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# THE POST-2015 UN ROAD TO DIGNITY AND JUSTICE THROUGH INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION FOR GIRLS

**INVESTING IN GIRLS' EDUCATION: BEST ROAD TO DEVELOPMENT**

**Education in the 21st Century: Towards Global Citizenship**

*Women's Federation for World Peace International and the Global Women's Peace Network  
and Partners*

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## **THE POST-2015 UN ROAD TO DIGNITY AND JUSTICE THROUGH INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION FOR WOMEN AND CHILDREN**

*As a citizen you get your rights through a passport/national paper. As a global citizen, it is guaranteed not by a State but through your humanity. This means you are also responsible to the rest of humanity and not the State alone*

Chernor Bah, Chairperson, Youth Advocacy Group, United Nations Global Education First Initiative

### **INTRODUCTION**

I would like to thank the Women's Federation for World Peace International for the invitation to make a statement today. Although I cannot deliver it personally, I feel that the invitation to speak on the topic of intercultural education under which my statement features is to me personally, intergenerationally and professionally (as a lawyer, criminologist and f. UN staff) very important. This is because the international education movement has its substantive roots in the international penal and penitentiary movement of the nineteenth century, especially the First International Penitentiary Congress held in London in 1872. The current United Nations Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Programme is the successor of that international penitentiary movement. This UN Programme now works in the Vienna International Centre, and I have worked for 30 years as a staff of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime which is the secretariat of that Programme.

### **THE POST-2015 UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AGENDA, INTERNATIONAL AND INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION**

The United Nations Secretary-General listed six elements of the UN 2016-2030 sustainable development agenda. These are: Dignity, Justice, Partnership, People, Planet and Prosperity. The preamble to the seventeen draft sustainable goals states that all cultures and civilizations can contribute to them. Draft goals 4 and 5 that are directly relevant to the topic of my statement in many ways emphasize the importance of equitable education of men, women and children. In other cases only the education of girls is mentioned. In sum, there is no doubt that Member States are keen to pursue education as a means to achieve sustainable development goals in the next 15 years.

It is exactly this perspective up to the year 2030 from which I would like to speak about intercultural education of girls (not about international education of girls). I am doing so as a member of the Academic Council on the United Nations System, former UN staff and educator but now educationist who would like to emphasize at this event addressing "global citizenship" that intercultural education prioritizes culture over nationality.

The relationship between one and the other is not easy. Given time constraints, I will only address three culture-specific points: two general and one girls-specific. Apologizing in advance for the obvious belabouring of the first general point, I must shortly say that we should keep in mind the difference between international and intercultural education. One is concerned with countries, the other one with cultures. While, in international education, the second word is important, in intercultural education important is the first word.

Regarding what else "intercultural education" is, among several definitions the closest which fits the purpose of this talk is one by the Intercultural Education Network from the Michigan State University. This definition says that

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intercultural education promotes the understanding of different people and cultures. It includes teachings that accept and respect the normality of diversity in all areas of life. It makes every effort to sensitize the learner to the notion that we have naturally developed in different ways.

Among a few educators and visionaries who first realized the paradox of “normality of diversity” or “unity in diversity” (as now the UN emphasizes) was John Evangelist Walsh, one of the US pioneers of intercultural education. This earlier senior editor at the *Reader's Digest*, then an independent scholar and writer wrote that, in theory, intercultural education is concerned:

*“with understanding the modes of thinking”, “with helping people make value judgments”; it is “the process by which one looks beyond [one’s] own culture and attempts to understand and appreciate how persons of other cultures interpret the life...and things of nature, and why they view them as they do..[It] also aims to change the negative attitudes of the people of one culture towards those of another, and to reinforce positive attitudes”.*<sup>2</sup>

Two elements of this definition lead to the second and third point. The second general point is that equitable education for the sustainable development agenda carries an intercultural connotation of “dignity” and “justice” – two of the UN six sustainable development elements.

In essence, for over 150 years of the internationalization of education, the concepts of “dignity” and “justice” have been seen through the Western lens focused on “persons of other cultures” (or “others”) as “the worse” or “the lesser” (this is what in the Western logic “others” (in Greek “*heteros*” ) mean). But in the Indian logic one of the Sanskrit meanings of “others” (“*para*”) is “higher and better”. This difference says that when talking about “inclusion”, “inclusive societies”, “inclusive education” one must remember that “otherness” in the negative sense is a Western concept.

Many such concepts, methods, theories and findings are Western and they are not gender disaggregated. Many more are insufficiently researched, conceptualized and practically solved for early crime prevention involving women and children, in terms of cross-cutting interculturality and interdisciplinarily common and separate gender and age issues. To my knowledge, too little in research and educational policy starts from the heart of the problem, that is how perceived as incompatible cultural concepts, in practice can be complimentary to one another.

Conceptually and organizationally, since the first international educational conference which took place in 1876 in Philadelphia, through to the first international schools that were founded in the Western world in the 1950s, international education has been a Western arrangement. It emerged at the backyard of the Great Industrial Revolution, in fact, around the various industrial world fairs of that time. On their occasion, ancillary international education congresses were held, to which agricultural education was subsequently added.

Moreover, in substance, these congresses followed the agenda of the reformatory (in the Western sense) international penitentiary and penal movement (the predecessor of the current United Nations Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Programme), which first has started dealing with child offenders and white slave traffic. International education congresses dealt with the education of children in the name of school hygiene, pedagogy and narcotic education.<sup>3</sup>

After a few years of a quite dynamic of pre- and post-First World War developments, compared with the teaching as well as with scientists of other disciplines, the academic educators lagged behind those other scientists and

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<sup>2</sup> J. E. Walsh, *Intercultural education in the community of man*. University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu 1973, pp. 13, 45, 63 and 182.

<sup>3</sup> E. Fuchs, *Educational sciences, morality and politics: International educational congresses in the early Twentieth Century*, *Paedagogica Historica*, Vol. 40, Nos. 5 & 6, October 2004, pp. 760-765.

disciplines, eventually to the point of critique that educational science lacks general terminology and scientific standards.<sup>4</sup> Politically, however, the international exchange of the teaching experience has yielded some standardization of international education that paved the way to intercultural education.

Intercultural education is a younger sister of international education. It originated from its idealistic pacifist sub-current of early 1900s. Naïve as it was in that time, it started spreading the moral internationalism.<sup>5</sup> It was particularly emotionally and strongly shared after the atrocities of the Second World War. The United Nations Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and many other UN-related legal instruments are cases in point. Still in this, but already subsiding since the early 1950s<sup>6</sup> emotion, in the 1974 UNESCO Recommendation<sup>7</sup> there are first important intercultural elements involving education for peace and tolerance, quite appropriately aimed at “international understanding”. Then another 30 years later (or 140 years after the Philadelphia conference) UNESCO has published a position paper (not an intergovernmental “recommendation”) with the “Guidelines on Intercultural Education”.<sup>8</sup> It then quickly came up with the intergovernmentally adopted “Global Citizenship Education” that supports the UN “Global Education First” whose Chairman’s quote opens my written statement. Next, after a series of consultations, in Spring 2014 UNESCO published a handbook “Global Citizenship Education. Preparing learners for the challenges of the 21st century”.<sup>9</sup>

As one can see, international and intercultural education do not develop at the same pace. As between the two sisters in family, communication between one and another occasionally is uneasy. They still are calling various names (the scientific terminology is quite loose, the scientific method, too) and they both have the worlds of their own. Before a more synergetic and constructive relationship develops, occasionally one may look down at another before one catches up with another. This is why at one of the early international education congresses held in 1925 in Scotland, a participant from India wearily observed that *“most of the speakers had spoken as if the world were made up of Scotsmen and Americans, whereas actually there were some seven or eight hundred million people living in India and China who were a part of the world and had to be considered”*.<sup>10</sup>

Globally we now have some 2,5 billion women educated in Confucian, Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim and other non-Western or atheist values – two thirds of the entire population of the world. With men – about 5 billion. Interculturally educating girls in universal moral values (and boys for that matter) in the world that children constitute 27% of its population, or 43% when we include youth up to the age of 25, requires from educators and educationists quite an insightful but differentiated effort to implement the UN sustainable development goals.

## **THE SECOND WORLD WAR AND DIGNITY & JUSTICE IN 2030**

Due to an imminent major change in the post-Second World War balance of economic power, neither today’s “international” or “intercultural education” nor “dignity” or “justice” will be the same in 2030.

This is documented by one economic estimate: by the year 2025 forty eight per cent of the global output will be delivered by advanced economies and fifty two per cent by emerging and developing economies, at the helm of

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<sup>4</sup> Ibidem, p. 781.

<sup>5</sup> Ibidem, pp. 777-778.

<sup>6</sup> S. Redo, Blue Criminology. The Power of the United Nations Ideas to Counter Crime Globally, European Institute for Crime Prevention and Control, affiliated with the United Nations, Helsinki 2012, pp. 110-111.

<sup>7</sup> UNESCO (1974) Recommendation concerning education for international understanding, co-operation and peace and education relating to human rights and fundamental freedoms, adopted by the General Conference at its eighteenth session Paris, 19 November 1974.

<sup>8</sup> UNESCO, Guidelines on Intercultural Education, Paris 2006.

<sup>9</sup> See further W. Wintersteiner in: H. Kury, S. Redo, E. Shea (eds.), “Women and Children as Victims and Offenders: Background – Prevention – Reintegration. Suggestions for Succeeding Generations” (Springer 2015, forthcoming).

<sup>10</sup> Fuchs, op. cit. p.767.

which will be China and India.<sup>11</sup> Emerging economies will rise in importance and China will have surpassed the USA on the list of world's top ten largest economies in GDP terms.<sup>12</sup> Because of the rise to economic power of China and India, intercultural and international education will already be different in 10 years from now.

And yet, one overarching educational premise should remain, namely that *"since the Holocaust, cultural relativism is dead"*<sup>13</sup>. In this sense, "justice" and "dignity" are now and in the future a mainstay of a further moral internationalization. Even if this premise challenges claims about some (un)natural substrates of our morality that make it relative (i.e., "tribal"), or it challenges the argument to remain scientifically "objective", no longer we have the luxury to say two things:

First, that a legal culture which does not accept "justice" and "dignity" (developmental concepts after all) as universals (whether *de iure* or/and *de facto*) may pass our moral "right or wrong" test, and still remains equal to other legal cultures, which pass that test;

Second, that even though "justice" and "dignity" are the ideals that move on as the horizon recedes, they both are not virtual.

Moreover, you can behave in a dignified way despite injustice, but this talk is not about teaching girls good manners. This talk is about how education may be helpful to them for ameliorating poverty (the core of what "dignity" is about in the UN sustainable development agenda), hence about creating dignified life conditions.

In short, how education may be a key factor on the road on which the Women's Federation for World Peace International, should continue to inform its developmental work.

In this context, and before I conclude, I come now to the heart of this talk, that is how to invest in girls' education for dignity and justice.

## **EQUALITY, EQUITY AND EDUCATION FOR GIRLS**

Two extreme examples plus some generalized findings from children-specific research will help to conclude my talk. One Afghan educational example involves the problem of socio-economic inequality. Another Indian example involves the problem of socio-economic inequity.

Regarding the inequality example from Afghanistan, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in its 2012 annual opium survey report<sup>14</sup> informed about the interviewed village headmen from non-poppy and poppy-growing villages on the availability of basic infrastructure. Information was gathered about villagers' access to credit, electricity, irrigation, vocational skills training and access to TV/radio, medical facilities, off-farm employment opportunities, telephones, drinking water, roads, public transportation, and last but not least, about a boys' school and a girls' school.

In this last regard, several important differences were noted. Overall, the vast majority of villages (83%) reported having access to a boys' school and just under half of them (49 %) to a girls' school. However, there was a marked difference in access to schools between poppy- growing and non-poppy-growing villages. While over 90% of non-

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<sup>11</sup> Altogether 55 countries (see further: Global Economic Outlook 2014, <http://www.conference-board.org/data/globaloutlook.cfm> [last accessed 10.12.2014]). "Output" means here capital plus labour inputs plus a residual (salvage) value composed of a value of technological progress plus production efficiency remaining as an asset after it has been fully depreciated.

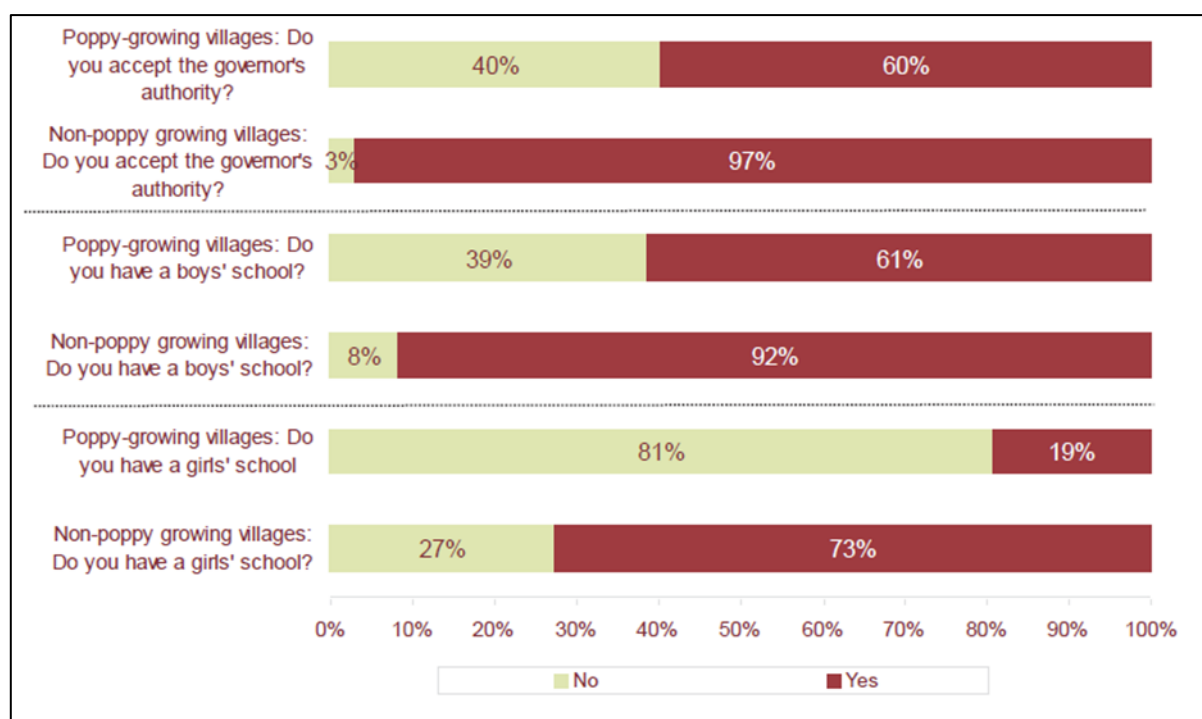
<sup>12</sup> [www.therichest.org/world/worlds-largest-economies/](http://www.therichest.org/world/worlds-largest-economies/) [last accessed 07.03.2015].

<sup>13</sup> M. L. Hoffman, *Empathy and Moral Development. Implications for Caring and Justice*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2000, p. 273.

<sup>14</sup> Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Ministry of Counter Narcotics, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Afghanistan Opium Survey 2012*, Vienna, May 2013, pp. 50-51.

poppy-growing villages have a boys' school and almost three quarters a girls' school, these proportions drop in poppy-growing villages to 61% (availability of boys' school) and 19% (availability of girls' school). After testing for the statistical significance of this difference<sup>15</sup> it was found that certain facilities (such as schools) are more likely to be in villages without poppy cultivation than in villages with poppy cultivation (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Access to a boys school, a girls' school, recognition of governor in Eastern, Southern and Western regions, by poppy-growing status, 2012



Source: Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Ministry of Counter Narcotics, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Afghanistan Opium Survey 2012, Vienna, May 2013

This is an alarming situation. The negative long-term effect of children having generally less access to education than their age-mates elsewhere (that is in non-poppy growing villages), and the absence of schools for girls in over four fifths of poppy-growing villages, in particular limits the life chances of girls in poppy-growing areas.

This salient finding reminds of an elementary precondition for education - the structural equality of opportunities<sup>16</sup> and, eventually, of a two-lane avenue for a reformist motivation and action. For equity in education consists of two components: fairness and inclusiveness. Fairness implies that social and personal circumstances – for instance socio-economic status, gender or ethnic origin – should be irrelevant to achieving educational potential. Inclusion implies that everyone should not only have a chance to the same-level education but also same-level treatment, that is without the consideration of status, gender or origin (“inclusive classes”).<sup>17</sup> More importantly even, fairness in education implies also equity in outcome. This means instruction which cultivates an innate sense of fairness<sup>18</sup> that motivates a student to be fair to others.

<sup>15</sup> All differences were significant at 0.01 level.

<sup>16</sup> ST/ESA/305, Social Justice in an Open World. The Role of the United Nations. United Nations: New York 2006, p. 15.

<sup>17</sup> Adapted from S. Field, M. Kuczera, B. Pont, No More Failures. Ten Steps to Equity In Education, OECD, Paris 2007, p. 11.

<sup>18</sup> See further: P. Bloom, Just Babies. The Origins of Good and Evil, Crown Publisher, New York 2013, ch. 3.

Concerning the equity in the educational outcome that eventually equalizes the chances for reformist motivation, its importance was well demonstrated by the World Bank's econometric experiment. The experiment involved Indian schoolboys from low and high castes.<sup>19</sup> As we know, these castes had existed in India for 35 centuries and were formally dissolved only in 1950. In the World Bank's experiment, sixth and seventh grade schoolboys were respectively divided in two halves. They were then asked to play a monetary incentive game by solving as many mazes as they could out of a given packet. When the first caste was not publicly announced, between the boys there were no caste differences in performance. However, when the caste was publicly announced, the number of mazes solved by low caste boys dropped by a dramatic 25%. When caste was announced but a random draw of a name determined who in a session of 6 would be paid for the mazes to be solved, the caste gap in performance disappeared. According to the authors, the findings suggest that the aggregate effect of economic deprivation (i.e., injustice) on the expectations associated with caste is clearly negative. In other words, providing for equitable conditions in education may alleviate prejudice.

In the second experiment with a smaller group of low-and high-castes school Indian boys the authors of the same World Bank study tested those expectations separately. They introduced another game that involved negotiating driver's right of way in a rush hour city traffic. The results were not less astonishing then in the first experiment. These authors found that when the game's rules were relaxed (there was more possibilities to circumvent them), the proportion of both castes who refused to gamble the way through increased. However, there were more low caste boys who refused.

On this basis, the authors concluded that indeed the self-perception works like a self-fulfilling prophecy. It locks the respondents into economic disadvantage because of the pre-defined content of own expectations. This is not a consequence of a "culture of poverty" *per se*, the authors conclude, but its enduring legacy that facilitates the division of people into categories. That legacy shapes their beliefs and the self-fulfilling expectations.

This conclusion is well-known by educators and educationists. Moreover, they also are aware of children with working-class backgrounds who underachieve when impeded by the negative stereotyping, as shown in the World Bank's experiment.

However, since this is the Women's Federation for World Peace International meeting focused exclusively on girls' education, the following conclusions generalized from the two above examples and other research findings will hopefully meet the specific purpose of this talk, and bring into this forum new developments. As far as solely girls'-focused developments, there is precious little to say. The majority of such developments are not gender-disaggregated, but focus on children.

First of all, the Afghan example of separate girls' and boys' schools alerts us how fundamental in intercultural education gender-neutral schooling is. Other experimental research demonstrated that since early childhood socializing girls and boys into their respective gender roles is a natural course of upbringing ("*girls play with toys, boys with trucks*"), but there is so far unmanaged by the educators and educationists margin of tolerance (that is of being more fair to one another, especially when children get older) which allows to accept girls in boys' groups and vice versa. This margin was found after the experimental researchers propped a group of nearly evenly divided US middle-class girls and boys of European-American, Asian-American and African-American background with a question: "*Is it all right to exclude a boy from playing with dolls? Or a girl from playing with trucks?*".<sup>20</sup> In both cases

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<sup>19</sup> K. Hoff, P. Pandey, An experimental investigation of an Indian caste, World Bank Policy Research Working Paper" 3351, June 2004, <http://elibrary.worldbank.org/doi/pdf/10.1596/1813-9450-3351> [last accessed 07.03.2015].

<sup>20</sup> M. Killen, K. Pisacane, J. Lee-Kim, A. Ardila-Rey, Fairness or stereotypes? Young children's priorities when evaluating group exclusion and inclusion, Developmental Psychology 2001, Vol. 37, No. 5, pp. 587-596.

the many positive answers suggested to the researchers a priority of fairness over a stereotype. In conclusion, this finding informs that there is room for successfully promoting the negotiation of gender-neutral fairness amongst children.

Second, the same Afghan example reminds us that at the heart of fairness is making intergroup contacts between and among students, thus familiarizing one group with another. A meta-analytic test (713 sampled groups in 515 studies) of this premise found that intergroup contact typically reduces intergroup prejudice, almost in the same measure for adults and children.<sup>21</sup> Such contacts yield good results, particularly in the schooling systems with principally pre-arranged post- elementary interethnically mixed schooling. For instance, in Germany where this is the case, researchers found that the interviewed German elementary school kids were more tolerant to a German/Turkish new colleague in the class than the likewise interviewed Turkish peers.<sup>22</sup>

Coming back to the Indian experiment on the reformist motivation, and the self-fulfilling prophecy that blocs boys' life chances, there is a good news concerning elementary-school girls in comparison with their male peers. A recent UK experimental study<sup>23</sup> of school children aged 4-10 found through, inter alia, writing and mathematics tests that boys perform worse at school because they are constantly being told that girls are more intelligent. However, when boys were told that they could perform so well as the girls do, their academic performance, and girls' performance remained at the same high level.

The morale of this study is exactly the same as in the Indian study: Educators and educationists in any culture should encourage the underachieving children that any student, in fact, everybody is able and is expected to perform better. Whether or not this "better" meets the intercultural standards and objectives as far as "justice" and "peace" in the world are concerned is not the matter of this instructional technique but its contents.

I agree with the authors of the recent publication on "Freedom in Diversity" that:

*"Education therefore has a vital civic function: it should equip children to be active citizens, teaching them to respect the law and to understand democracy, as well as imbuing them with a sense of pride in being part of an inclusive society, whose members respect each other and are open to new ideas and associations. Such notions of civic pride and responsibility, rooted in the values of inclusivity, liberality and respect for others, should permeate the school curriculum – especially, of course, the teaching of social sciences and history – and, even more importantly, the mind-set of teachers and head teachers. Failures in this respect are easily transmitted from one generation to the next. Therefore, it is essential that those who face difficulties within the school system – underachievers and those who risk becoming drop-outs or delinquents – receive special attention".<sup>24</sup>*

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<sup>21</sup> T. F. Pettigrew, L. R. Tropp, A meta-analytic test of Intergroup Contact Theory, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 2006, Vol. 90, No. 5, 751–783.

<sup>22</sup> A. R. Feddes, P. Noack, A. Rutland, Direct and extended friendship effects on minority and majority children's interethnic attitudes: a longitudinal study, *Child Development* 2009, Vol. 80, No. 2, pp. 377-390.

<sup>23</sup> B. L. Hartley, R. M. Sutton, A Stereotype Threat Account of Boys' Academic Underachievement, *Child Development*, September/October 2013, Volume 84, No. 5, pp. 1716–1733.

<sup>24</sup> T. G. Ash, E. Mortimer, K. Öktem, *Freedom in Diversity, Ten Lessons for Public Policy from Britain, Canada, France, Germany and the United States*, University of Oxford, Oxford (n.d.), p. 39.



## CONCLUSION

Therefore also, regarding the content work of the Women's Federation for the World Peace International, the following two points sum up my talk on the post-2015 UN road to dignity and justice and the intercultural education for girls, women and children.

First, the statutory obligation of any non-governmental organization in general consultative status with the United Nations is to continue stressing that peace is a pre-condition to justice and dignity. Since the Holocaust and the establishment of the United Nations, its understanding of "unity in diversity" neither prohibits nor can stop tribal morality. Tribal morality is as natural as for a baby to drink milk. But any action, doctrine or ideology that at the expense of a more refined caretaking of the United Nations Charter resurrects or strengthens in tribal morality cultural relativism is only tribally legitimate. Tribal morality should be kept away from entering intercultural school curricula because it fosters exclusion. Every day we have enough tribal morality and sufficiently many related nonsenses for which their authors may have to pay later. Educators and educationists who believe in the equality and equity for and among girls and boys, children and adolescents, pupils and students should continue developing and implementing these intercultural curricula to strengthen internationally the inclusion as one of universal values, the deficit of which caused the Second World War. Tribal morality, a natural part of universalism as it is, invites hardly irreversible consequences to succeeding generations to uphold peace in the world. Paradoxically as this may sound, but only if and when in tribal morality one opens avenues to what others think, it can helpfully inscribe itself into the United Nations socially progressive vision of the world. Then there still is a genuine chance that the lost between 1945 and now "Spirit of San Francisco" of the United Nations founding conference may return to the Organization.

Second, in terms of education of girls and boys as the UN Charter's "succeeding generation", the Women's World Federation for Peace International carries an important responsibility to promote the UN universal values. Among them one is cardinal at a practical level, namely that peace in the world starts with peace at home.<sup>25</sup> Inequality, inequity, intolerance, cultural or domestic violence, but also crime prevention starts in our bedrooms and homes and then goes into the streets, kindergartens, schools, parliaments and peoples. This may be a way of teaching children good manners not by refining the French "*bon ton*" rules, but applying the UN civil society rules for a global citizenship. We should return to the drawing board. We should start looking why we lost from our sight something interculturally relevant in early childhood that now shows up and makes us concerned that things do not work as they should have. Nonetheless, what we should continue is a humanistic progressive reformist content of education that helps the maintenance of peace and security in the today's and tomorrow's world.

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<sup>25</sup> S. Redo, M. Platzer, The United Nations' Role in Crime Control and Prevention. Albanese J, Reichel P (eds), Handbook of Transnational Crime and Justice. SAGE: Los Angeles – London – New Delhi – Singapore – Washington DC 2013, pp. 293-294.