

## **World Peace, Inner Peace Healing Self, the Earth and Others**

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David Lorimer, Fife, Scotland

May 1999 saw the hundredth anniversary of the first international peace conference held in the Hague. It was a very different affair, as made clear by a booklet produced by Jan and Steve Nation. Convened at the instigation of the Czar of Russia, who was worried that his military expenditure was putting a strain on his overall budget, the meeting lasted several weeks. During this period the delegates got to know each other very well and some old antagonisms were partially resolved. However, the meeting set a dangerous precedent that has continued during the intervening century: that any agreements made were not binding. Powerful countries were therefore free to break such agreements if it suited their national interests. Not long afterwards, war broke out between some of the participating nations, then came the First World War.....and a growing scepticism about the value of such meetings.

Our century has seen the emergence of our aspiration towards a sense of global community with the creation of an unprecedented number of co-operative international institutions. Some 1899 delegates would be impressed. However, the roots of global conflict in the individual and collective psyches have yet to be seriously addressed in official international circles. The Network event held in the autumn of 1986 and entitled 'The Image of the Enemy' was a small attempt to bring in the psychological dimension of projection into the picture. This meeting went further by postulating the link between inner and outer peace and healing. As far as I know, it was the only forum in which such critical issues were properly addressed. I venture to suggest that an editor writing in 2099 will look back and comment that this meeting was a pioneering one in making such a link. Let us hope that she will be proud of our progress in the intervening period!

The aim of the meeting was to articulate 'the new dream of the human heart' and help build a 'culture of compassion and peace'. The delegates remained painfully aware throughout of the backdrop of the Kosovo crisis and the need to make their deliberations relevant to our world reality. One speaker also commented that 'the American dream is becoming a nightmare for the rest of the world. The conference was opened by honorary member Dr. ROBERT MÜLLER, the visionary behind the whole event, which was realised by a group of dedicated people based at the Davidhuis in Rotterdam. Both Robert and former President of Costa Rica and honorary member Dr. RODRIGO CARAZO articulated the vision of the University of Peace and the contribution of the history of his country to the process. Speakers held that thoughts were alive and had a vital influence on the peace process, that peace should first be sought within, and that feelings were even stronger than thoughts. Our most powerful contribution is through personal example, as had been the case with former secretary-generals of the UN U Thant and Dag Hammarskjold. We were entering a period of the development of the global soul and heart after eras in which we had become aware of our ecological position. Robert also spoke of the promise of the United Religions Initiative and predicted a global spiritual renaissance, commenting that a change of consciousness implies a change of values and a step forward in evolution. Primatologist Dr. JANE GOODALL gave one of the most uplifting speeches. She radiates a remarkable simplicity and compassion, embodying the noblest of human qualities. Her moving message of hope was acclaimed with a lengthy standing ovation.

The lectures and sessions were too numerous to summarise. Speaker after speaker showed how individuals can and do make a difference when they put their vision into action. Among the themes considered were the return of the sacred in the circle of life, a medicine and a culture of peace, peace with soil, soul and society, human rights, sustainable communities and energy systems, ethical science, education for peace, and peace in our personal and working lives. Interwoven with the words was a strong sense of ritual and music. THERESE SCHROEDER-SHEKER and NOIRIN NI RIAIAN played the harp and sang respectively, introducing a powerful spiritual impulse into the proceedings, which symbolically took place in a circular space. Elders from many different cultures were represented, filling a gap in our Western way of life that recognises technical skill and intelligence but not wisdom. A peace planet was drawn by a group of children, while another group gave an inspiring musical performance. It was an altogether heart-warming event that pointed the way towards a new culture of peace in the next millennium.