



AGENDA FOR RECONCILIATION

Dialogues towards justice and reconciliation



‘There is a great difference between stopping a conflict and reconciling the warring parties,’ said Edouard Brunner, former Secretary of State in the Swiss Department of Foreign Affairs, opening the 1999 Agenda for Reconciliation. ‘The first is far easier than the second. I know of no government agendas or conferences dealing with genuine reconciliation. If we can add that dimension to the initiatives aimed at restoring peace, this will be a big step towards creating fraternity and interdependence between people in conflict.’



This was the third meeting of the Agenda, which takes place each August at the Moral Re-Armament (MRA) international conference centre at Caux, Switzerland. It brought together 450



people from 60 countries. One of its initiators, Japanese Diet Member Yukihiro Fujita, said: ‘Peace and development depend on reconciliation. Warring parties need to see that differing races and religions can work together. That is the aim of Caux.’



This report contains extracts from the proceedings.



Caux 1999

CIVILISATIONS – REPLACING DISTRUST WITH APPRECIATION

Will the future be characterised by the clash of civilisations?
Or by the growth of a constructive dialogue between them?

The Agenda for Reconciliation witnessed a wide range of cross-cultural dialogues.

WILHELM VERWOERD, lecturer in philosophy, South Africa. Grandson of former Prime Minister Henrik Verwoerd, widely regarded as the architect of apartheid.

'I grew up living the seductive life of a white Afrikaner in the beautiful university town of Stellenbosch. When I went to Europe as a student, I was suddenly exposed to painful truth about South Africa. I had been very proud of my Afrikaner identity; but when a Zambian asked me, 'Why do you Afrikaners try so hard to separate yourselves from us Africans?', I saw



how much that identity was based on fear. I began to see my grandfather through the eyes and tears of South Africans in exile, and realised the huge difference between their view and the picture with which I grew up.

Later I realised that though I was committed to an equal partnership with my wife, I had to overcome deeply ingrained attitudes to sharing the labour of the home, so that we could both be involved in the public life of our country.

When we went back to South Africa, I was like a tree without roots. I had to find a place where I could be anchored again. One day I went down to the beach. Huge waves were coming in. I wanted to run away; but I sat for hours, facing those waves. I realised that I needn't be ashamed that I am a white Afrikaner Christian, as long as I did something creative with these sources of myself. That led me eventually to join the ANC. My father told me that if I did this, I could not be a member of the family any more. But because I found clarity of conviction, it was possible to make that choice. Reconciliation is a costly business. But it has brought Melanie and me to a point where we can feel alive, excited and privileged to be part of shaping a new South Africa.'

MELANIE VERWOERD, ANC Member of Parliament, South Africa

'Reconciliation is the tortuous road of a life-long commitment to the country and its people. It requires, from each of us, a personal introspection. We need to keep quiet and listen to our fellow South Africans, and recognise the tears of those that have been so deeply hurt. In this

process, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission has played an important role. So many have come there to tell their story – not out of revenge, but to seek reconciliation.

Whether those who inflicted the pain intended to do so is irrelevant. The point is that someone was hurt. If that person shares the hurt with you, and you turn your back, this causes further injury. That is why it is crucial for those who were responsible to apologise unconditionally. As Archbishop Tutu said, 'Confession, forgiveness and reconciliation are not airy-fairy religious things. They are the stuff of practical politics.'

Many people from the previously advantaged communities say: 'Let bygones be bygones.' But the reality is that while the vast majority of Africans still live with the consequences of apartheid, whites enjoy the fruits of decades of racially-determined State expenditure. The past is present in access to jobs and earnings, in health care and education, in sport and recreation; and these legacies of apartheid will endure stubbornly unless we actively remove them.

It is therefore important that the Government succeeds in the reconstruction and development programme (RDP) of our nation. And social transformation can not be separated from spiritual transformation. Both Nelson Mandela and Thabo Mbeki have increasingly spoken about the 'RDP of the soul'. They recognise that we must ensure that our history of dehumanisation and immorality does not spawn new generations of people who find nothing wrong with corruption, crime, the mindless pursuit of purely personal goals and profit, and the manipulation of people towards these goals. It is a battle we can and must win.'

"We feel alive, privileged to be part of shaping a new South Africa."



Melanie Verwoerd, (centre) introduces Ruth Mompati, South African Ambassador to Switzerland, to her daughter Wilmé.

SIR DOUGLAS GRAHAM, Attorney-General, Minister in Charge of Treaty of Waitangi Negotiations, New Zealand

‘The Maori people came to New Zealand a thousand years ago. Two hundred years ago, British settlers started to arrive. The two peoples signed the Treaty of Waitangi, guaranteeing the rights of the Maori under British sovereignty.

However, as the number of settlers increased, their demand for land increased. Maoris grouped together to try and prevent sales. That was deemed to be a rebellion. Troops were imported, wars began, and Maori land was confiscated. Then we established the native land court to break down communal ownership into individual titles and make land sales easier.

By 1900 the Maori people owned only 5% of the land of New Zealand and were dying out, disheartened. They had no way of seeking redress for their grievances.

In 1975, as a result of Maori protests, we established the Waitangi Tribunal to hear the grievances. By 1990 there were 700 claims. At that point we decided that we would attempt to address all the claims. We were not motivated by guilt, because we were not alive when the wrong was done. But we have an obligation to correct the wrong.

It fell to me as Minister to begin. I started with a blank piece of paper. How do you value losses suffered a hundred years ago?

Well, we’ve tried. In the last 10 years we have settled claims which cover a little over half of New Zealand. Maori people now own more than half the commercial fishing in New Zealand. It has cost the tax-payer about \$700 million so far. The tribal groups have invested these funds, and are able to provide their own education scholarships, their own health care in their own way.

The settlements will not be durable unless the negotiations are fair. So they are unusual negotiations. They are not commercial. They are spiritual. We begin each time with the *Karakia*, a prayer. We sit around the table, not across. There are a lot of tears. The burden is great on the Maori leaders. But they recognise that to pass on the grievance to the next generation would be unhealthy for Maori and for New Zealand.

The settlements have three parts. The first is a formal apology from the Crown, which details what happened; and an apology from the Government on behalf of New Zealanders, which we will deliver in person at the *Marae* (Maori meeting place). The second is cultural redress – the return of burial sites, the recognition of interests in rivers and lakes and geo-thermal power and mountains. We recognise the holistic way that Maori people view those resources and the life force that they see in all of them. Thirdly there is commercial redress, which we hope



is enough to get people started again financially.

It has been ten years of hard work. There are moments when you get frustrated and wonder whether it is going to work, and whether you can take the population with you. You have the red necks on one side and the radicals on the other, and you aim for those in between, and say to them, ‘The vision is there. Your sons, mine, our grandchildren, will live together in greater harmony’. You know that you are trying to bring justice for the betterment of New Zealand and hopefully for all mankind.’

KUINI REEDY, Maori elder and educator, New Zealand



‘We were fed up that the prisons and welfare institutions were full of Maori people. We realised that we had to return to the values of our ancestors. Maori elders from all over New Zealand came together at a national *hui* (meeting), and decided to focus on the language. Language is the life force of a people. But ours was dying fast after three generations of suppression.

We started at the grassroots, winning the support of our politicians to the Kohanga Reo movement, which establishes Maori kindergartens for our children, so that they receive our culture and language from an early age. Through the revival of the language we are able to revive our soul, and this is restoring our culture.’

“We have set ourselves to end Maori grievances in this generation”



Lac Léman
(the Lake of Geneva)
as seen from the
conference centre.



Current and former parliamentarians and senior government officials from 20 countries met during the Agenda to discuss conflict situations in several parts of the world. They issued the following appeal:

Ethiopia/Eritrea

We are concerned that events stemming from the Ethiopian/Eritrean war are not given sufficient priority by the international community. We sense the urgency needed in view of the extent of human suffering. We will appeal to our respective governments to take immediate action.

Kosovo and other areas of conflict

The example of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa could play a part in reconciling the deep divisions in Kosovo and Bosnia. Retributive justice is not enough to heal the wounds and ensure a democratic and pluralistic future. We recommend for Kosovo – and other areas of conflict such as Rwanda – that the facilities of Caux be made available to leaders and citizens to begin the processes of reconciliation. We offer to support such dialogue processes.

Debt Relief

There is a strong consensus in support of debt relief for highly indebted poor countries, conditional on significant reductions in arms purchases.

NIDIA DÍAZ, Member of Parliament, El Salvador. As a guerilla commander she was a signatory of the Peace Agreement that ended the civil war.

'We had civil war for 36 years. The indigenous people, who form 60% of the population, have suffered especially. We have not learnt to respect their right to be different. I am a



teacher, and I believe we will only solve this through changing the way we educate our students. I have worked alongside indigenous teachers. They were great colleagues, equal to me yet with differences which enrich our society. My commitment is to work for a new humility among my people. We need the indigenous people's forgiveness, and we need to forgive them. Only when that happens will we unite our country.'

ABDUL NABI ISSTAIF Professor of Comparative Literature, Damascus, Syria

'Civilisations are the outcome of partnership between different nations, peoples, areas and ages. Rather than feeding the notion of clash or conflict between civilisations, we should call for a partnership. In partnership, no one should have a monopoly over any part of human knowledge.

As the poet Abu al-Ala' al-Ma'arri once said: "May the rain never fall on me or my land, unless it covers the whole country".'



ALHAJI DR ADO BAYERO Emir of Kano, Nigeria

'The end of the cold war gave us a hope of a better world. This hope is giving way to ethnic chauvinism and corruption. In Nigeria, staggering amounts of funds disappear from government treasuries. An endemic sense of helplessness pervades society.

The return of democracy to Nigeria is invigorating our powerful press to challenge corruption. And freedom will strengthen the resolve of the general public.

In Nigeria, we are all too aware of inter- and intra-religious conflicts. During our recent presidential election, in the Northern electorates (where Muslims form the majority) the political parties willingly included Christian as well as Muslim candidates. This gave the Christian community a sense of belonging, and the action generated a lot of goodwill.

MRA is a universal moral rallying point. There is great strength in the synthesis of man's struggle to establish a moral order through the divine inspiration of Judaism, Christianity and Islam and through secular ethics. Man's moral nature will raise him to the lofty heights of humanity if he accepts responsibility; and to debasement if he succumbs to his lower desires.'

KIM TAE-ZHEE former Ambassador, Korea

'This year at Caux, people from two parts of China were able to have dialogue. We hope the day will come when we South Koreans will meet North Koreans here, and seek peace.'



right: State Representative
Anitra Rasmussen

below: State Senator Avel Gordly
(right) with Dr Yusuf
Al-Azhari, Somalia



In 1849, the Oregon Territorial Assembly passed legislation (since repealed) excluding African Americans from the State. This year, 150 years later, the Oregon Legislature held a Day of Acknowledgement, when the House and Senate acknowledged this history, recognised people of all races who have worked over the years for positive change, and called for ongoing dialogue and action. 'On that day, the galleries were packed with 600 people of all ages, dress, colours; and the Speaker invited them to join us on the floor of the House,' said State Representative Anitra Rasmussen, an initiator of the Day. Another initiator, State Senator Avel Gordly, described her feelings. 'I still find it fearful to stand and speak in the face of life-long messages that say, you are not worthy, we don't expect much from you – because you are not white,' she said. 'Though there are many people struggling to embrace inclusivity, white supremacy is still the foundation of our American institutions. That is why the Day of Acknowledgement was a powerful statement to our nation.'



Participants from Ethiopia, Eritrea, Sudan and Somalia meet

FROM VICTIM TO HEALER

Those who have suffered can do much to heal their societies

VLADIMIR DEVAKOV, Ukraine, teacher

‘Two years ago my wife had a difficult pregnancy. With our free health system crumbling, we decided to pay an experienced doctor to perform the delivery. When the moment came, the doctor was drunk. We could only rush to the hospital and leave matters to the duty doctor.



A few weeks later the neuropathologist told us that our daughter had suffered spinal or brain trauma at birth, would not walk until she was four, and would have a serious limp. For us, that started a time of intense pain and fear. We were angry at the doctors, the corruption, our helplessness.

I tried to be a neutral non-victim, but simply became a passive, quietly angry victim. Last year at Caux, I heard people talk about forgiveness. It sounded wonderful. The problem was that I had to be the agent of reconciliation. That was hard. I couldn't do it by myself.

My wife and I saw that this wasn't just a personal matter. We had to help break the post-Soviet approach to ethics in our country. So we have decided to take five steps. We fervently ask God to remove all bitterness. In my work as a teacher, I am trying to be the best I can be, refusing all bribes. We are doing everything possible to treat our child. My wife is a music graduate; but she has decided to train in nursing instead. And we are supporting the pregnant women we know, helping them get the fruit, vitamins, and other things they need.

In the past days, a great change has happened in my daughter. At the age of 17 months, she has begun to walk.'

YEHEZKEL LANDAU, Israel, educator

‘On this side of the Holocaust, the lesson for most survivors is, ‘Never again’. Does that mean just us, or does it mean to be in solidarity with every people facing genocide? Having met Rwandans here, I feel a strong affinity to them, and I am grateful for our new relationship.



Since 1948 we Jews in Israel have been tested by political and military empowerment, something we could only dream about for two millennia. The challenge for us is whether our State will remain faithful to the primary values of our heritage – justice and compassion. We are obsessed with security. What are we to choose? The Golden Rule? Or the pre-emptive strike mentality – ‘Do unto others before they get a chance to do it

worse unto you” – which keeps us trapped in a cycle of violence and retaliation?

I feel that I must apologise to the Palestinians, the Lebanese, the Egyptians, the Syrians, the Jordanians. They are victims of our fear, as we are of theirs. Our security requires more goodwill and forgiveness, rather than state-of-the-art weapons or policies that humiliate others. Hopefully, with God's help, we can listen compassionately to each other, and work together to heal the wounds of our shared history.'

HAMIT GURGURI, Kosovo, police officer, at present a refugee in Sweden

‘For a decade we Albanians have endured violence, discrimination and many cruelties. I appeal to all my people – do not take revenge. We have a saying: ‘Braver is he who forgives and reconciles than he who kills.’ There are Albanians who have reached out in reconciliation to the Serbian people. There are Serbians who have helped Albanians. We can work for reconciliation between our peoples. For ten years the University of Kosovo was closed to Albanian students. Now they have returned, and Serbian students have been expelled. I appeal to the Albanian students to invite their Serbian colleagues back. Let us together build our society in the Balkans.'



DIDACIENNE MUKAHABE SHIWARA Rwanda, nurse and trade unionist

‘After the 1994 genocide, I was traumatised by hate. But God removed it from me. We brought together women of every background to help the prisoners awaiting trial for the killings. We collect food, cook it and take it to them. We now have 75 women taking part. At first, the prisoners were amazed that widows of genocide were bringing them food. They were scared of being poisoned. But with time, they understood that our motivation was compassion. When they realised that, they started to cry, and to ask forgiveness.



Now I must ask forgiveness. We Rwandans have hated the international community, accusing you of leaving us unassisted when our children were being massacred. Please forgive us.'

WILLIAM STAINSBY, Ireland **President of the Newman Foundation**

'Having grown up in Derry, I lived with tragic memories of friends who were killed, of my own brushes with death. Like many in Northern Ireland, it left me with a deep fear of the future. Fear is a crippling disease. To transcend it, I have to get hold of my own thought patterns. I have to counterbalance fear with love. I may not feel like loving the other person, especially those who have hurt me. But I still have that basic control of myself whereby I can will to love him.'



HELEN MORAN, Australia, radio host

'I am a member of the stolen generations of the Australian Aboriginals – children of mixed Aboriginal and European descent who were removed from their families to be assimilated into white Australian society. Acknowledging that we have been victimised is well and good. But I realised that while I viewed myself as a victim, I could not rise above my experiences. They kept me weak, they helped me to stay angry, full of shame, blaming others, mistrusting and resentful. It has been a long and difficult road



recognise myself not as a victim but as a survivor, and in this I have been helped by others of the stolen generations. We will not accomplish reconciliation in Australia until we all, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, make peace in our own hearts, among ourselves and between each other. This year I have been a national committee member for the Journey of Healing, which has enlisted tens of thousands of Australians of all races in initiatives aimed at healing the wounds created by the assimilation and dispersal of the Aboriginal people.'

NURTA HAGI HASSAN, Somalia **business woman**

'In Somalia we have no government, no police, no courts. I live in the capital, Mogadishu, where two factions fought each other fiercely. I belonged to one faction; and lived for revenge against those who killed my people and looted my property. Five years ago I realised that my hatred was victimising myself. Others had suffered more than me. I began to forgive. I decided to go to the women of the other faction, and invite them to set up a market together. The UN helped with a grant which built 50 small kiosks, and we offered 25 of them to each faction. Our aim was not to make money but to bring together those who had been killing each other. Now the market has grown to 150 kiosks, and the kiosk owners have established a kindergarten for all their children together.'



At the end of a workshop on Russia, a Czech stood up and challenged the workshop leaders. Michal Gärtner's father and other members of his family died as a result of the Soviet invasion of his country in 1968. He himself had to leave Czechoslovakia. 'I am trying to forgive,' he said, 'but I have never heard any Russian apologise.' Russian human rights activist Andrei Mironov responded immediately with a sincere apology, adding that he had served a jail sentence, in part for speaking out against the invasion. The two men shook hands and talked together (pictured left, Mironov on right). 'His apology allowed me to let go of my hatred,' said Gärtner. The next evening, when the Czechs sang folk songs they ended with the classic Russian song 'Kalinka' as a 'gesture of goodwill towards our Russian friends present'.

COMING TO GRIPS WITH CORRUPTION

Corruption destabilises countries and aborts development. It needs to be fought at the macro and the individual level.

SIR JIM LESTER, United Kingdom, Member of Parliament, 1974-1997

'There was a time when we didn't talk about corruption. Now it is out in the open. It has forced the resignation of the whole European Commission. The World Bank and IMF have come out fighting. Recently I helped draft a handbook for parliamentarians worldwide detailing methods of creating a clean parliamentary assembly. This year there have been specific workshops in different regions. The IMF has been much braver in not paying loans to countries whose governments have done little to deal with corruption. In Kenya and Nigeria we have seen amazing change. The OECD has drafted legislation making bribery an offence. In the annual reports of companies, we are seeing much more attention paid to their 'corporate social responsibilities' - which usually means their programme to eliminate bribery.

Some people see corruption as a reason not to transfer resources. We should be wary of that argument. Stopping aid does not affect the national leaders. It affects schools and hospitals. We need to try to deal with corruption, but never use it as an excuse to avoid helping countries in need.'

CATHERINE WANJERI, Kenya, teacher

'Many Kenyans are unhappy about bad governance. But we lack the moral authority and spiritual strength to work for good governance.

Several years ago, MRA launched a Clean Election Campaign (CEC). Hundreds of thousands of leaflets, outlining the qualities of a good leader, and showing how everyone can help curb corruption, were distributed across the country by churches, mosques and community organisations. A pledge form was attached, enabling the recipient to

pledge that they would not participate in corruption or election violence. Nearly 50,000 signed pledges



were received by the CEC organising committee.

As a result, corruption became a live issue in the election campaign. Many people refused the bribes which politicians hand out. In some areas people urged women and men of integrity to stand for parliament, and raised money to pay their nomination fees. The new parliament has seen a much more searching debate on issues of corruption.

Since the election, over 7,000 Kenyans have written to the CEC, urging that the momentum be maintained. Thus was born the Clean Kenya Campaign. The first leaflets of the campaign have just come out. Requests are coming in from all over Kenya for campaign launches in their area.

My involvement with CEC challenged me to look at myself. Before I could demand honesty of my leaders, I saw I needed to be honest with my pupils and my colleagues, and straighten out my relationship with my parents and some friends.'

CHEA VANNATH, Cambodia President, Centre for Social Development

'Like many countries, we face tragic issues of corruption, such as the traffic in children and in drugs. For five years our Centre has been drafting anti-corruption laws and arranging visits by Government officials to countries where such laws are in place. However, the Government has set aside our legislation. We have concluded that we cannot fight corruption purely through legislation. We are now mobilising the people. We need to give them a vision of a transformed society. To this end, I have been printing and distributing the MRA booklet, *Which Way Cambodia?* We also need international help, and we are about to become an affiliate of Transparency International. We do not expect quick results. But the more we do, the more we will keep corruption under control.'



Agenda for Reconciliation

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