perhaps, if one starts with the premise that one cannot achieve sustainable peace in a society where most people are living in poverty or in the anguish of living in poverty in the near future. Protectionism is back in the news. It has repeatedly shown to be conducive to trade war and worse. In this context, there is a need to develop regulatory organizations like the WTO.*

We Are Discussing This Theme until March 24

This week’s summary delves into the second formal theme of the forum. After “Humanity and the Biosphere,” we are now tackling the issue of the socioeconomy of solidarity and peace. Due to the small number of responses this issue commanded in the first of this three-week debate, we decided to make only one summary for the first two weeks of the debate. (As a reminder, we will be debating the question of “What is a socioeconomy of solidarity and what does it have to do with building peace?” until Sunday, March 24, midnight GMT.)

The debate was launched with several questions, including the following:

- * How, exactly, are the dominant global economic system and world peace related? Is peace dependent on reducing inequalities at every level and on a more equitable economic system?
- * What is a “socioeconomy of solidarity”? Are there really alternatives to the prevailing economic model? What are they? What makes us so sure that they can prevail over violent conflict?
- * What are the different things an ordinary person can do to foster a socioeconomy of solidarity?
- * What role do the multinational oil companies play in the world and what is their responsibility in the present conflicts?
- * Is terrorism directly related to poverty?
- * How is the current international financial system related to global violence?
- * How was “the external debt” generated? Should, or could it be cancelled or rescheduled for some countries?
- * Do women have a particular role to play in local development?
- * What is the best way to deal with mass clandestine “economic” immigration?
- * Are the free market and democracy really compatible?

Two People Who Worked with the Alliance’s Socioeconomy of Solidarity Workshop

Two participants chose to introduce themselves this week. One of the new participants is from Mexico. She has a thirty years’ experience working with organizations and Indigenous People of Mexico, a vast experience that has given her a deep knowledge and understanding of the Indian people, of their values. Alongside them, she has witnessed the rescue of their culture and shared their vision for new life alternatives in the contemporary world. Recently, she participated in the Socioeconomy of Solidarity workshop of the Alliance for a Responsible, Plural and United World. The second new participant has also worked closely with the Alliance, including the Socioeconomy of Solidarity workshop. From the United States and France, he has a multidisciplinary background in the social sciences and development studies. He is interested in international cooperation and in understanding how our daily lifestyles influence the environment and social relations.

The “Hidden Hand” of Bad Governments Is an Instrument of Inequality

This timely debate on the socioeconomy of solidarity, which coincides chronologically with the European economic summit of Barcelona, and with the accompanying anti-globalization demonstrations, goes to the root of the one of the greatest challenges of the twenty-first century. If one considers that the twentieth century saw the rise and fall of the great totalitarian states and their battle against democracy, that it witnessed the end of the colonial empires, the last of which, the USSR, disappeared only ten years ago, one may consider that the twenty-first century will face economic challenges as great as the political struggles of the preceding century. While total war may be a thing of the past, and while democracy is progressing steadily, economic justice is far from being accomplished. In these conditions, building a lasting peace will be all the more difficult, even if the great political battles between powerful states are over for now. In what probably constitutes the greatest work of political philosophy of the twentieth century, "A Theory of Justice," the American political theorist John Rawls (1921-) explored the ethical ramifications of injustice and justice (understood as fairness). Since this landmark book was published thirty years ago, noted thinkers like Nobel laureate Amartya Sen have tried to decipher the economic "laws" that might lead to a fairer economic outlook for humankind. The concept of a "socioeconomy of solidarity" forms an integral part of the will to resolve a problem that affects the greater part of humanity.

One of the participants defined the socioeconomy of solidarity as a new conception of exchanges in which economy is not separated from society and culture anymore and works on daily socioeconomic relations. As such, it is related to Peace and sustainability. Someone else envisioned the socioeconomy of solidarity as an alternative to liberal and neo-liberal conceptions of the economy on the premise that one cannot achieve sustainable peace in a society where most people are living in poverty or in the anguish of living in poverty in the near future, knowing that the forces of the market alone are conducive to widening the gap between rich and poor. But while market forces follow the erratic laws of the invisible hand, the "hidden hand" of bad governments is also, most notably in countries of the South, an instrument that promotes inequality. Corruption and nepotism, which touch many governments these days, regardless of their ideology makeup, constitute a scourge that needs to be eradicated. On that level, solidarity begins with the will of some governments to put pressure on others to clean their act. Institutionalized theft and dishonesty are a perverse way to conduct insidious business in a legal manner. Tax havens, while perfectly legal, have as negative an impact as illegal and criminal economic activities. International pressure should be exerted to look at these with more scrutiny.

Liberal Globalization Advocates Will Use Protectionism When Convenient

But are countries of the North really up to the task of showing the way by good example? While the United States has become the negative symbol of globalization, it is currently rearing its ugly protectionist head to defend its steel industry. As we know, history has shown on many occasions how protectionism leads to trade wars which sometime degenerate into armed conflict. On the other hand, the steel challenge today recalls that others have dared to make different choices. This was the case with the setting of a "community" of interests putting the coal and steel industries of two countries, France and Germany, under a unique authority. These industries had played a determining role in the race toward the war and then in the two last world wars. It was the system wished by the French declaration of May 9, 1950, that ultimately led to the construction of the European Union, and the now familiar Euro. The steel example shows us that there are different ways of dealing with problems. Narrow nationalism and protectionism rarely bring about peace and prosperity. Solidarity and cooperation not only prevent violent conflict but they also promote prosperity and a more equitable distribution of profit. It is in this direction that we must go. Europe and Latin America have shown the way. Now perhaps is the time to move from regional cooperation to international cooperation. Indeed, one measures better, here, the utility of the World Trade Organization meant to be an encouragement to the development of world trade more than an institution promoting a doctrinaire liberalism.

"Fair Trade" Breaks with the Macroeconomic Approach

But trade should also be fair trade, one in which the aim is to pay to the producer a *fair price* for his work. Fair trade weighs little in front of the prevailing system and it is constant readjustments that are needed and are only possible through concerted international action. Fair trade is a key element of an "economy of Solidarity." Fair trade has been designed to remedy the fall in raw materials prices especially touching southern countries. The policies such as (state to state) public aid as well as the mechanisms aiming at offsetting the fall in the prices of raw materials and the price fluctuations on the

global market proven to be insufficient. Fair trade is an alternative trade that breaks with the macro-economic approach in order to act at the *individual level*, establishing a direct relation between the producer and the consumer. Fair trade guarantees a “fair price” to the producer and the purchasers, which leads eventually to the reduction of intermediary actors between producers and consumers.

These examples show that changes are indeed possible at many different levels that can bring greater solidarity in the international economy. In general these initiatives, big and small, have fostered peace rather than conflict. They give us hope that movement in this direction is possible.

Summary 14 (March 18 – 24, 2002) Is International Trade a Viable Agent of Peace?

Abstract: *The question of whether or not international trade is a viable agent of peace served as the main theme for this week’s forum discussion. In general, forum participants agreed that international trade does have the potential to promote peace; however, many also agreed that much progress is needed for this to be widely applicable as an accurate statement. In order for this progress to be made, a balance between effective economic policy and ethical trade practices needs to be attained. A harmonious balance must also be established between the differing economic needs and cultural value systems of all countries within the international trade network. Also lightly touched upon were the issues of oil companies’ relationship to international conflict, the possible connection between terrorism and poverty, and clandestine immigration.*

A New Introduction from Cuba

This week’s forum welcomed one new participant to the discussion. Joining us this week was a woman from Cuba who has more than 15 years of experience in the educational and investigative work in the Polytechnic University and in the University of La Havana. She has worked directly with student, union and feminine organizations, addressing political economy and international economy issues. In 2001 she participated in the Pole Socioeconomy of Solidarity in the “Woman and Economy” workshop in La Havana, in the workshop “Job and Employment” in Brazil and in the Event of Scotland.

International Trade Can Promote Peace... If It Is Fair

International trade inherently possesses the potential to encourage peace because it promotes communication among governing leaders. Increased communication generally tends to improve international relations as leaders become more familiar with the needs of each other’s countries. To take advantage of this intrinsically beneficial effect, international trade can be even more effective as an agent of peace if it adheres to the rules of fairness, transparency, and mutual respect. To achieve maximum benefits, a country’s international trade goals should reflect the social and economic needs of that country. The necessity of this last point was stressed numerous times during this week’s discussion. Strong concern surfaced regarding the detrimental effects on developing countries when international trade is forced on their economies, especially when little regard is taken for their specific fiscal and cultural circumstances. Moreover, global trade should not be used as a means to reach economic gains at the sacrifice of ethics. Obviously, improper implementation of international trade defeats its innately beneficial nature.

While much has been said both for and against liberalism and democracy in the last few years, as the end of the cold war was hailed in the West as a victory for liberal democracies, there may be doubts as to whether or not the free market and democracy really exist. Based on these premises, one may thus ask whether or not the development of a purer democracy and the establishment of a true free market system might be beneficial to humankind and to peace. Thus put, the crux of the problem is not that a market economy is bad, but that when a market economy is imperfect—and hypocritical -it is destructive, meaning that more efforts should be made to develop the market mechanisms, rather than trying to eliminate them. This argument corroborates what one participant suggested last week about the need to re-enforce institutions such as the World Trade Organization.

Fair Trade Will Never Be Accomplished without the Involvement of Individual Consumers

Some participants, though, question the genuine ability of fair trade practices to truly promote peace. Admittedly, where they have been established, fair and balanced trade relations have proven to encourage peace and long-term financial stability. However, for some, the extensiveness of this type of trade network leaves much to be desired. Fair and balanced trade relations have, for the most part, been successfully cultivated among developed countries. Contrarily, this type of network runs thin between developed and developing countries. Moreover, the network of fair and balanced trade that does exist constitutes a comparatively small percentage (0.0001 %) of world trade overall. The enormity of illegitimate international trade, that of drugs, weapons, and humans, undermines the ongoing struggle to improve and expand fair and balanced trade. Additionally, for many, the full potential of fair trade will never be accomplished until individual consumers attain an awareness of their role in promoting fair trade practices. For example, the idea of accurate pricing was again mentioned this week.

Another commonly lamented thorn in the side of progress towards global peace is the ever-present inequality of wealth and power. Some participants narrowed down the playing field to two global economic systems. There is the "modern one," currently economically prosperous and culturally imposing. This modern system uses the value systems and the legal concepts of the North. There is the "non-modern one," which is economically failing and culturally dominated. The differences between these two economic systems in value and belief structures sometimes create friction. A fair structure for addressing this friction presents a difficult goal to attain because a mutual agreement concerning the concept and legitimacy of law seems allusive. Policy makers should be cautious not to over-implement the ideas of the North, thus strengthening the friction, yet they should also recognize the ways in which the North's successes can be drawn on to foster socioeconomic solidarity. For example, the use of modern information and communication technology to increase alternative information flows might be an effective method for creating awareness of differing cultural systems and economic needs.

And Something Has to Change In the Balance of Powers between Governments and the People They Govern

The question then comes to surface of who and how? Who should be responsible for creating and enforcing international trade practices? How should these practices be implemented, and how do we develop a socioeconomy of solidarity? Some question the actual benefit of transnational actors. A suggestion was made that non-governmental organizations should play a larger role. The idea that the establishment of an international legal system to enforce ethical business and trade practices merits consideration. Others also addressed the necessity of a balance of powers between governing bodies and the people they govern to facilitate the achievement of social transformation.

Summary 15 (March 25 – 31, 2002) The Theory and Practice of a Socioeconomy of Solidarity

Abstract: *This week's extended debate was in itself extensive. The discussion involved several exchanges among participants and a good mix of theoretical thinking on the one hand, and practical ideas on the other. The general critique of the current state of economics pointed to a great void in our ability to resolve the problem of poverty. Finding a manner by which to build a socioeconomy of solidarity seemed to be on everyone's minds. While some argued about its necessity, others illustrated this by providing practical ways by which to start constructing this type of framework. A couple participants shared with us their experiences in Africa and Mexico, showing that a climate of economic fairness and social tolerance in so-called traditional societies is built out of the most basic social relationship, that existing in the household, then going up in increasingly complex forms to the extended family, the village, and the nation. The role of women, and their ability to create a communal sense of solidarity and peaceful relations also came up.*

Debate Extended by One Week

To reiterate a point made earlier by the Forum Coordination, we decided to extend by one week the debate on the socioeconomy of solidarity and peace. In effect, we found ourselves submerged by a flow of last-minute messages that took some time to translate and process. This resurgence in activity well compensated the slow evolution of the debate that characterized the first weeks of this discussion. There were open disagreements and some even showed frustration at the directions taken by the discussions. Nevertheless, all of these were voiced in good spirit and provided a heated, but healthy, debate on a difficult topic.

Introduction from a Working-class Neighborhood in Paris, France

Living in a working class neighborhood of Paris, this new participant works with a social center whose employers are neighborhood volunteers. She believes that the simplest involvement as a citizen is to possess, and act upon, a great hope to see society head towards peace.

Marxist Critique, but Not Marxism as a Viable Alternative

Listening to this week's debate is akin to hearing a discussion that has dominated world history for at least two centuries. Free-market economics, democracy, capitalism, liberalism, the environment, the North-South debate, peace: all these themes, which were touched upon this week, are those that thinkers, politicians, and ordinary citizens have been grappling with for two hundred years. Against the background of the topic of socioeconomy of solidarity, a great part of this week's discussion was devoted to these fundamental questions. As if to answer those questioning the theoretical direction of the debate, a second part of the discussion was also dedicated to finding very concrete ways to tackle the problem of solidarity. In effect, the discussion was clearly divided between theory and praxis (or practice). Those of you familiar with Karl Marx will remember that he devoted some thought to these two complementary ideas in a famous essay.

It is not by coincidence that I have chosen to bring up the name of Marx even though he is never mentioned in any of the messages. Marx, who was very well versed in the thought of the classical theorists of liberalism (and someone did mention David Ricardo this week), was the foremost critic of liberalism, capitalism, and "bourgeois" democracy, which we now call liberal democracy. For part of the nineteenth century and most of the twentieth, Marxism was understood as the alternative to capitalism and liberal democracy. Reading all the messages this week led me to make two important conclusions. The first one is that, a decade after the disappearance of the Soviet Union, Marxist critique is still being advanced without being named. The second conclusion is that an alternative solution to the current global economic dynamics is indeed deemed to be necessary by a majority of the participants.

While several ideas were raised (mixed economy, Tobin tax, etc.), it is evident that no alternative "system" has yet been devised to challenge the liberal model. This state of affairs, you will recall, is what the American philosopher Francis Fukuyama (1952-) called the "end of history." Yet, if classical Marxism seems to have been abandoned (and with it, its vision of the unraveling of history), Marx's criticism of capitalism finds many echoes in the various contributions that came out his week, even though Marxism is no longer seen as a viable alternative.

Some Concrete Proposals on How to Develop an Economy of Solidarity

To summarize, many participants found the current state of affairs to be wanting. With the interest of big Western companies looming large, with governments, both in the North and the South, seeking to profit politically and financially from big money, a vast majority of people are left to live in poverty with hardly anyone with a modicum of power to care. Thus, an economy of solidarity needs to be constructed. On this fact, most people were in agreement.

But how? That is the big question. Since governments and big companies are looking elsewhere, civil society, backed by Non-Governmental Organizations, remains in practice the only viable solution to start constructing something new. In this light, some participants discussed the role of women, and how they could effect changes at the family and local level. Another participant shared with us her experience in constructing a local "economy" of solidarity, while someone else offered insights into solidarity in traditional African society. There were also several interesting concrete proposals as to how to develop an economy of solidarity, including eliminating financial globalization; establishing consistent use of fair trade; activism on the part of the individual; increased transparency of operations and behavior of multinational companies; and international investment, managed by NGOs, in development projects for developing countries. Also mentioned were actions that could be taken to stimulate a socially respon-

sible economy: accurate pricing and the availability of information on the reasons behind the price established, thus leading to responsible, ethical consumerism.

Women Have a Role to Play in Local Development

A few years ago, the aforementioned Fukuyama published a controversial article (in the review "Foreign Affairs") in which he argued that a greater participation of women in politics would probably bring about more peaceful international relations. Much maligned by critics, his interesting argument found little echo. The ideas developed this week regarding women are somewhat similar to these arguments, with one big difference: they concern women's impact at the basic communal level, rather than at the top rungs of the power ladder. Women have a role to play in local development. They tend to be the caretakers of the local communities and their inhabitants, especially the children, thus they are more in touch with life's daily activities. For this reason, the female population better relays the intimate knowledge of the needs of local societies.

"Traditional" Societies Tend to Foster Solidarity and Solve Conflicts before They Become Violent

Another participant, along similar lines, discussed the economic and social ties of solidarity that arise in the traditional societies of Africa and Madagascar. These societies, based on clear gender and age lines, tend to foster solidarity on several levels, from the couple to the extended family, to the village, community and nation. Each model, beginning with the most basic, helps create and generate the next model, while each level brings about new elements and greater complexity into the equation. Nevertheless, a climate of solidarity is engineered at all levels. This climate breeds tolerance, a capacity to share and to redistribute wealth, and mutual respect. In essence, social ties and economic structures are founded on the principle of solidarity, a principle that logically brings about peaceful relations between individuals and communities and tends to resolve conflict before it adopts violent forms.

Another contributor shared some of her experience working with indigenous people of Mexico to illustrate the development of other types of economic models that might offer an alternative to the classical Western free-market model. Based on household relationships, this vision extends from the house of the family, to the house of society to the house of humankind. In similar ways to the African example, this model is founded on economic relations of solidarity. It is adapted from a manner of looking at things where "being" is more important than "owning" and "accumulating."

Summary 16 (April 8 – 14, 2002) The Role of Non-state Actors

Abstract: *This week sees the launch of a new discussion on governance and peace. The old concept of governance has taken on new meaning in the past few years. This new art of "governing without government" is closely linked to our concern for peace, from the village to the planet. It is therefore a very rich concept, which gives us matter for discussion for this new phase of the forum. Since governments have had many shortcomings, are NGOs the answer? Perhaps not, at least not until they reform and become more democratic. Today, the perennial problem of the global management of power is complicated by the presence of a lone superpower. To counterbalance its unilateralism, non-state actors should be given a greater role.*

An "Incorrigible Reader" ...

We welcome one new participating member this week from Spain. He is a pharmacist and a member of a grass roots Christian community. An inspector of Public Health, he also dedicates his time to a foundation that works for sanitary development and for the protection of the environment. His work is centered mainly toward access to medicine. He describes himself as an incorrigible reader and is fond of computer science as well as of philosophy.

“Governance” and “Legitimacy”: Imperfect, but Useful Concepts

This week inaugurated a new three-week debate. The new topic, “Governance and Peace,” arrives at a time when the Middle East conflict is suddenly taking a turn for the worst. The conflict between Israel and Palestine vividly illustrates the complex and intricate relationship between governance and peace. Indeed, it is usually governments that enable or prevent peace from being established. Governments, or course, are more or less legitimate. Their decisions to go to war, which not only affect their own nation but, directly and indirectly, other countries as well, also raise the question of legitimacy.

A while back, I was fortunate to attend a class taught by Leo Gross, a legendary professor of international law (1903-1990), then in his late eighties, who had been instrumental in creating such institutions as the League of Nations and the United Nations. The reason I mention Leo Gross is that this great scholar had one very peculiar characteristic: he forbade the use of the word “legitimacy” in his classroom and had a very low tolerance for it outside. One day, attending a lecture on the topic of legitimacy given by another well-known scholar, Gross suddenly rose up before an astonished audience and requested that the speaker stop using this word. I asked Leo Gross why he was so adamant about this. His response was a bit vague. Basically, what bothered him was that the term was used to describe practically anything one wanted it to describe. For the lawyer that he was, such murkiness was too difficult to accept.

One may thus refuse to accept such a concept entirely. But I think it more wise perhaps, at least more practical, to deal with an imperfect concept, especially if it is important. Governance is another term that is both vague and unavoidable. In order to help us deal more efficiently with this complicated concept, Delphine Astier (of the Ecole de la Paix) wrote a short notice on governance that I will summarize here. Before that, perhaps it will be useful to give you the definition found in Webster’s dictionary, which states that the word is derived from the old French “gouvernance” and means “***the act, power, manner, function of government.***”

Everything You Always Wanted to Know about Governance

Governance is one of those ancient concepts, like civil society, that have resurfaced lately and taken on both broader and more specific meaning. If the etymology traces the word to French, medieval England is where the concept was developed. More recently, the World Bank used the concept of “good governance” to mean an alliance between political democracy (or liberal democracy) and market economy, which translates into an open economy where information circulates freely, where the legislative framework is favorable to businessmen, and where all public deficit must be fought.

Governance, however, is not confined to this narrow definition. It is also understood as a concept which takes into account and tries to explain the mutations of the international system, interdependence, the complex nature of the relations between the local and the global, and the multiplication of state and non-state actors. For the purpose of this discussion, we understand “governance” as a political and social regulation system. It is a pragmatic concept that attempts to respond to the crisis of classical democratic policies centered on state authority. Numerous actors, who do not have the same interests and who are acting at different levels, but who are faced with the same problem, are going to build a common representation of this reality and set new objectives in order to progressively adopt solutions. Governance is not just the art of managing things at a single level anymore but rather the art of articulating the management between *different levels of territories*. Governance focuses on the horizontal links that are woven at different levels as opposed to top-down links.

This new art of “governing without government” is closely linked to our concern for peace, from the village to the planet. It is therefore a very rich concept that gives us food for thought in this new phase of the forum!

Chronic Democracy Deficiency

The general question we put to the forum was the following: **What is governance, what is our role in it, and how, exactly, does it relate to building peace?**

As seems to be customary, the turnout for this first week of the discussion was low. We did however get a few responses. We will start with an issue that has been frequently touched upon in this forum, the failure of governments. One of the common answers to this problem is that more effort should be placed to promote the role of NGOs. Is this, however, a solution to the failure of governments? One participant suggests that the problem is not governments but “lack of democracy.” Lack of democracy, unfortunately, is an affliction that not only affects governments but .NGOs as well. Thus, giving more

power to NGOs such as the World Bank or the IMF would only displace the problem rather than solve it. While some NGOs like the World Health Organization are more democratic than others, they many suffer from a deficiency in that department, just like governments. Thus, democratization of both governments and NGOs is an urgent task that could lead to a next step that might involve rethinking the distribution of political and economic power. In this light, new institutions such as the International Penal Tribunal, which are neither government nor NGO, should play a greater role in international relations, if only to educate the public. But, once again, the legitimization of such entities is complicated and their development must be kept in check so that they do not gain more importance than they deserve.

The Present U.S. Unilateralism Needs to Be Corrected

On a global scale, governance, “governing without government,” is the element that determines the nature of international relations. One could perhaps say that at this level the issue might be understood as “governing without governments.” Experts have characterized international relations as an “anarchical society,” where no supranational entity is in place to govern the planet. Institutions such as the U.N., thus far, have not been capable of taking on such a role. In any case, the U.N. only represents an aggregation of governments and thus does not function independently. This places the problem at the center of international relations: the management of power. In the past, heads of state tried to create an artificial equilibrium, be it multi-polar (nineteenth-century Europe) or bipolar (Cold War).

Today, the main problem is that one state, the United States, wields so much power that it has created an imbalance. One way of dealing with this problem is to encourage various groups in the U.S. to voice their opinion on foreign-policy matters so that decisions are at least made in a more democratic fashion. But this does not change the systemic imbalance. To remedy this potentially unstable situation, there is an urgent need to create an effective opposition to the superpower’s unilateralism. In order to do this, a greater role should be given to non-state actors since other states have not had the will so far to resist. Ideally, this would lead to the creation of an international form of authority based on internationally accepted norms. How? This is a conundrum that has faced thinkers for centuries. But perhaps today’s brave new world is ready for new ideas. Let’s hope it is.

Summary 17 (April 15 – 21, 2002)

Good Governance Involves Governments, but Not Just Governments

Abstract: *This second week of discussion on the topic of governance and peace saw a good amount of participation. Topics debated on included bad and good governance, as defined by the levels of democratic processes, and the creation of new models and modes of governance. On this latter point, the idea of a World Parliament of Citizens was offered as a possible alternative. By the same token, the School of Peace discussed its ten years of involvement in the Colombian peace process, which resulted in concrete steps taken by the European community. The word of the week might be that good governance is a process that involves, but is not limited to, governments.*

An African and a European

Two newcomers introduced themselves to the forum this week. The first one is an economist from Benin who specializes in fiscal policy and acts as a member of the Youth Workshop of the Alliance. The second one is a 31-year-old European who has devoted a lot of his time to travel and study and who likes to write and communicate on the Internet.

The second week of the discussion on governance and peace witnessed a good amount of participation with a discussion on the fundamental philosophical underpinnings of good governance, illustrated by the creation of a *laboratory for peace* in Colombia.

Good Governance and Bad Governance: a Complex Issue

The main thrust of political philosophy throughout the ages has focused on the twofold problem of eliminating “bad” governance and establishing “good” governance. One can define bad governance as

the root of violence. As such, it is a source of corruption, nepotism, and fraudulent misuse of public funds. In addition, it is also characterized by the lack, or the absence, of democracy, and the lack of political vision. Good governance is essentially the riddance of bad governance.

Seemingly simple in theory, the problem of governance is as complex as any in practice and is far from being resolved. While, for centuries, competing ideologies were thrown in by thinkers and applied by citizens, today's political landscape appears simpler. Democracy is, in most cases, deemed the best direction to be undertaken. Nevertheless, democracy is a work in progress that still has many flaws and is far from being perfect, or even satisfactory.

Thus, today, the riddle of democracy takes two forms. First, democracy needs to be improved and reinforced where it has taken root. Secondly, it must gain new territories. Many participants have voiced their dismay at the state of democracy in the world. And many have given ideas as to ways to improve it. A majority has shown hope that progress can be made.

“Democracy” Can Often Be a Veil to Protect Special Interests

One of the first problems raised in the forum concerns the fact that much of what is considered democratic in today's world is really a veil to protect special interests. In other words, there are double standards applied. In this regard, someone voiced her concern about an international tribunal that would judge certain criminals and not others (a complaint I have heard myself repeatedly outside of this forum is: Why Pinochet and Milosevic, but not Castro or Kissinger?). This indeed is a problem. The only answer possible is that progress must start somewhere before it can be applied everywhere. In other words, before Kissinger can be tried, perhaps Pinochet has to be condemned. Which brings us back to the problem of democracy taking root in new spaces.

Today, for a few imperfectly democratic governments, there are plenty of half-democratic governments and outright undemocratic ones. There are also important non-state actors, as we saw last week, which garner a lot of power but do not function democratically. These include multinational corporations, which function in a world unencumbered by borders where economic power is gaining ground relative to political power. Finally, there is the perennial issue of governance in an anarchic world of states. To this latter question, there have been basically three answers: equilibrium, collective security, or a world state. Since we discussed the first two previously, let us focus on the third one a bit.

The most famous defender of a world state is the seventeenth-century English philosopher Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), who favored the creation of a dominating world entity to whom all states would have voluntarily given up their power. In other words, this Leviathan, as he called it, would be a sort of super state that would assure imperial peace, at the price of freedom. This idea has always been judged as the acme of authoritarianism, and, thus, dismissed by most political thinkers. Today, other alternatives are being considered that would bring together the idea of freedom and democracy with that of a supranational political entity. One such alternative is the creation of a World Parliament of Citizens, or Peoples (an idea introduced at the World Citizens Assembly of the Alliance for a Responsible, Plural and United World held in Lille in December 2001 <http://www.alliance21.org/lille/en/index.html>). Such a parliament would be a first step in the direction of political participation at a global level. Well designed, it would enable less powerful states to have a voice and would, perhaps, encourage the spread of democracy. Evidently, such an idea sounds revolutionary, even utopian.

Nevertheless, the time may be ripe for the creation of such an entity. In the twenty-first-century context of globalization, governance requires more than what governments can provide in terms of environmental and social sustainability matters for example, and, thus, one needs different models and schemes for the economic and political game.

Colombia: a laboratory for peace to give peace a chance

It is such new initiatives that can give peace a new impetus by changing our modes of thought regarding governance. This can occur at a grand scale, but also at the local level. The example of the work of the School of Peace in Colombia illustrates this, in what is probably one of the most complex political puzzles on the face of the earth.

The School of Peace has been working in Colombia for ten years. This involvement started with a basic analysis of the causes of the violence and was followed by the support of efforts in organizing civil society. Now, it is participating in the actual peace process.

Its action of international solidarity follows three main orientations:
—action in favor of the younger generations and peace education,
—support to the civil society,—development and peace.

The first action is illustrated, for example, by exchanges between young people of Medellin and Bogota and schoolboys and pupils from Grenoble. The second led the School of Peace to support the setting up of the *Permanent Assembly of Civil Society for Peace* with hundreds of other organizations, and to back the work of the Peace Communities in Uraba. The third action aims at encouraging an original process attempting to create, in the context of the conflict, the conditions for a type of development chosen and organized by the populations themselves, from the local or regional level, in order to give peace a chance.

A European plan differing from the American one

This work has resulted in making the European Community pronounce itself in favor of an *aid different than the one of the Colombia Plan* [American plan, essentially centered on military cooperation and the eradication of drug cultures <http://www.zmag.org/ZMag/articles/chomskyjune2000.htm>]. The European process, accomplished in cooperation with governments, NGOs, and civil society, started with a strong commitment to the education of peace, understood in a broad sense.

In light of this experience, one can define governance as a process that involves governments, but not just governments, and which is characterized by pragmatism and actions at multiple levels.

The recent signature by the European Commission of an agreement with one of its partners in Colombia, the Development and Peace Program of the Magdalena Medio, designating it officially as a "laboratory for peace," is full of promise for the future.

Summary18 (April 22 – 28, 2002) Bad Governance, Global Governance, and Reforming the U.N.

Abstract: *This is the third and last week's discussion on Governance and Peace. It comes at a time when France has been shocked by the results of the first round of its presidential elections. We pick up where we left off with a discussion on bad governance. Bad governments not only make bad politics but they create a general atmosphere of dishonesty and lust for power that trickles down to all parts of society. In the age of globalization there is a need to reform governance on a global scale. While the idea of a world parliament may be premature, reforming the U.N. appears to be the only realistic solution. Reforming the U.N. starts with internal democratization. The organization of a summit on global governance could launch a general debate that might lead to such reforms. We end the weekly summary with a list of possible proposals.*

This third and final week of the discussion on "Governance and Peace" was open only until Friday, April 26, midnight (GMT). Any messages received after that time were neither translated nor published on the forum, but will be published on the Web site at

http://www.alliance21.org/forums/d_read/pax/late_messages/ and taken into account, for those received before midnight (GMT) Wednesday, May 1, for the general summary on this theme.

World Events Have Reminded Us of the Fragility of Democracy

This third discussion on governance and peace came at a time when one of the world's most established democracies, France, was rocked by the shocking results of a first round of presidential elections placing an extreme-right-wing candidate as one of the final two hopefuls facing each other in the second round. In effect, France showed the world what happens when a population loses interest in its own democratic processes (nearly 30% didn't vote, many through lack of interest, others chose small-time candidates as a means to protest "politics as usual," and others to protest the fact that blank votes are not computed): it opens the gates to those who, like Adolf Hitler, hope to be able to use democracy to destroy it. The world's second oldest democracy, the United States, recently gave (global) power to a warmonger and his friends through clever manipulation of the votes and the constitution, while 40% of the voting-age population didn't bother to participate in elections that effect the entire planet. These events, and those in the Middle East remind us of the importance of governance, of the fragility of democracy, and of the need to develop alternative, stronger forms of government.

This week's debate basically picks up where we left off last week with a discussion on bad governance and possible ways to remedy its shortcomings. Bad governance on the part of governments does not only affect politics. If this were the case, then one could conceivably change corrupt governments (especially through voting ballots) and replace them with more honest ones. But bad governance is worse than that. It trickles down to all parts of society, and then corrupts it to its core. One could indeed say, to paraphrase Lord Acton (1834-1902, liberal Catholic scholar and Member of the British Parliament) that power corrupts, and local power corrupts locally. All individuals and groups in a position of power are tempted to imitate their political leaders. If the former are corrupt, then so will be the latter.

Power Is Efficient Only When There Is a Strong and Constructive Opposition Force

Global corruption of a society is potentially dangerous because it generates, in reaction to injustices, internal conflicts that can erupt at any moment with no limit to the violence. Bad governance also manifests itself in the will of many elected officials to remain in power for as long as they can. Often, they change the rules of the game to their advantage and corrupt a system designed to favor a healthy turnover of politicians. In the end, politicians are willing to lie to the public in order to enhance their personal gains. Such is the natural way of politics everywhere with only the system in place to protect the people. Hence, the system must be well designed and well-kept, and the people must be vigilant. Peace and peaceful relations can be put in place and protected if everyone becomes aware of the pre-eminence of the public interest with regard to personal and individual interests. Power is strong and efficient only if there is a strong and constructive opposition force.

Bad governance is not the only problem we are facing today. The very structure of governance is ill-adapted to the needs brought upon by globalization. One example is the rigidity of national frontiers, which do not reflect the perpetual flow of people, products, and ideas that permeate through international borders. Globalization has meant, in the past decades, the consolidation for the first time in history of a *global community*. The intensity of international relationships is enormous and it invades all the aspects of our life: work, culture, friendships, etc. The construction of a political community has not followed the construction of an economic and cultural community, that is to say, the normalization of social relations under conditions of justice for all. The political sphere of the global community is governed by the reason of strength and leads to enormous inequalities.

Pressure for Reform by the Global Civil Society Is Crucial

What we need is a democratic international order, that is to say at least a system where a consent exists among parties, not based on the strength, intimidation, and crushing dominance that generates these perverse inequalities, but rather based on cooperation for mutual benefits. But how does one create global democracy? And what are its structures?

In last week's discussion, we raised the idea of a world parliament, as a response to the United Nations' shortcomings. This week's contributors seem a bit reluctant to the idea, one person suggesting that "We are talking about it a lot but no one has explained what would be the basis of its power," adding that "I only recognize one legitimate World Parliament: the one of the U.N." Other voices were in favor of founding a new global democratic order on the foundations of the U.N., an option deemed as realistic.

Such an ambitious endeavor would mean a complete overhaul of the system set up in 1948, including the permanent Security Council. To push for reforms within the U.N. is difficult. Thus, the pressure of civil society—global civil society—is crucial, as it has been in pushing for reforms in the former states of the communist block. International action is based on consensus, and consensus is based on dialogue. Proposals for reform are not only political and economic but deal with the construction of shared values among the different cultures that make up the global village. In order to come up with proposals—some of which are already in circulation—one could start with the organization of a large summit on global governance.

Proposals for Reform that Need to Be Discussed at a Summit on Global Governance

At such a summit, one could discuss the following proposals or topics for reform:

- Restructuring of the UN, a symbolic act that would culminate with its internal democratization: annulment of the veto right and of the condition of permanent member; creation of a "Global Parliament of the Peoples" working in tandem with the General Assembly.

- Subjection of the financial institutions (World Bank, IMF) and of the World Trade Organization to the system of the U.N.

- Shared sovereignty of all scales of territory.
- Establishment of property of non-private goods for an entire range of goods, from the environment (mineral resources, air, sea) through to intangible goods as culture, creativity, beauty, and feelings.
- System of global taxing: of financial transactions (Tobin), of energy consumption, and of business profits, among others. The benefits would finance the UN and the development program of the South.
- Drastic control on the production and trade of weapons, establishment of a system of prevention, and of a fair and pacific resolution of conflicts.
- Mechanisms of distribution of wealth. At the personal scale, a Universal Basic Income, at the national and continental scales, the annulment of the debt and revision of the conditions that generate it, and the elaboration of wide regional development programs.
- Universal and mandatory access to education and health.

Summary 19 (May 13 – 19, 2002)

Can Education, Ethics, or Religion Make Humans More Prone to Peace Than to War?

Abstract: *After a brief recap of the new topic for discussion, the text delves into the topics raised over the passed week. Proving as intriguing as the question would suggest, this week's participants tackled many of the tough issues at the center of this new discussion. Discussed below is the role of education in the evolution of humankind, and if education does have a role, what should the subject matter be? This last question proves difficult to answer without having an established definition of the goals of humankind. It was suggested that an adequate education should teach individuals about responsibility, critical thought, and building a common future. From there, the discussion moved to the issue of ethics and religion, and what their combination should be in the arena of global consciousness. Perhaps the fact that ethics are still very much associated with particular religious traditions might be an impediment for a world that is more and more diverse and where tolerance is becoming one of the foundations of a nascent global community that is eager to emerge out of its restricted religious or ideological shells. This is not to say that religion should be completely discounted, but rather that its power and effect should neither be underestimated, nor used unwisely or inappropriately when shaping a new balance of global ethics.*

This is the first summary for our final debate, and fourth topic, "Art, Values, Culture, Education... and Peace." This discussion will continue until May 31st. Once this debate is closed, we shall take the whole month of June to "tie up" our seven-month forum, discussing things such as follow-up to this forum, eventual "products," etc. and if possible, get your evaluating feedback on the forum itself. This first week of discussion produced a low turnout of responses. Still, a lot of ground was covered, notably on education, ethics, and religion.

A New Contributor from Madagascar

Even at this late stage in the game, we are happy to host new contributors. This week, we present from Madagascar the Director of the Institution of Micro-Finance, an institution that operates in the southwest of Madagascar. Having received management training, holding a degree in business administration and finance and specializing in micro-finance, he is also executive vice-president of the Young Economic Chamber of Madagascar (Jeune Chambre Economique de Madagascar). A member of the Alliance for a Responsible, Plural and United World, he participated in the Finance of Solidarity forum in Paris, and in the socially responsible socio-economy meeting in Findhorn, as well as the World Citizens Assembly in Lille.

Humankind Is Very Young and Can Still Evolve

Machiavelli and Hobbes or Jean-Jacques Rousseau? The problem of humankind's perfectibility and the role of education have divided philosophers, statesmen and educators ever since men started thinking about their destiny. In a nutshell, two schools have opposed one another. The first states that

men, and women, are imperfect beings who will never really change and must learn to live with their differences and defects. This is Machiavelli and Hobbes. Others, like Rousseau or Kant, believe that adequate education will remedy some—though not all—of these defects. The types of political systems that result are in great part determined by these views, as is one's belief in the possibility for peace. The former think peace results from dominance or equilibrium (negative peace), others believe real (or "perpetual") peace can be attained, provided that adequate reforms in education are thoroughly enacted. If history is any indicator, Machiavelli and Hobbes seem to have the upper hand. But, as we all know, history evolves. In the last few decades, scientists, psychologists and sociologists have entered the fray and brought new light to animal, including human, behavior, and the capabilities for change.

This is where we start our debate. Globally, one can argue that humankind is very young and that it has barely started to shape its own history. Education is what permits humankind to evolve and progress, a notion that distinguishes it from other animals who change only through the Darwinian laws of evolution. Progress in "humanization" can make people more "human." Throughout history our intellectual advances have been faster than our progress in "humanization." This explains, for instance, why we build weapons of mass destruction and then try to eliminate them (on this topic, the agreement reached by Russia and the United States on denuclearization this week is a case in point). Educational systems, inside schools and outside, should point to people's deep similarities rather than their superficial differences. On these basic, but until now forgotten premises, education should actively promote the values of democracy, understood not as a simple form of government, but as a way for individuals to trust each other and their possibilities. An adequate education—a precondition to having any future at all—should teach individuals about responsibility, critical thought, and building a common future.

The Good, the Bad, and.... Choosing the Right Behavior

Whether one discusses education or international conduct, ethics are usually at the core of the problem. Ethics are simplistic in their objectives: determining the good from the bad and choosing the right conduct. In practice, ethics are as complicated as anything invented by man. When one moves from the individual to the community, things get even more difficult. One standard example is the right to kill. Killing is considered the gravest of crimes in society. Yet it is not only permissible but also encouraged in war. This is only one of the many problems faced by ethicists. The American protestant theologian Reinhold Niebuhr (1892-1971) is widely considered to be one of the greatest ethicists of the century, especially in the field of war and peace. He summed up the problem as one between "moral man and immoral society." Niebuhr always kept the faith that somehow man would resolve his ethical contradictions, and, in certain ways, the history of the last sixty years has proved him right. But Niebuhr's ethical approach was largely influenced by its religious underpinnings, foremost among which lays the doctrine of the Fall, which in many ways permeates ethics, religious or secular, in the Western world. Thus, one of the possible questions to pose might be how one could develop a secular system of ethics that is better adapted to the world of the twenty-first century. This new (secular) system might also aim to strike a more successful cord with the general public than might a religious system of ethics that is perhaps too ensconced in the rigid teachings of theologians (and that includes not just Christian theologians, but other religious traditions).

Put differently, one could say that humankind has yet to gain its full ethical consciousness. And perhaps the fact that ethics are still very much associated with particular religious traditions might be an impediment for a world that is more and more diverse and where tolerance is becoming one of the foundations of a nascent global community that is eager to emerge out of its restricted religious or ideological shells. One might call this an ethics with a human face. It should be an ethic system based on social consequences. And it should be attentive to reconcile politics with ethical behavior, ethics and politics being in the end inseparable.

Religion as a Way to Teach Tolerance and Not as an Instrument of Hatred

On the related topic of religion, war and peace, one of the dangers of our global community is the increasing polarization of the great religions of the world. This phenomenon is caused by the politicization of religion and its use as an instrument by religious leaders intent on war. The phenomenon is not new. Recently though, religion seems to have emerged as a new source of conflict as ideological rivalries have disappeared with the end of the Cold War. While religion has always fulfilled humankind's spiritual needs, its political exploitation is dangerous, as one can attest to with the current events in the Middle East, to cite one example. And, while this phenomenon should not blind the fact that religion is also a great instrument of peace, as illustrated the example of Colombia, among others, it is a cause for

concern. Perhaps, then, one of the objectives of education in the twenty-first century should be to define clearly the frontiers of religion and to use it as a way to teach tolerance to children rather than as an instrument of hatred and war.

Summary 20 (May 20 – 26, 2002) It's Time for Us to Agree on Universal Values

Abstract: *This week saw a high degree of participation. Not surprisingly, there were many responses to last week's discussion on religion and war. Several participants felt that other factors, political or economic, are more fundamental factors of war than is religion. One cause of conflict, fanaticism, comes in many different forms, not just religious ones. Peace is a serious matter, and efforts to establish it should be made accordingly. Since peace is a pragmatic problem, it is on this level that it should be tackled. Building a culture of peace through education is a first step in that direction. Elements of culture, such as art, also have a role to play, since it is a reflection both of who we are and who we want to be. Science and the media also participate in our perceptions of war and peace, but the media cannot be depended on to foster peace. Finally, the discussion focused on our general will to create a global community with universal values that reflect our cultural diversity and bring all of us together in our common destiny.*

For this second week of the debate on "Art, Values, Education, Culture, and Peace," the discussion was extremely rich, both in terms of numbers—four times as many contributions as last week—but also in terms of the variety of topics involved, and the general quality of the conversation. Not surprisingly, there were many responses to last week's argument on religion and war, but the discussion also covered the other elements of the current debate: art, education, culture, and more. Needless to say, this short summary will not do justice to all these contributions.

Religion Is Not the Cause of War

The argument made last week by one of the participants that religion is a cause of conflict drew many responses. The first type of response focused on the fact that the causes of conflict cannot be restricted to one element. Indeed, some felt that the quest for territorial gains or economic advantage is historically a greater cause of war than religion. Struggles for power and political squabbling are also deemed more important than religion as factors of conflict. Some suggested that conflict is nurtured by our biological makeup as a species and by our psychological characteristics as individuals (meaning that general peace starts with inner peace). A second type of response argued that it is not so much religion that may be a cause of conflict, but rather fanaticism, which can take many forms, including religious ones. Most agreed that those who use religion as an instrument for power and conflict have forgotten about the true nature of religion. Some participants also disagreed with the idea that religion should be restricted to the private sphere, judging the process authoritarian and intolerant. Generally, the social, political and economic environments were thought to be a greater factor of conflict, including religious conflict, than religion itself. One participant argued that history has shown us that all the religions, even the more fundamentalist ones, must undergo an evolution toward a growing degree of understanding and liberty.

Peace Is "Serious Business" and Requires Education

Moving a bit away from religion, there were voices that focused instead on our "physical temporary existence" on earth. Building on the foundations laid by Enlightened Philosophy, this approach seeks to remedy earthly problems through pragmatic solutions—while not denying the importance of religious beliefs and spirituality. If we assume our life on earth to be the only proven fact of our existence, then we shall concentrate on this life and do the utmost to live peacefully together. The famous Prussian strategist Carl von Clausewitz (1780-1831) suggested that "war is serious business." We could say that peace also is serious business and that great efforts should be exercised to gain it. This objective starts with the building of a culture of peace, constructed through enlightenment and on an education through emancipation. In short, the task to rescue humankind should become our dominant aim as a global, and

very diverse, community. Initiatives such as those of VIVIM PLEGATS, involving 44 schools and 15,000 students in a program of education for peace in the Balearic Islands, illustrates the possibilities of such programs to give youth a basis for the full enjoyment of human possibilities of joy and happiness.

Art Can Serve Peace by Pursuing the Truth, but the Media Are Not Likely to Do That

Culture plays a great role in our understanding of war and peace, and art defines our culture in many ways. Art is an interpretation of our world, of our thinking, and of our experiences. Art is, thus, directly or indirectly political. We know about art as an instrument of propaganda for war. As such, it usually fails as time uncovers it as pseudo-art. However, Art can also serve a culture of peace by pursuing the truth. As such, it opens the road to reflect history and historical truth. Other elements of culture play a role. Science for instance has enabled us to know our environment, and thus, to act to improve it. While many scientific discoveries have been made through the process of building weapons, they have in turn found other applications that have completely modified our global environment, the Internet being only one example on a long list.

The media, a modern cultural invention, has played an increasingly large role lately in molding our conceptions of reality. The media, which functions strictly as a business, benefits from war and violence. As such, it indirectly fosters conflicts by focusing on them and can influence political decisions, such as intervention or retreat (U.S. in Somalia for instance).

Is There Such a Thing as “Universal Values”?

When one talks about culture, it is inevitable to ask ourselves if “universal values” exist, as well as diverse forms of applying them according to the cultures where they are being applied. The French anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss (1908-1967) considered that the capacity to produce diversity is the fundamental characteristic that human societies share. According to him, humanity only shares one custom: the taboo of incest. Following the Swiss philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), Levi-Strauss also believed that any human community starts building its values from the collective will, that is, from what it seeks, rather than what already exists. If we transpose this to the global community, we could argue that the time has come for us to build a “universal culture” based on a nascent global community superimposed on local communities. The fact that we need universal values justifies their elaboration and application. These values are the result of the will of particular societies, from various parts of the globe, to share certain aspects of their identity. However, they do not have any abstract origin in any common human behavior in society, nor is it necessary to justify them starting from this supposed common behavior. The will itself of wanting to share the planet in a responsible way, and in solidarity, justifies them. Democracy, for instance, is an example of this creative exercise of diversity. Built upon humanistic principles, it meets in its objectives the human desire for liberty. The right to self-identity is another such example of this creative exercise of diversity, interesting because it allows a minority that may have been put on the fringe of society by a national community to participate in the global construction of a universal culture.

Summary 21 (May 27 – June 2, 2002) Human Beings Can Be Educated to Practice a Culture of Peace

Abstract: *A human rights activist from Atlanta, Georgia (USA) introduced herself to the forum this week. The debate, which saw a lot of interaction among participants, focused on education, more specifically on education for constructing a culture of peace. A look at different societies shows varying levels of violence, suggesting that human beings can be taught to change—and adopt a more peaceful outlook. Education starts with children—in the family, then at school—where art and religion can teach them to be flexible in their thinking, tolerant in their ideas, and obedient to the basic rules of ethics. We all share basic values that cut through different cultures. In any case, what these values may be is not as important as learning to practice them. If education starts with children, it should trickle up to the adults, in particular the policymakers who lack imagination, often using simplistic methods without any long lasting effects.*

An American Working in Human Rights

We begin the third week of our last discussion with the introduction of a new participant. Currently the Senior Program Director for the National Center for Human Rights Education, she lives in the United States, in Atlanta, Georgia. For the past ten years, she has been involved in various programs that help young people and adults discover ways to live in a heterogeneous society and work to build sustainable, fair communities.

Peace Is a Selfish Goal

This week saw a lot of interactive activity among the participants, including several responses to last week's debate. Generally, the focus was on education, with general comments, as well as specific ideas, about the role of education in building a culture of peace.

Several people agreed that building a culture of peace is vital to our future. With the power that we have today of destroying the planet many times over, not building a culture of peace may ultimately mean the self-destruction of our species. In order to survive, we must advance in the process of "humanization." Thus, building a culture of peace may not only be an altruistic endeavor but, ultimately, a selfish one, since our survival depends on it. To the age-old question of whether humankind is violent or peaceful, and whether or not human beings can change in one direction or the other (preferably the latter), one participant suggested we look at different societies. It is evident that some societies are more violent than others. What does that tell us? Such discrepancies in the levels of violence tell us that people can change, that they are malleable. If people can change, then they must be taught to change. This is true in both space and time—Scandinavia for example, where Vikings once roamed, is now one of the most peaceful regions on earth. If descendants of warmongers can become peace-loving, then education must have played a role in gradually transforming their minds.

The Key to Peace Is Flexibility and Open-mindedness, and Art Is a Good Medium for That

To the question, "what role can art and education play," one participant responded adamantly a "very important" one! Another one suggested that it is necessary to begin with education to change the world. Most of us agree that education starts with children. By teaching them flexibility of mind and openness, a first step is achieved in the direction of tolerance.

Art is one of those subjects that indeed can open one's mind. With no culture of national barriers, it constitutes the best material for developing a universal culture. It might teach children to want a more peaceful and tolerant world, without being afraid of freedom.

Religion is another means to teach tolerance to children, as well as to give them a basic knowledge of ethics. Education for peace should be taken on primarily by the family. It is the family who must instill ideals of peace in children, to be followed up by teachers who will complement this basic education. Only in such an environment will these young individuals be able to become "soldiers for peace." We all share values. What they are is not as important as learning to practice them. Shared values—such as Freedom, Equality, Solidarity, Tolerance, Respect for Nature, and Responsibility—provide us with the common bond to build unity and solidarity. Virtue is not, nor can it be, "owned" by a religion or a people. These values represent similarities we have with each other. Perhaps we can find justice and peace as we implement them in our global solidarity.

Think Globally and Act Locally, and the Other Way Around Too

One could say: think locally, act globally. Education for peace starts in schools. But it must but be achieved on a global scale. Indeed, there will be no lasting peace until there is justice throughout the world, and the first step to building a movement for peace is raising consciousness through education. Human rights education teaches people how to respect the rights of others, and to embrace the commonalities among us, without having to erase the differences. People do not need to reject religion. They simply need to respect the right of each person to choose the religion that makes the most sense for them. People do not need to ignore or hide those aspects that make them different (their race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, nationality, etc.), they must only accept each person's right to exist in dignity.

There is a lot we can learn from one another. While openness to other worlds is one path to "world citizenship," one must not discount the fact that those who cannot, or do not desire, to leave their environment also have things to teach others. Poor peasants in remote areas of the world may not be able

to travel, but accepting, and respecting, their knowledge and customs can benefit others by fostering tolerance.

Simple Solutions Rarely Foster Peace: We Need Imaginative Solutions

If education starts with children, it trickles up to the world of adults, including those who make the decisions. Right now, one must admit that policymakers, for the most part, tend to lack imagination. This unfortunate state of affairs is illustrated almost daily. Afghanistan is one example among many, where a simplistic military solution was chosen over something more imaginative, complex, and in the end, more constructive. Simple solutions rarely foster lasting peace. They are band-aid solutions to deep and complex problems. The twentieth century is riddled with such narrow-minded decisions that, in retrospect, appear to be profoundly short-sighted and disingenuous.

The Middle East is a case in point with decisions taken after World War I are still affecting the region almost a century—and several wars—later. This is what the French philosopher Gaston Bachelard (1884-1962) had to say about imagination: “More than the determination, more than the vital momentum, imagination is the very strength of the psychic production.” While there are proven methods of conflict prevention based on the organization of periodic meetings and cultural exchanges—including between “rival” cultures—such methods are often overlooked. Yet, these exchanges can, in the long run, produce a certain flexibility that can loosen up rigid outlooks often built on prejudices. These methods are founded on a constructive understanding of cross-cultural relations. It is therefore vital that we try to understand each other’s cultures in order to clarify the misunderstandings, and to see our differences as assets rather than as handicaps.