CIVIL SOCIETY REPORT AT MIDPOINT OF CULTURE OF PEACE DECADE

The global movement for a culture of peace is advancing. This is the conclusion of most organizations from around the world, as they report progress toward a culture of peace during the first five years of the International Decade for the Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World. It is documented by over 3000 pages of information submitted by almost 700 organizations from 100 countries which are freely available on the website http://decade-culture-of-peace.org/cgi-bin/ib3/ikonboard.cgi. This information is only the tip of the iceberg, since there are many other organizations promoting a culture of peace that were not contacted or did not respond to the questionnaire for this report, as indicated by the many partnerships listed by participating organizations. They number in the many thousands, corresponding to the call for partnerships for a culture of peace in General Assembly Resolution A/53/243 (para B.A.6).

Photo from WUNRN workshop in Pakistan

The advance is especially remarkable given that it has been only five years since UN General Assembly resolution A/53/243 first called for a global movement for a culture of peace. It is also remarkable because, as reported from around the world, the mass media has failed to report on news of the culture of peace, and the United Nations and the lead agency for the Decade, UNESCO, have given very little attention to it.

"We strengthen up communities" - Eco-Cidadão, Brazil

In Brazil where 15 million people signed the Manifesto 2000, special credit is given to the International Year for the Culture of Peace for having launched the movement in the Year 2000.

The richness of the reports reflects the definition of a culture of peace provided by General Assembly resolution A/52/13 that first called for a "transformation from a culture of war and violence to a culture of peace and non-violence": a culture of peace consists of "values, attitudes and behaviours

Traditional dances at the Gramsh dormitory fest – Albanian Disarmament Education Project

that reflect and inspire social interaction and sharing based on the principles of freedom, justice and democracy, all human rights, tolerance and solidarity, that reject violence and endeavour to prevent conflicts by tackling their root causes to solve problems through dialogue and negotiation and that guarantee the full exercise of all rights and the means to participate fully in the development process of their society." And the Programme of Action for a Culture of Peace (A/53/243) adopted by the General Assembly in 1999

["Shoot me with a bullet to the head, but don't rape me"] Centre Africain d'Echange Culturel

encompasses eight programme areas: Education for a culture of peace: Equality of women; Democratic participation; Sustainable development; Human rights; Understanding, tolerance, solidarity; Free flow of information and knowledge; International peace and security. Advice to the UN in all of these areas is given here from the reporting organizations.

PROGRESS AND OBSTACLES AS SEEN BY INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Excerpts from some of the 111 international organizations that have provided reports on the culture of peace (for full information see http://decade-culture-of-peace.org/cgi-bin/ib3/ikonboard.cgi). Regional organizations are considered separately in the appropriate region.

Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University: "The BKWSU has certainly seen progress towards a culture of peace and non-violence within its domain of action … Around the world, the BKWSU's meditation classes and sessions have attracted greater attendance and there has been a growing awareness of the need to develop and maintain inner peace in order to create a lasting culture of peace."

Hague Appeal for Peace: "Collaborative effort (1996-1999) to bring together 10,000 individuals and organizations in The Hague, The Netherlands … launched 12 campaigns worldwide to foster nonviolent alternatives to war. The Hague Appeal for Peace adopted the Global Campaign for Peace Education" "Obstacles to the Hague Appeal for Peace mission to see peace education integrated into formal and non-formal education worldwide include lack of political will, resource constraints i.e., teacher availability, set school curricula, understaffing, and under funding, and resistance of teacher education institutions to broaden the scope of education."

International Baccalaureate Organization: "The International Baccalaureate Organization is educating this year approximately 200,000 children in 1,500 schools spread across 117 countries for a world that is free of violence and filled with understanding where the rights of children and adults are respected. The annual increase in IB schools and student numbers is 15%, so our contribution has been spreading as the decade for peace moves on." "The main obstacle in …the developing world and poorer countries) is cost…"

International Federation of University Women: Many reports were received from IFUW national affiliates of progress in establishing a culture of peace and non-violence and they are published on the World Report website (see Internet address at top of this page) under the country concerned or under the main heading for IFUW.

International Fellowship of Reconciliation: "There is greater awareness of the reality of violence at the domestic level and greater awareness that the use of violence needs to be challenged in all levels of society. [especially] violence against women and children.…The impact of the media and especially of the dominant American culture has been to entrench violence as an integral aspect of conflict resolution … the invasion of Iraq by the US and its allies was a major setback …"

International Network of Engineers and Scientists for Global Responsibility: "In the past years the INES activities were intensified … INES reinforced its contacts with international organizations like the Middle Power Initiative and the World Federation of Scientific Workers. INES participated in the European Social Forums of Paris and London by the organization of workshops and seminars in collaboration with other NGOs…"

International Peace Bureau: "Democracy-building, women's participation (esp. work on UNSC Resolution 1325), anti-poverty, International Criminal Court, nuclear abolition, landmines, small arms, conflict prevention, non-violent intervention, human rights, human security and UN reform. In most of these areas - despite a very challenging political climate - we have seen some significant advances in the last 5 years." "The most severe hurdles for civil society relate to a) lack of resources, primarily financial and b) mobility restrictions such as refusal of visas for essential travel, and restrictions on UN access rights…."

International Society of City and Regional Planners: "As a non-governmental organisation with the aim to bring together professionals in the field of planning on our annual conferences ISoCaRP feels that it constantly contributes to a culture of peace; specifically by organising Young Professionals Workshops (in 2005: already the 15th one) until now supported by UNESCO." "However, due to a shift of priorities, UNESCO has informed our society that it can no longer support these workshops as of 2006."

Life-Link Friendship-Schools Programme: "There is progress since year 2000 *through formulation of an operative peace concept: "Care for Myself – Care for Others – Care for Nature", *through spread of a manual to schools in 70 countries, *by inspiring 400 schools to perform well above 2000 peace actions reported to the Life-Link interactive website. One of actions is named: 'From a Culture of Violence to a Culture of Peace/Care'". One obstacle is that "Teachers that are in contact with the Life-Link programme have told us that they have little time within their official working hours to engage and promote peace education and international programmes."

Pax Christi International: "We have seen progress, particularly in getting movement toward peace discussions among Palestinians and Israelis. We have sent our members to Israel and Palestine and organized meetings among professional and ordinary citizens of both parties." "The greatest obstacles are the governments and the unyielding religious conservatives who have an ideological determination to persist in what they believe is a God-given right to certain land and religious sites."

Peace Boat: "Overall, we would argue that there has been progress towards a culture of peace and non-violence …emergence of civil society as the "other superpower" in the massive worldwide demonstrations against the Iraqi war, and in the reasonable amount of coverage given to such activities in the mass media. The emergence of the World Social Forum movement, … significantly increased number of people joining our peace education voyages and our volunteer activities…" Obstacles "include a lack of cooperation between governments, UN and NGOs/CSO in the peace and security fields, and a lack of coordination of activities in NGO networks..."

Peaceways-Young General Assembly: "In July 2000, people under the age of 18 established an international organization dedicated to achieving a permanent Culture of Peace brought about with the

assistance of Child Participation … There are 91 Member organizations in 57 countries involving over 2 1/2 million young people worldwide…" "The hardest obstacle to overcome is the attitude that people under 18 are not capable of making decisions or initiating responsible action towards building a Culture of Peace…"

Soka Gakkai International: "We have developed several educational programs to promote a culture of peace and nonviolence such as the 'Building a Culture of Peace and Nonviolence for the Children of the World' exhibition, the 'Victory Over Violence' initiative, and several initiatives related to the theme of 'Women and a Culture of Peace."

Soroptimist International: "Maybe that the progress is not measurable, but within the communities where the projects have been realised a better understanding, more tolerance and solidarity has been achieved." "Obstacles: Especially for the youth the influence of the media is negative. Very seldom we find positive examples, in the headlines we find war, violence, murder. We would need more positive role models. The media should observe their responsibility."

The World Peace Prayer Society: "Yes, the Culture of Peace has been greatly advanced during the past 5 years. The World Peace Prayer Society promotes the prayer and message 'May Peace Prevail on Earth' around the globe as a constant reminder for people to hold peace in their hearts. Peace Poles, which are monuments with the message 'May Peace Prevail on Earth' inscribed in various languages, have been dedicated in over 180 countries and now total well over 200,000…" "One of the greatest challenges to creating a Culture of Peace has been the prevailing culture of violence evident in much of today's media and popular culture…"

Transcend: "Progress**:** We have contributed to the peaceful resolution of a number of international conflicts. In 2005 alone, Transcend has mediated in Sri Lanka, the Middle East, Chiapas, Aceh, Uganda, Liberia and many other conflict regions. As an earlier example, one positive experience was the creation of a BINATIONAL ZONE between Ecuador and Peru which has been an example for other conflicts…." Obstacles: "Only run by volunteer work, lack of permanent staff. No grants or financial support."

United Network of Young Peacebuilders (UNOY): "We have seen progress since 2000 which is reflected in the number of new activities and organisations involved. Of particular importance we consider the involvement of organisations which do not traditional work on this issue, for example, students associations and clubs in secondary schools and universities and religious organizations …" "The main obstacles we have faced and are facing are: 1. Lack of coordination among all institutions and actors involved. 2. Leadership of the Decade is not determined enough. More efforts need to be made by UNESCO…."

United Religions Initiative : "URI has seen definite progress toward a culture of peace as our organization -- committed to promote enduring, daily interfaith cooperation, to end religiously motivated violence and to create cultures of peace, justice and healing for the Earth and all living beings -- has grown from 85 Cooperation Circles (our local groups) in 2000 to nearly 280 CCs in 60 countries in 2005, with activities annually engaging over 1 million people. These numbers … don't measure a more critical factor -- the depth of transformation that comes from forming mutually respectful communities whose members have rarely, if ever talked with each other and/or worked cooperatively to realize a shared vocation for peace, justice and healing."

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom: "Our organization, working in 37 countries, has seen minimal progress in the first half of the decade. We have, however, seen remarkable progress within our own education, and on a grassroots level. The growing awareness of a culture of peace and nonviolence within and without the organization has indeed progressed…" "Funding is one obstacle that has prevented us from completing some specific projects on furthering the decade."

World Alliance of YMCAs: "…The World Alliance of YMCAs has been promoting a culture of peace for many years through its 40 million members at local, national, regional and international levels. As a youth organisation the YMCA is particularly focused on engaging young people to promote a culture of peace. The World Council of YMCAs meets every 4 years. In the first World Council meeting after the Decade for the Culture of Peace, in Mexico 2002, the Council adopted three Global Youth Priorities, one of them being to promote a culture of peace."

World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts: "Progress: Yes, through our joint peace work with our brother organization, WOSM, more girls and young women and boys and young men have taken part in peace activities. Together we have almost 40 million members. We are running many different peace projects - some long-running and some new - all of which are being taken up enthusiastically by different countries. For example, a small peace project developed on the Olympic games, involved over 13 countries."

World Council of Churches - Decade to Overcome Violence (DOV): "There clearly is progress in making peace and nonviolence more of a priority in the constituency of the World Council of Churches. Several National or Regional councils have made overcoming violence and/or peace building the theme of their general assemblies, and church agencies have made overcoming violence a programmatic priority or a criterion for evaluation ... DOV and the UN-Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World are in growing convergence and synergic development."

World Federation of UNESCO Clubs, Centers and Associations: "Since 2001, WFUCA has conducted numerous sub-regional and international projects in the domain of the culture of peace … These actions (see full report) address not only a broad public of youth and young adults, but also children who are sometimes the main actors…" "Despite a special website for 'Confluences – the newsletter of WFUCA ' - too many members of UNESCO Clubs in developing countries have no direct access to Internet…"

PROGRESS AND OBSTACLES IN AFRICA

(Based on data from 80 national organizations from Benin, Burundi, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone,Somalia, South Africa, Tchad, Togo and Uganda, as well as regional organizations including the Organisation Panafricaine des Femmes and the Federation of African Women's Peace Networks, which have member organizations in many states)

PROGRESS: When looking at the entire continent of Africa, some accounts tend to be negative. For example, "Long-drawn wars, the type we had in Rwanda/Burundi in the last decade of the last decade of the last century were not commonplace in the first half of this decade. But the Darfour crisis, sporadic wars like skirmishes in West Africa and increasing displacement of people due to socio-political problems in many African countries nearly tend to suggest that many African societies are pushing more towards violence than they are towards a culture of peace. Obstacles include existence of violence-inducing situations which are mainly socio-economic... oil in Nigeria's Niger-Delta, diamond in Liberia/Sierra Leone, land in Rwanda/Burundi; and in various communal clashes that have broken out in Nigeria." Other views are more positive. For example, "In Africa, in country after country, advances result from the peoples' demands for a model of democracy founded on a State of rights, the efforts of promotion, of economic, cultural and social integration, both sub-regional and regional, the engagement of new authorities materialized by NEPAD (New Partnership for the Development of Africa) of which the fundamental principle is good governance."

When looking at local situations where organizations are active, except for two accounts from Somalia and the Niger Delta, the accounts are mostly positive. A Nigerian organization writes, "There has been tremendous progress towards a culture of peace in my state especially this year that is mid of the decade. The indicators to measure this progress are, 1. People returning to their homes after fleeing due to incidents of gun battles that occurred in those domains. 2. Economic activities resuming. 3. The youths that were at each others throat, publicly embracing each other and swearing an oath that the hostilities would not return. 4. The state government diverting their attention to developmental activities and utilizing funds to pursue developmental activities."

An organization from Ghana writes, "We have been successful bringing about peace between three rural and tropical villages in Ghana. They have also been educated on the importance of tolerance ... The communities now meet together to discuss development issues which was non existent previously as there were conflict and litigation."

From the Democratic Republic of the Congo: "Despite the armed violence and other forms of violence that afflicted our country, R.D.Congo, we can see ... the actions of civil society in the search for a lasting peace and culture of non-violence. Our work was difficult for the period ranging between 1998-2004 during which we passed from intimidation to dialogue, from violence to mediation between the various parties in conflict... "

And from Burundi: "A remarkable progress has been recorded in the culture of peace and non-violence in Burundi. …our new-look concept 'mine clearance of the spirit' … has and continues to allow, through appropriate actions, the uprooting of any sort of division and hatred, mutual acceptance and progressive reconciliation. With the campaigns undertaken since the end of 2004 on this concept of mine clearance of the spirits, more than 500 Burundian organizations and personalities adhered to the campaign against land mines 'in the spirit' of people, as well as anti-personnel land mines."

Youth are taking the lead: "In the schools, one notes the creation of clubs for peace and clubs for human rights." More than half of the organizations reporting are specifically run by youth and dedicated to youth. A typical example by a youth organization: "Peace building and conflict resolution activities were conducted among the youth at the grass root levels through participatory methodology." And a special case: "We were able to reach more than 100,000 people with a message of peace by use of a camel caravan ..."

Leadership is also taken by the women's organizations, at the international level, as mentioned at the top of this page, as well as national and local levels.

OBSTACLES: The chief obstacles mentioned by almost everyone are lack of funding and technical support, including means of transport and Internet facilities. Another issue is "poor level of collaboration or networks among NGOs."

The media is often mentioned as an obstacle: "Media were unwilling to support the campaign and those that did demanded money from the campaigners to cover the event;" and it promotes violence: "the proliferation of video games and local cinema halls diffusing violent films all day long." One organization has dealt with this directly: "We have engaged one person (a journalist) in each of the press houses in order to train them. Once trained, the journalists often write articles in their press about non-violence and the environment - and we do the same for those responsible for television broadcasts."

PROGRESS AND OBSTACLES IN THE ARAB STATES

(based on data from 50 organizations from Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Jordan, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, Yemen)

PROGRESS: Where there is no peace, progress is difficult. For example: "our organization, based in the non-violent intervention in Palestine has seen a REGRESSION in our domain of action during now 4 years of our existence. More than 100 missions and 2000 citizens sent there register day after day the decay of the different aspects of the life situation of the Palestinians, the growing lack of hope. The most important obstacles that have prevented progress are the obstinacy of the Israeli government to deny the fundamental and national rights of the Palestinian people, the violent politics applied by those who call for a violent response." And a response from an organization that tried to maintain a peace center in Iraq: "In the beginning we in the Iraqi peace center thought that things will work out very well … We have planned to do so many programs in terms of peace culture and cultural exchange, but no one of them have been done. All of that happened because of the current financial situation of Iraq, and the huge waves of violence that have destroyed the country."

But progress is not impossible. For example, one organization working in Palestine says, "Peace is elusive. At the same time, there are more and more people that are getting involved in peace work. There is a record number of organizations that are trying to promote peace." The Palestinian/Israeli project "Good Water Makes Good Neighbors" by the international NGO Friends of the Earth Middle East has achieved "concrete and practical reconciliation actions on the ground implemented by volunteer youth water trustees created by the project in each community based on the common water and environment issues that they share."   A conflict resolution institute in Ramallah has promoted "peaceful conflict resolution techniques among a generation of future leaders through the design and implementation of unique programs and services … reaching more than 50,000 beneficiaries in Palestine through the development of relief projects and programs." And in Iraq, a commission for civil society enterprises has "established a wide organizational network to arrange the work and activities of the different organizations to promote political participation, develop the community's capabilities and contribute to sustainable development."

In the rest of the region, progress is reported by all civil society organizations. There is an increase both in number of projects and in the number of organizations involved. Improvements are reported in democratic participation, the role of women and human rights activities, as well as dialogues for tolerance and inter-faith understanding. For example, "Yes, we have made progress. We have conducted a programme for dialogue between the diverse opposition parties, including Islamists, and together we worked out a national formula for political reform in Yemen. We have also managed, in cooperation with Yemeni women associations and international organizations operating in Yemen, to get an initial obligation from all political parties, including the governing party, to adopt a quota system for women participation in the coming elections." Many organizations recognize that the empowerment of women and the establishment of gender equality are essential to progress in democracy and a culture of peace, but only a few are working on women's political rights or civic education.

In general the growth of the role for civil society organizations in some countries has become an important element in policy formulation, and in blocking some public activities not in conformity with the Culture of Peace, e.g. in Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, Yemen and Morocco. Also there has been success in certain partnerships between civil society organizations and governments in some countries such as in Algeria, Jordan and Egypt.

OBSTACLES: Insufficient, inadequate funding is a universal obstacle.   Another major obstacle concerns human expertise. More technical assistance is needed to deal with building capacity, project implementation, sustainability and marketing to target more participation from civil society and the private sector.

Networking is increasing, but remains weak for joint activities and solid cooperation, especially for cooperation with NGOs abroad: "Another technical challenge is the lack of actual coordination on the ground either between international concerned institutions and local NGOs, or between the local NGOs themselves." Although a majority of Arab civil society organizations say they are part of networks with other Arab organizations, they do not report common projects that might give them a chance to expand their activity geographically or to benefit from their common potentials. Government cooperation depends on the country, but in general it is better for education, sustainable development and international peace, and more problematic for human rights and equality of women.

The mass media is found to be a major obstacle. Examples: An obstacle is "local and international media indifference to our activities" and the international media, "seems to be more interested in the region's violence and bombings while we would prefer to highlight the fact that there does exist dialogue, cooperation and joint activities between Israelis, Palestinians and Jordanians." Related to this is "mutual misunderstanding and lack of accurate information between the Arabs and the West, which has created an unhealthy environment for the achievement of our goals."

PROGRESS AND OBSTACLES IN LATIN AMERICA

(based on data from 142 national organizations from Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay and Peru, as well as several regional organizations, including Ciudades Educadores America Latina and Consejo Latinoamericano de investigación para la Paz that include member organizations in many Latin American states)

PROGRESS: In Brazil there were 15 million signatures on the Manifesto 2000 during the International Year for the Culture of Peace, and many of the 75 Brazilian organizations represented here were started after that time. As one report describes, "UNESCO's Year for a Culture of Peace had a great impact. Millions of citizens gave their support and commitments in many universities, work-groups and research centres were created about the vital theme of peace and non-violence." The reports from civil society in Brazil are too rich and varied to do justice to them here. Remarkable cooperation for a culture of peace between civil society organizations and government agencies at local, city, state and national levels includes a national disarmament initiative. For example, "ConPAZ, Culture of Peace Parliamentary Advisory Board is a body of the São Paulo Legislative Assembly …the first organism of its kind in the world, gathering representatives of 36 institutions of the civil society and 12 deputies of the State Assembly … to formulate, supervise and assess parliamentary policies for a Culture of Peace based on the principles of the Manifesto 2000." At a national level, "in 2003 the theme 'Culture of Peace and Non-Violence' was introduced in the agenda of the municipal representatives of health care, through meetings of the CONASEMS, which represents as much as 5,562 municipal health care delegations of Brazil." Other reports come from the cities of Cajamar, Aparecida, Belo Horizonte, São Carlos, Porto Ferreira and the state of Espirito Santo. However, inter-sectoral programs of civil society and government are not easy, since, "Public policies and programs are interrupted every 4 years, when new governors, mayors and president are elected."

In Colombia, to quote one report, "There are many projects for the development of a Culture of Peace, defense and promotion of human rights, reconciliation, works of women and equality, actions with and for children, both boys and girls, and young people. There is work of recognition and support for displaced populations and other vulnerable groups. Expressions come from all aspects of the life of the nation: children, young people, educational institutions, plastic arts, theater, Associations of Communal Action, the work of women and mothers, friends and relatives of those kidnapped and disappeared, the academy, union groups. Unfortunately, this activity has not been reflected in a substantial change of the levels of violence from armed conflict as well as other forms of violence in Colombian society." To explain the lack of effect, the report suggests that one factor may be "the lack of coordination of actions between the organizations … It is necessary to establish networks and free-flowing communication to avoid duplication of efforts and waste of resources and to obtain cooperation and greater social impact." The need for greater cooperation is echoed in similar comments from elsewhere in Latin America.

A report from Peru credits the government Ministry of Women and Human Development with making the culture of peace a theme of its program of "Apoyo al Repoblamiento (PAR)" and mentions a movement in Huánuco based on the recommendations of the Commission of Truth and Reconciliation, including the goal of "promoting a culture of peace on a regional level." In Mexico the culture of peace is linked to work for human rights. Of special importance in Guatemala is the widespread participation of indigenous peoples, which according to one account would have been unthinkable just 20 years ago.

Throughout Latin America, and especially in Argentina, young people are involved in promoting a culture of peace, in schools, in troops of scouts and guides, in international exchange programs, in sports, in universities and youth organizations and centers. On the other hand, there are references to lack of family infrastructure and lack of family involvement with the activities of young people as an obstacle to progress toward a culture of peace.

OBSTACLES: Most reports underline widespread unemployment, poverty and inequality, and many link them to neo-liberal economics and globalization. Many put blame on the mass media: "We feel immersed in a culture of war where distrust, absence of dialogue, fear, excessive competition, indifference to nature, and structural as much as direct violence, prevail…with the support of the media that privileges these values in detriment to the values of peace." At the same time there are efforts to develop positive media such as those by one organization that "promotes workshops of mediatic education… produces communal educative audiovisual products and organizes meeting and conferences for the democratization of communications. Finally, it tries to foment the creation and establishment of communal medias."

As elsewhere, most say there are insufficient financial and human resources available for what needs to be done. One report describes this as "the scarcity and difficulty of access to resources for the promotion of the culture of peace, in comparison with the immense expenses for the promotion of war and violence."

"The absence of a permanent information channel with UN agencies, which would allow the members of our board to better understand and apply the Culture of Peace principles" is a complaint that finds echoes in a number of reports. It is further stated that "to form a general common understanding of these principles not only among politicians, but throughout the civil society, is in fact, the great challenge."

PROGRESS AND OBSTACLES IN SOUTH AND WEST ASIA

(based on data from 47 organizations from Bangladesh, India, Iran, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka)

PROGRESS: Work is progressing on the root causes of violence in this region. It is said that "Fundamentalism and religious fanaticism have largely been the main obstacles in the path of progress toward enhancing and achieving adherence to culture of peace. In addition, under-development, unemployment, ignorance, injustice, poverty are liable to lead to violence."   This is linked to education: "To achieve Peace Culture, living values, understanding, tolerance and even democracy should be taught from childhood." In response to these perceived needs, many organizations in this region report on progress in their work for local employment and health initiatives and for education.   Work is also progressing for participatory democracy throughout the region, given that in the past, as described for one country, "Our political system was never people-led and based on people's wishes and aspirations. It has always been ruler-led."

At the same time, organizations are trying to overcome overt violence (inter-religious, inter-ethnic and international) with varying degrees of success. In some regions, the situation is described as urgent, such as in Nepal, Pakistan-Afghanistan, and some states of India (Gujarat, Kashmir). In others, relative peace is described, as in Bangladesh, Iran and some states of India (Tamilnadu, Maharashtra). But here, too, it is said that "the knowledge that past violence has broken out as a flash point, not even a slow build, as is often the case in communal violence, leaves an anxious vulnerability due to the uncertainty of what could spark it again in the future."

Many are emphasizing girls' education and employment since women are especially victimized by ignorance and poverty. It is said that for women, "poverty is not only the consequence of a lack of resources, but also due to certain discrimination … The realization of women's rights is a global struggle based on universal human rights and the rule of law." In general, lack of adequate education is seen as a major problem, especially in rural areas and among refugees.

OBSTACLES: Most organizations operate on small budgets and largely volunteer staffs, so funding and trained personnel are seen as major obstacles to progress.

There are complaints about "lack of coordination among NGOs, donor agencies and government departments."   One organization expresses this as: "Leadership of the Decade is not determined enough. More efforts need to be made by UNESCO … [there are] difficulties in partnership building. We have not learnt to work together. We need to develop a sense of common project, building up on everyone's strengths and not fearing competition."

As elsewhere in the world, the mass media is often seen as an obstacle to progress: "bad news seems to be big news and good news seems to be no news."

PROGRESS AND OBSTACLES IN EAST ASIA

(based on data from 24 organizations from Australia, China, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand, as well as the regional organization, Asia-Pacific Centre of Education for International Understanding)

PROGRESS: In China, Japan and Korea, organizations report that their priority is being put on international partnerships and international education in the schools. This may help overcome the history of war in this region, which, in some cases, remains distorted in the textbooks being distributed by the government to schools. The culture of peace may also seen as an alternative to violent culture where "corporal punishments and bullying at school and violent TV programs and videos at home [and] violent scenes in magazines, movies and comics … scenes that affirm violence are everywhere."

In the Philippines, several organizations describe their work to strengthen ceasefires and zones of peace in the areas where armed conflict has continued for several generations.   Much of their work involves peace education in schools, where it is making progress despite some opposition by conservative school administrators and lack of adequate teacher training.

In Southeast Asia, among others, reports describe the "Path of Progress Ethics Quiz Contest" for a culture of peace in Thailand and the "SIGNIS Asia Charter: Promoting a Culture of Peace through Communicative Action" from Malaysia. The latter proposes a campaign to "seize communication opportunities for promoting a Culture of Peace. The existing social order that promotes a culture of violence and the highly-developed and complex media environment and the technology and institutions that support it offer great challenges and opportunities for the promotion of the Culture of Peace", including specifically 'Promoting transparent, reconciliatory, participative and dialogical communication processes and institutions in Asia.'"

In Australia, organizations are working for reconciliation with indigenous peoples, a just refugee policy and inter-religious, inter-ethnic dialogue, in the face of governmental policies that are seen as giving support to global militarism abroad and continued social injustice at home.   Increasingly, individuals and organizations are participating in training for alternative dispute resolution, including mediation and negotiation.

OBSTACLES: Throughout the region, the lack of sustained funding is seen as an obstacle to progress. Another complaint is "lack of communication channels with UN and other international NGOs."

PROGRESS AND OBSTACLES IN EUROPE

(based on data from 143 organizations, including schools and university programs, from Albania, Armenia, Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzogovina, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland. Israel, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, and Montenegro, Ukraine and United Kingdom)

PROGRESS: Organizations for the culture of peace are growing in Europe as indicated by reports from national networks for peace and the culture of peace in Austria, France, Italy, Greece, Netherlands, Norway and Spain representing hundreds of additional organizations, as well as a European Network for Peace Education in eight countries. City-wide mobilizations are described from Osnabruck (Germany), Donostia/San Sebastian (Spain), Malakoff (France), Rotterdam (Netherlands), as well as communes from Italy and Norway.

Many would agree with the assessment that the leadership comes from civil society: "At level of the policy of the states, interstate organizations and international politics: No [there has been no progress]. The number of armed conflicts, of commercial tensions, increased criminal economy and violence in social relations has continued to increase. Only the pacifist and humanitarian organizations, as well as the citizenry in general have intensified their presence and activities in peace, non-violence and the resolution of conflicts." Many complain that their national governments, as well as UN agencies, have not acted upon the Decade for the Culture of Peace and Non-Violence.

The teaching and practice of mediation and other alternative forms of conflict resolution is on the rise. Education for a culture of peace has been systematically introduced into school systems in France, Greece, Spain, and in all teachers' training in Sweden. As one organization describes, "In our daily task to promote an education to peace and to study the conditions for the construction of peace, we have noted a true progression - slow as it may be but nonetheless real! - from a culture of war towards a culture of peace … in schools, high-schools and colleges where we act through exhibitions, presentations, conferences and lectures, we witnessed a growing interest for the issues of solidarity and global development which are important paths to peace." This is sometimes described as the "work of ants."

Many European organizations specialize in solidarity with ex-colonies and other countries of the South. For example, one Norwegian organization celebrates a major victory in their efforts to help preserve the rainforest for the indigenous people in Brazil. Another "links about 190 communities with partners in the South." Other organizations are involved with protecting the human rights of those who have immigrated from countries of the South.

In Eastern Europe, the movement for a culture of peace, for the most part, is small but well dispersed throughout the region. For example, in the Russian Federation, reports have been received from UNESCO Schools, Clubs, University Chairs and Institutes that continue to work for a Culture of Peace in Nalchik (North Caucasus), Kazan (Tatarstan), Ufa (Bashkortistan), Novosibirsk (Siberia), Tula and Volgograd as well as in the major cities of Moscow and St. Petersburg. Their work flourished previously when the Russian government cooperated with UNESCO during the International Year for the Culture of Peace, but since that cooperation ended they have lost their national support. In other East European countries there are many reports from Life-Link Friendship Schools.

Major programs are underway in Albania for disarmament education and in Bosnia and Herzogovina devoted to education for a culture of healing and peace in 108 schools involving 80,000 students 5000 teachers and 150,000 parents.

Women are playing a leading role, as described by Women in Black (Belgrade, Serbia): "Throughout the region women initiated peace exchanges, dialogue amongst women activists and made numerous proclamations demanding an end to war and violence." See also the reports from NGO Women for Development (Armenia), Education of Mothers for the Education of Children (Hungary), and the Russian section of Women's International League for Peace and Freedom.

OBSTACLES: The "war on terrorism" is described as diverting attention from peace: "the fear in the world was used to put minds on war while we need these minds to prepare the road towards peace." In addition to psychological effects, there are sometimes political effects as well, as one group describes: "We had planned to undertake a lobby of governments at the UN in New York … but our colleagues were held up at the airport for 'random baggage checks' until the plane had left and their tickets were not reimbursed. Many of our colleagues withdrew into a shell of activities aimed at keeping a low profile." Many organizations see a major obstacle in the mass media's lack of interest in their activities and their emphasis on the news of violence instead.

Both non-governmental organizations and schools and universities find it difficult to obtain funds to support their work for a culture of peace, and, in the case of teachers, to obtain the authorization to spend time on peace in the schools. In addition, there are problems of priorities in education: "[Schools in our country] are obsessed with passing meaningless exams … and not enough time is given to social issues, to talk and debate – to visit and receive visitors from other cultures."

PROGRESS AND OBSTACLES IN NORTH AMERICA

(data from 53 organizations in Canada and United States)

PROGRESS: Both Canadian and US organizations report progress toward a culture of peace in their own work. For the most part, they do not address the question of progress at a national or international level, but they do see increased awareness and cooperation in the particular cities where they work, including Hamilton (Ontario), Vancouver (British Columbia), Calgary (Alberta), Cincinnati (Ohio), Houston (Texas), Northfield and St Paul (Minnesota), New Haven (Connecticut), Quabbin (Massachusetts), New York City and in particular states (Connecticut, Minnesota). In Canada a nationwide Culture of Peace Program has been launched. Organizations specializing in non-violence like the Fellowship of Reconciliation report increasing membership and interest.

An advance is seen in the awareness and practice of mediation, restorative justice and other alternative forms of conflict resolution to settle disputes. There are many programs in schools, as well as in communities, and even prisons, often involving training programs that may involve local police departments and members of the communities they serve. In one community "We now teach conflict resolution and mediation to over 1,500 school children each year in this mostly rural region (and have) trained over 100 community members as mediators."

Regular peace vigils by many local groups receive an overwhelming positive response; this contradicts the impression given by the mass media that the population is evenly split between support and opposition to war and militarism. "People seem heartened to know that they were not alone or crazy in their yearning for peace." In both Canada and the US people are trying to get support for a Department of Peace at the level of the federal governments.

The "Student Pledge Against Gun Violence" has been signed by more than 10 million young people and may have contributed to a dramatic decrease in gun deaths among young people.

OBSTACLES: Many agree with the statement that "the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq after 9/11 have made many people feel depressed and powerless to influence events." And many point to the emphasis on violence by the mass media as another obstacle: "people are constantly bombarded with daily images of violence on television, in the movies, at sports events, and in their popular video games." At the same time, the Internet is often seen as a positive mobilizing and consciousness-raising tool. At a local level, "The Internet has made it possible to get information out quickly to all concerned which has facilitated the work. The sense of community is enhanced." At a global level, "there is definitely more conversation between international peace organizations." The Canadian Culture of Peace Program reports over a million visitors to their website since its inception in 1998.

Funding is a major obstacle for many of the organizations, since they rely on donations and volunteer labor. This is also a problem for the schools in both Canada ("BC teachers are under stress because of government budget cuts") and the US ("As the schools and youth groups have less funding, they are less able to join us.").

PROGRESS AND OBSTACLES IN THE CARIBBEAN

(based on data from 22 organizations in Barbados, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Haiti and Puerto Rico)

PROGRESS: Reports from this region are often tied to particular campaigns for human rights and demilitarization. Organizations in Puerto Rico celebrated a victory in 2003 after many years of struggle to reclaim the Island of Vieques from the US military which used it for a bombing range. A leading role was played by women, using "civil disobedience, nonviolence, dialogue and consensus as forms of struggle and participation." As one organization explains, "Our people lived and proved the force of peace against the violence of the military." Most struggles are ongoing, such as those described for the rights of Haitian women and children refugees in the Dominican Republic and for access to water in certain Puerto Rican communities.

Progress is often described in terms of "consciousness development". For example, the UNESCO Chair for Peace Education in Puerto Rico engages in "education, research and action" for "the promotion and consciousness development for a culture of peace." Alternative methods of conflict resolution are increasingly taught and practiced throughout the region. A campaign is sensitizing people that children's toys should not glorify war and violence.

OBSTACLES: Organizations throughout the Caribbean, like others around the world, find that the lack of funds is a serious obstacle to their work. Many emphasize that the inequalities between rich and poor, powerful and powerless, is a major obstacle. Another problem is "difficulties of integration and regular communication among the organizations and institutions working on these themes in the region, as well as distribution and access to materials they have produced on this matter." Organizations in Haiti report that they are especially hampered by political instability and lack of democratic participation, while in Puerto Rico there is difficulty in international participation as a consequence of its "relation of political subordination."

ADVICE TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL AND THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Representative excerpts from some of the 670 organizations that have provided reports on the culture of peace (for full information see http://decade -culture-of-peace.org/cgi-bin/ib3/ikonboard.cgi). They are ordered by the eight programme areas of the Programme of Action for a Culture of Peace (Resolution A/53/243).

GENERAL

"All bodies of the United Nations system should use the language of the 'Culture of Peace' in as many places as possible. Documents and speeches should include reminders about the culture of peace and the decade as a whole. The culture of peace presents a positive opportunity for people in all countries to overcome the negative issues of terrorism and security concerns."

"UNESCO, whereas it was mandated by the United Nations to be the promoter for it, executive and responsible for this campaign [Decade for the Culture of Peace], has greatly reduced the number of coordinators and person in charge working on this dimension; the survival of the department is completely called in question. If a real will exists among the Member States of the United Nations, all signatories of this campaign, why this lack of reactions, means and achievements?"

"Involve all UN agencies (and not only UNESCO) in the Culture of Peace efforts, and allot resources for the publication and dissemination of books, videos, and audio recordings and other materials for implementing tools such as conflict mediation, deliberative democracy, inter-religious and inter-ethnic dialogue, and the relation of traditional knowledge (of minority cultures, indigenous and others) and science."

"Focus upon the International Day of Peace as an annual highlight of measuring progress toward building a Culture of Peace for all Nations and Peoples. In support of these objectives, one suggestion is to reconvene the UN International Day of Peace Steering Group, which was formed at the request of the Secretary-General … comprised of representatives of most UN Agencies and Departments, and invited UN NGOs."

"A week-long promotion of a culture of peace entitled "Living a Culture of Peace Week" from September 18 through 26 including the International Day of Peace. The designation of such a week by the General Assembly would help facilitate the promotion of a culture of peace in addition to the International Day of Peace."

"Declare the Year 2010 the International Year for Reconciliation."

EDUCATION

"Promote education for peace in all levels of education, especially cultural exchanges and youth voluntary work."

"We would like the United Nations to undertake the international training in conflict resolution and peace for young cadres from countries that are victims of armed conflict, to prepare a young generation capable of leading the Africa of Tomorrow with a culture of peace."

"Strengthen collaboration with NGOs specializing in peace education [and] appeal to Ministries of Education for the integration of peace education into national curricula and as a requirement of teacher training (pre-service, in-service and continuing professional development)… UN agencies i.e., UNESCO, UNICEF and UNDP that include education as a part of their mandate should broaden their programs to require peace education content and methodology."

"The first and foremost thing we realized is the need of spirituality and self awareness. … If children ever since their early age are helped to develop their inner potential and express their creativity: things would be much better."

HUMAN RIGHTS

"Reinforce the mechanisms of follow-up and monitoring with respect to human rights in the Member States of the UN * Work more closely with countries like ours that are involved in violating human rights."

"Our advice to the UN for the second half of the Decade: to make efforts to be present in Palestine, more efficient, resolutions applied. You cannot ask people for peaceful convictions without rights."

"Implement all the UN resolutions equally and the world will look to the UN as a moral leader, not a politician. So let your morality speak."

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

"The attainment of a Culture of Peace … can only be realized side by side with meaningful Poverty Alleviation at grassroots community levels. Our advice, therefore, is that as Peace and Poverty Alleviation are so intertwined, these two must be carried in an innovative manner by the UN System."

"Along with needed support and promotion of the Millennium Goals, peaceful development should also be prioritized, promoted, and financially supported. It is only upon the foundations of a peaceful society that the Millennium Goals are attainable."

"We think that the United Nations needs to commit to actions to eliminate the causes that generate violence such as ignorance and poverty. The subject of external debt and the programs of structural adjustment promoted by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank have become one of the main obstacles, perhaps the main obstacle to development, especially of the poorest countries … Finally we think that the coordination between the agencies of the system of United Nations could be much greater, because for example, the approach of the World Bank does not agree with that of UNDP and other specialized agencies."

"[Tap the] potential of environmental peacemaking particularly as regards trans-boundary water issues. * Because of interdependence water can be a bridge towards peace building…. * pollution prevention and habitat protection benefits are long term - therefore cooperation requires 3rd party support."

"Preservation of the Environment is most important and crucial to the future generations. Listen to the Indigenous and local communities in rural areas. They are aware of what is needed to preserve the environment. Wealth is dissipated in unfinished projects and studies geared to the choices of the donors, not to the need of the recipients."

DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION

"Restructure the United Nations so that the distribution of power between the nations that compose it is more equitable and the UN becomes an example of democracy. "

"The promotion of a culture of peace during the next five years should be linked to community development and a real democracy in all the countries of Africa … It is well known that true democracy gives birth to a state of rights, which means that the people must find it to be on their side, and that there will be no more disorders, no more wars. That's what we call in our Association, the resurrection of Africa."

EQUALITY OF WOMEN

"We would like to request to the Secretary General to please do something for the women, especially in the underdeveloped countries, who are suffering a lot from violence, torture and passing life with unsafe conditions."

"Assistance should be given to women's organizations and associations so that they can be provided effective and modern means of communication …. NGOs or other continental or national organizations suffer much from this lack of communication between them. Thus it is very important, even essential that the modern means of communication are accessible to all the organizations which fight to support the living conditions of women and the African people."

UNDERSTANDING, TOLERANCE, SOLIDARITY

"Motivate all faith communities and cultures to engage in interfaith dialogue as well as intra-faith dialogue. Specifically, UNESCO should (a) sponsor a world commission on interfaith dialogue for building and educating for a culture of peace; (b) implement curriculum and teacher education projects for integrating interfaith dialogue and the contributions of faith and spirituality traditions to a nonviolent and sustainable solution to conflict and violence."

"For every conflict in the world, there is a community that has learned to cope with the same factors in a peaceful way. Rather than focusing only on the areas of conflict that now need to be assuaged and rehabilitated, increase awareness of what it is that has allowed the peaceful community to develop. Learn how to replicate the positive in addition to stemming the flow of the negative."

FREE FLOW OF INFORMATION AND KNOWLEDGE

"Invite national and regional organizations to interchange experiences on cultures of peace (in plural) in each region to learn of the other experiences, to empower the local groups or to promote peace. For these encounters they would have to develop methodologies appropriate to the countries of the South."

"Provide substantial financial support for the creation of Peace Literature, Theatre, Television films and Programs, Peace Literature Education, Prizes (as substantial as the Nobel), for Peace Literature for all ages, Peace Literature Competitions, Grants, and support to Peace NGO's."

"The United Nations ought to have its own television channel. This could be used to give unbiased news reports, and to support a global culture of peace. The UN TV Channel could broadcast cultural programs from various parts of the world which would help to increase international understanding … For this project, and for its other activities, the UN needs much more money than it has at present. A Tobin Tax should be instituted, with proceeds going to the UN."

"Develop openly a campaign for the culture of peace together with the media and through it (TV, magazines, review, etc.) and with the film industry and through it, taking into consideration that they have been strong propagators of the culture of violence."

"Since China is the largest developing country in the world, we hope UN could set up an information center in China. So that Chinese NGOs could have easy access to and more involvement with UN activities."

INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND SECURITY

"Work harder on reducing manufacturing and distribution of arms and ammunitions."

"Bring the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty into the 21st Century so that it addresses the realities of the threats we currently face … The prevention of weapons development in nations not having them now must be clearly tied to the systematic elimination of nuclear weapons among the existing nuclear powers. Verification must be universally applied to states that might produce a nuclear weapon and to those that already have them."

"Creation of a UN Agency for Mediation, with several thousand professionals and similar to other international organisations, who can detect emerging conflicts and help transform them peacefully before they lead to war. That would be an excellent investment for a more peaceful world."

Photo from Concern Universal - Colombia

This General Assembly definition of the culture of peace is positive rather than negative, going far beyond the previous definition of peace as the absence of armed conflict. This is not always easy for people to understand. For example, "in Japan people are apt to think that peace means the situation without wars and nuclear weapons through the experience the World War. Peace Education means the teaching of the nuclear weapons in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, air raid attack and the battles in Okinawa… We spent a lot of time to make understood the difference between peace and culture of peace to fellow groups or people who made efforts for peace." Many other organizations also underline that it is important to explain the nature of the culture of peace.

Although highlights from reports are summarized here, the full information, available on the Internet, is far richer than any summary can indicate. Hundreds of photographs illustrate culture of peace activities, showing a complex picture of children, women, men working, playing, celebrating, demonstrating, engaging in hundreds of activities that promote life, cooperation, solidarity, hope, commitment to change and

In Morocco Enda is strengthening capacities of civil society & local authorities to improve mutual understanding and dialogue

improvement of their lives and the lives of others, a view of the culture of peace that cannot be found elsewhere in such a global and all-encompassing vision.

It is generally agreed that there is a remarkable "scarcity and difficulty of access to resources for the promotion of the culture of peace, in comparison with the immense expenses for the promotion of war and violence." One exception, perhaps, is the enormous resources devoted to tourism, which, as reported by the International Institute of Peace through Tourism, has a great potential to contribute to a culture of peace.

The qualitative indictors of progress in this report need to be further developed as quantitative indicators for a culture of peace during the second half of the Decade. Starting points are provided by the indicators of international peace and security, human rights and development provided by Escuela de Cultura de Paz, and indicators for peace education referenced by the Peace Studies Program of Clark University.

Peace protest by participants from the Peace Boat

Sharing of information is essential to development of the global movement, as stated by the General Assembly in its resolution A/53/243, especially in view of the failure of the mass media to provide news of the culture of peace. It is generally agreed that systems of information exchange need to be greatly expanded in the second half of the Decade. Important initiatives are already underway, including those described in reports from the Good news Agency, the Transnational Foundation for Peace and Future Research, the Peace Research Information Unit Bonn, the Danish Peace Academy, Education for Peace Globalnet and the International Coalition for the Decade, as well as others in the planning stage such as the Signis Asia Assembly from Malaysia. All of the arts are employed, e.g.: Agencia Internacional para el Fomento de Acciones con Hip-Hop; Conseil International de la Danse; International Forum for Literature and Culture of Peace; Jipa Moyo Comics, The Art Miles Mural Project. Two other Internet sources of culture of peace information have already been supported by General Assembly resolutions: the CP Internet pages of the UNESCO Website and the Culture of Peace news Network.