

Declaration of Schlaining

AGAINST RACISM, VIOLENCE, AND DISCRIMINATION

The participants of the International Conference "Against Racism, Violence, and Discrimination", organized by the European University Center for Peace Studies (EPU), the Austrian Commission for UNESCO, the Institute of Human Biology of the University of Vienna, and in co-operation with UNESCO as well as the Austrian Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Arts, met from June 8 to 11, 1995 in Stadtschlaining to elaborate the following Declaration.

The declarative section of the text presents the results achieved in the two main parts of the conference that focused on natural science issues (II.) and on interdisciplinary aspects (III.) of the conference theme, whereas the operative section (IV.) contains strategies and actions against racism, violence, and discrimination. This declaration stands as a contribution to the International Year for Tolerance 1995, decided by the UN General Assembly, that assigned UNESCO to carry it out as lead organisation.

I. Preamble

(1) In UN instruments (International Convention and UN Declaration on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination), in the UNESCO Declaration on Race and Racial Prejudices of 1978 as well as four preceding declarations on the racial issue, all states and people were called upon to fight against racism and racial prejudice and to support the extinction of all forms of racism by all means available.

(2) In spite of its historical refutation, its world-wide condemnation and scientific proof for the obsolescence of the concept "race", the "evil of racism" has not been overcome. On the contrary, after the end of the East-West conflict, racism has led to renewed violence such as deportations, massacres, and attempts to extinct entire ethnic groups and minorities. Racial discrimination, right wing extremism, xenophobia, sexism, and intolerance are spreading again. The revival and escalation of racism and its violent, new and old forms of expression constitute one of the major challenges of mankind. To face it, a new understanding of its causes, new strategies and actions will be necessary.

(3) The Statement of Seville 1986, which aims at fighting the abuse of biological research results to legitimize war and violence, rejects the fallacy that organized human violence is biologically determined.

This scientific knowledge, however, does not suffice to banish violence from history. The number of wars has increased since 1945, continually in poor and developing regions. As a whole, the number of wars between states has decreased, but internal strife and civil wars threaten to become a matter of normality in peripheral and underdeveloped regions.

(4) The 1989 Declaration of Yamoussoukro sees the roots of a growing number of armed conflicts in racism, intolerance, and discrimination and calls for the support of peace programmes and the promotion of peace research. At the same time, the vision of a culture of peace was conceived.

(5) The UN Resolution on the Year for Tolerance 1995 demands the creation of a tolerant society and underscores" ... that tolerance - the recognition and appreciation of others, the ability to live together with and to listen to others - is the sound foundation of any civil society and of peace."

(6) The struggle against racist intolerance and discrimination must not remain restricted to moral condemnation and public indignation, however understandable and important these reactions as a first sign of protest may be. Treating the symptoms and alleviating the consequences of racism, discrimination, and violence by means of direct and quick protective measures and humanitarian aid in cases of emergency are a necessary canon of active and joint humanitarianism. However, in order to efficiently face and defeat racism, violence, and discrimination once and for all, a systematic search for and elimination of their roots is necessary.

(7) The Declaration of Schlaining, therefore, calls upon all of humanity, regardless of sex, occupation, social standing, or age to act jointly in solidarity against racism, violence, and discrimination.

II. On the Obsolescence of the Concept of "Race"

(8) The revolution in our thinking about population genetics and molecular biology has led to an explosion of knowledge about living organisms. Among the ideas that have been profoundly altered are concepts of human variation. The concept of "race" carried over from the past into the 20th century has become entirely obsolete. In spite of this, the concept has been used to justify violations of human rights. An important step towards preventing such abuse of genetic arguments is to replace the outdated concept of "race" with ideas and conclusions based upon current understanding of genetic variation as it applies to human populations.

(9) "Races" are traditionally believed to be genetically homogenous and different one from the other. This definition was developed to describe human diversity associated, for example, with various geographical locations. However, recent advances in modern biology based on techniques of molecular genetics and on mathematical models of population genetics have shown this definition to be totally inadequate. Current scientific findings do not support the early view that human populations can be classified into discrete "races" like "Africans", "Eurasians" (including "Native Americans"), or any greater number of subdivisions.

(10) Specifically, between human populations, including smaller groupings, genetic differences may be detected. These differences tend to increase with geographic distance, but the basic genetic variation between populations is much less prominent. This means that human genetic diversity is only gradual and presents no major discontinuity between populations. Findings supporting this conclusion defy traditional classification of "races" and make any typological approach inappropriate.

Furthermore, molecular analysis of genes occurring in different versions (alleles), have shown that within any group the inherited variation among individuals is large, while, in comparison, variation between groups is comparatively small.

(11) It is easy to recognize differences in external appearance (skin color, morphology of body and face, pigmentation, etc.) among people of various parts of the world. Though it seems paradoxical to acknowledge the existence of conspicuous genetically determined morphological differences, genetic variation in underlying physiological features and functions are very minor when population means are considered. In other words, perception of morphological differences may erroneously lead us to infer substantial underlying genetic differences.

(12) Evidence indicates that during the course of evolution of modern humans there has been relatively little change in the fundamental genetic constitution of populations. Molecular analysis of genes also strongly suggests that modern humans have only recently expanded into habitable world regions, adapting, in the process, to very different and sometimes extreme environmental conditions (e.g. harsh climates) in a relatively short time span. The necessity to adapt to extreme environmental differences has generated changes in only a small subset of genes affecting sensitivity towards environmental factors. It is worth mentioning that these adaptations in response to environmental conditions are largely historical and are not consequential for life in modern civilisation. Nevertheless they are construed by some as reflecting substantial differences between groups of people thereby contributing to the concept of "races".

(13) According to scientific understanding, therefore, categorization of humans by distribution of genetically determined factors is artificial and encourages the production of unending lists of arbitrary and misleading social perceptions and images. Furthermore, there is no convincing evidence for "racial" divergence in intellectual, emotional, motivational or other psychological and behavioural characteristics that are independent of cultural factors. It is well known that certain genetic traits which are beneficial for one life situation may be disadvantageous for another one.

(14) Racism is the belief that human populations differ in heritable traits of social value making certain groups superior or inferior to others. There is no convincing scientific evidence that this belief is warranted. This document asserts that there is no scientifically reliable way to characterize human diversity using the rigid terms of "racial" categories or the traditional "race" concept. There is no scientific reason to continue using the term "race".

III. On causes and forms of racism, violence, discrimination, and intolerance today

(15) Racism is a complex and differentiated phenomenon deeply embedded in the structures and mentalities of societies and cultures. The consequences and suffering caused by racism in its historical, barbaric expression in all corners of the world have not yet served as an effective deterrent leading to the eradication of racism on principle. Yet only by solidarity and persistent action at all levels of society can racism be repressed and overcome. For this purpose, its observable specific features must be unveiled, that is, ethno-nationalism, culturalism, extreme right wing movements, sexism and the spreading of racism into marginalized groups of society as well as anti-Semitism as a specific form of racism.

(16) Racism "as such" does not exist. It is much rather a set of complex attitudes and modes of behaviour that are based on a wide range of interlinked political, social, economic, cultural, and other - also instrumental - factors, and often emerges manifest as country-specific or group phenomena.

Racism is always rooted in rigid approaches and prejudices according to which certain peoples and social groups are superior to others - both morally as well as intellectually. These prejudices, modes of behaviour, and political strategies translate into the socialization processes within societies and are passed down from generation to generation.

(17) Every racist idea, regardless of its variant, involves multiple forms of violence, especially structural and cultural violence. Its perpetration is always based on a power component anchored in society. Consequently, the struggle against racism necessarily calls for taking away its power base by a qualitative change of its societal environment towards democratization of social, political, and economic conditions.

(18) The roots of social conflict - also those settled by acts of violence - are neither biological nor anthropological, nor can their nature be understood as being essentially cultural. Just as "races" do not exist, cultural differences between groups are - as a rule - not the cause of social conflict, even if they are often used to justify racist and national violence. The actual causes lie in the radical process of change in traditional ways of life and the ensuing aggravation of social problems, antagonisms, and crises. This fact is endorsed by the "World Summit for Social Development" (March 1995, Copenhagen; Declaration), which states that poverty, unemployment, and disintegration are general core problems and main causes of racism, armed conflicts, discrimination, and intolerance.

(19) In times of great social crisis, conflicts, and general insecurity, the "community" is very often called upon to guarantee common rights and prerogatives. Aliens are regarded as an additional threat, as intruders into the "blood" or "people's community" or nation. They are - as victims of a racist political discourse - accused of being the authors of the conflict. The results are fear for one's life, xenophobia, and increased violence.

(20) The roots of violence, xenophobia, and intolerance lie neither in the inadequate assimilation of immigrants (especially from Third World countries) due to the purported cultural incompatibility of foreign cultures, in the inability to integrate, nor in a threat to one's own identity by multiculturalism.

(21) The aggravation of social conflicts often goes hand in hand with the disintegration of social entities such as the family and the decline of a sense of orientation, ideals, and values. This is very often accompanied by isolation and a feeling of helplessness and of having no future. This is accompanied by anxiety felt by entire groups about the possible loss of social standing and identity, and by the fear of becoming "tomorrow's losers". In many cases, this is answered by a "defence mechanism" expressed as ostracism of and differentiation from aliens. The "strangers" serve as "scapegoats" for unsolved problems, political, and economic crisis and radical cultural change.

(22) Attributing the causes of social conflicts and its consequences on cultural difference, interpreting xenophobia as "cultural conflict", and explaining political and economic crisis with the "immigration issues", provide the resonance and nutrient for every-day racism and right wing extremism. These are also expressed in strategic solutions aiming at erecting "a dam against the flood of asylum seekers". In addition, political measures manifest xenophobia. Examples thereof are:

- a policy to curb immigration;
- a government policy of ostracism - often legally sanctioned - instead of a humane integration policy;
- political negation of the interaction between integration and maintenance of cultural identity;

- justification of violence with the extremist right philosophy as the natural prerogative of the stronger over the weaker.

(23) The social roots of current conflicts in the Second and Third World are to be found especially in the dissolution of traditional social conditions, the concurrent inner struggle for resources in unstable systems, the formation of states and nations as well as the striving for influential and power positions. Religious fanaticism, nationalism, and racism are much more manifest during such processes of radical change. The widely proclaimed view of "ethnic differences" or of the "war of cultures" does not explain the cause of violence but is used to justify it.

(24) A decisive part in the appearance and continuation of international conflicts can be attributed to colonial legacies, neo-colonialism, the heavy debt load of many countries in the Second and Third World, the growing gap between North and South, and the great imbalance in the international economic world order as permanent factors of racism, discrimination, and violence.

(25) Media and the suggestive power of suggestion of visual perception are obvious tools for creating the willingness to violence. The "fascination of horror", the breaking of taboos and minimization of horror and atrocities, the aestheticizing of monstrosities and crimes, and the glorification of criminals as heroes can contribute to lowering the threshold to violence.

(26) The essentially negative image of today's youth as "a generation ready to use force, violent and egocentric", blackened as a social risk group is a dangerous, counter-productive generalization that stigmatizes young people and impairs communication with adults significantly. In order to face the effects and the expansion of racism, violence, and discrimination, an active commitment on the part of young people to tolerance and understanding is required. This can only be achieved by accomplishing inter-generational communication based on trust, the adult generation being responsible for establishing this communication in the first place.

(27) Violence is a political phenomenon affecting society as a whole. Social changes often result in conflicts that, in the absence of legitimate, regulated forms of conflict resolution are settled by the use of violence. Nationalism, ethnicity in and culturalization of politics as new forms of racism are inappropriate ways of resolving such social conflicts, since marginalization of social groups will only aggravate social discrepancies. Racism and ethno-nationalism simply aim at monopolizing opportunities and resources for certain groups. Therefore, democratic forms and methods of conflict resolution must be developed on a national and international level to allow fair access to resources and opportunities for all citizens.

(28) In almost all countries of the globe, cultures of different origin blend to create multicultural societies. In order to avoid the danger of cultural or racist exclusion of ethnic minorities, it is absolutely necessary to preserve the cultural identity and the right to self-determination of minorities as one of the most important preconditions of overcoming the roots of racism and violence.

(29) The development of a culture of peace as a complex concept for all levels of society is of essential significance in the struggle against racism, violence, and

discrimination. In this context, the creation of a culture of constructive debate based on a legal foundation is of prior importance. This includes above all the safeguarding of a society's basic existential needs, democratization of living conditions, non-discrimination of minorities, equality of the sexes, and a fair distribution of resources and opportunities.

In this context, education for peace, human rights, democracy, and tolerance has a major role to play. Acquiring competence in peace promotion and conflict resolution is one of the major aspects of this education. Education may not eliminate social causes or deficits, but it can raise people's awareness of and sensibility to racism and patterns of violence.

IV. New strategies and actions against racism, violence and discrimination

A. New approaches for strategies

(30) These strategies should be based on the following two main lines directed to

- revealing the concrete and contemporary forms of expression of racism, violence, and discrimination and their causes and restraining these by direct legal measures in cooperation with all democratic forces at hand;
- eliminating the political, economic, socio-cultural, and psychological causes through long-term reform policies.

The major objectives, elements, and ways of these strategies are: i.a.:

(31) To disseminate and make extensive use of the latest scientific findings available on the concept of "race" and the genetic differences between people and groups as summarized in Part II of the Declaration.

(32) To promote a multicultural society as an enrichment for all groups based on complete equality and devoid of any exclusion, and guarantee the right of individuals and groups to citizenship.

(33) To break with the use of nationalist-racist definitions of the concept of citizenship based on antiquated ideas of a "people's membership" rooted in a so called "right of blood".

(34) To develop a culture of peace especially characterized and sustained by a constructive culture of conflict resolution and mutual tolerance. To promote education for peace, human rights, and democracy as a principle to be applied in all areas of society.

(35) To disseminate examples and models of non-violent conflict resolution and visions of a peaceful world, including the popularization of the achievements of outstanding personalities for peace, social justice, and tolerance such as Mahatma Ghandi, Bertha von Suttner, Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela, Rigoberta Menchu, and Betty Williams.

(36) To overcome the young generation's stigmatization of being "aggressive" and "violent" and establish communication between young people and adults based on mutual trust.

(37) To eliminate violence against women as a specific expression of social discrimination - be it in the family, in the society, or in the "hands-off" attitude of the state - and establish women's equal status by implementing human rights and fundamental freedoms.

(38) To improve information on the phenomena of racism, violence, and discrimination in the media, to integrate members of cultural minorities and introduce multicultural aspects in the production and broadcasting of radio and television programmes.

(39) To organize and strengthen interdisciplinary cooperation of scientists in the fields of natural and social sciences, culture, law, education, religion, and political sciences in the permanent analysis of, and fight against, racism.

B. Framework of Action

(40) The results of the International Conference shall be made public all over the world. The conference participants suggest to submit this Declaration to the UNESCO General Conference in October/November 1995.

(41) At the same time the Director General of UNESCO shall be asked to examine the following proposals for their feasibility:

- World-wide dissemination of this Declaration by the UNESCO media.
- Recommendation to all National Commissions for UNESCO of the Member States to inform the relevant authorities, institutions, and school book publishers on the most recent scientific discoveries included in Part II of this Declaration.
- Orientation of the national and international school book research towards the most recent scientific discoveries. This is a means of supporting the integration of such discoveries into the relevant educational materials as well as to eliminate racist, sexist, discriminating, and violence-encouraging ideas and their language from curricula and school books (especially in biology, literature, history, native tongue, foreign languages, and art) and from teacher training programmes. At the same time the integration of new topical contents promoting peace, tolerance and multicultural education shall be encouraged.
- Initiating and promoting activities appropriate for conveying a responsible attitude to language (literature, encyclopedias, etc.) and to the various means of art while especially eliminating the stigmata of discrimination and cultural violence from language and art.
- Promotion and popularization of national and local initiatives in multicultural societies and groups so that cultural majorities are encouraged to learn the language of a minority.
- Organization of an International Seminar 1996 on education for a culture of peace with a view to contribute to the further implementation of the results achieved by the International Conference "Against Racism, Violence and Discrimination" laid down in this Declaration.

- Promotion of national and regional training programmes and courses for non-violent conflict resolution and gender-sensitive training as a contribution to fostering a culture of peace.

(42) The conference participants will evaluate and distribute the results of the conference in their respective institutions and workplaces. Wherever appropriate, the results shall become part of research and teaching as well as of public relations.

Members of scientific organizations, associations, etc. are called upon to support the dissemination of the results by means of publishing and information services available.