

Global Ethic for a New Global Order

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1. The 21st century will not be a European as the 19th century, nor an American century as the 20th century, and it will also not be an Asian century, but a World century. The age of imperialism and hegemonism is gone, and the damnation that is domination would be no lesser if it would be Asian domination.
2. But the world is faced with a new sense of East Asian self-worth, self-respect and empowerment; Asians today are aware of their own potentials, their possibilities, and their Asian values.
3. We should avoid any silly confrontation especially between the Western world (Christian or secular) and the world of Islam and should strive for a commonwealth of all nations where wealth is truly common, in other words: towards a single commonwealth of common wealth. In this sense we should strive for a universal civilization.

Presupposing therefore these three points of agreement, it is easier for me to analyse in my first point the fundamental challenges and responses we are facing for the 21st century. I do it very briefly in four steps.¹

1 Challenges and responses

1. We live in a time, where humanity is threatened by a “**clash of civilizations**”, as some think, between the Islamic civilization and the western civilization.² We are threatened, as I believe, not so much by

¹Cf. H. Küng (with J. van Ess, H. v. Stietencron, H. Bechert), Christianity and the World Religions. Paths of Dialogue with Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism (New York: Doubleday, 1987; London: SCM Press, 1993); H. Küng (with J. Ching), Christianity and Chinese Religions (New York: Doubleday 1989; London: SCM Press, 1993).

²Cf. for discussion of Samuel Huntington’s thesis of a clash of civilizations: H. Küng, Christianity. Its Essence and History (London: SCM Press, 1995; New York: Continuum, 1995), chapter C. V,9: “Tasks for an analysis of postmodernity: A war of civilizations?”; H. Küng, A Global Ethic for Global Politics and Economics (SCM Press, London 1997; Oxford University Press, New York 1998) chapter A. V,1: “A clash between the civilizations – or peace?”

a new world war, but by all sorts of cultural and religious conflicts between specific countries or in a specific country often even in the same city, the same street, the same school.

The reasonable alternative is: **peace among the religions**. Because there will be no peace among the nations and civilizations without **peace among the religions**. But many people all over the world will ask: Do not precisely the religions often support and inspire hatred, enmity, and war? Indeed:

2. We live in a time, where peace in the western and in the islamic world is threatened by all sort of **religious fundamentalism**, christian, muslim, Jewish, hindu, buddhist, often simply rooted in social misery, in reaction to western secularism and in the desire of a basic orientation in life.

The alternative is: **dialogue between the religions**. Because there will be no peace among the religions without the dialogue between the religions! But many people will object: Are there not many dogmatic differences and obstacles between the different faiths, which make real dialogue a naive illusion? Indeed:

3. We live in a time, where in the western and in the muslim world better relations between religions are blocked by all sort of dogmatisms which exist within each religion: the reason for many clashes between dogmatism and pragmatism, fundamentalism and enlightenment.

The alternative will be: Despite dogmatic differences a **global ethic, an ethical minimum common to all religions, cultures, civilizations**. Because there will be no new world order without a global ethic. This forthcoming "world century" asks for a "world ethic" which has to be the basis for an upcoming "world civilization" or "universal civilization".

The idea of a "universal civilization" certainly does not imply the abolition of cultural and religious differences which are tremendous not only in Europe, but also in Asia, which is only a geographical entity and not a political, ethnic, cultural or religious one. The idea of a "universal civilization" means in a positive way a universality in the technological, economical, political and, as we hope, also in the ethical dimension. In this time of globalization of markets, technologies and medias we need also the globalization of ethics. Nevertheless, we, in Asia or in Europe, shall and should not give up our specific cultures, the cultures of the different particular tribes, regions or nations with the particular history, language, custom, belief, law and art. Reaching out for a universal civilization we must not strive towards a single unified religion which would anyway be an illusion, but we should

maintain a culture of tolerance which respects all cultural and religious minorities. Presupposing therefore the importance of a universal civilization and at the same time the remaining differences in culture and religion, let us now talk about the emergence of a new world order in the political sense which, as I am convinced, needs an ethical basis:³

2 New World Order and World Ethic

1. In **negative terms**: A better world order will **not** be introduced on the basis:

- solely of **diplomatic offensives** which all too often are unable to guarantee peace and stability in a certain region and which are often, as in former Yugoslavia, characterized more by hypocrisy than by honesty;
- simply of **humanitarian help** which cannot replace political actions and solutions: The European powers, by substituting in Bosnia humanitarian aid for political action, put themselves in the power of the aggressors and became complicit in the crimes of war;
- primarily of **military interventions**: Of course an absolute pacifism would allow a new holocaust, a new genocide at the end of this "never again century". But indeed, the consequences of military interventions tend often to be more negative than positive;
- solely of **international law**, as long as such a law rests on the unlimited sovereignty of states and is focussed more on the rights of states than on the rights of peoples and individuals. If moral convictions and moral intentions do not back a law, armistice or treaty, powers as in Bosnia are not even prepared to defend the principle that only peaceful and negotiated territorial change is acceptable in Europe.

2. In **positive terms**: A better world order will ultimately be **brought in only on the basis of**:

- common visions, ideals, values, aims and criteria;
- heightened global responsibility on the part of peoples and their leaders;

³Cf. H. Küng, *A Global Ethic for Global Politics and Economics* (SCM Press, London 1997; Oxford University Press, New York 1998).

- a new **binding and uniting ethic** for all humankind, including states and those in power, which embraces cultures and religions.
- No new world order without a new world ethic, a global ethic.**

3. What is the **function** of such a global ethic?

- Global ethic is not a new ideology or superstructure;
- it will not make the specific ethics of the different religions and philosophies superfluous;
- it is therefore no substitute for the Torah, Sermon on the Mount, the Qur'an, the Bhagavadgita, the Discourses of the Buddha or the Sayings of Confucius.
- Global ethic is nothing but the **necessary minimum of common values, standards and basic attitudes**. In other words:
- a minimal basis **consensus** relating to binding values, irrevocable standards and moral attitudes, which can be affirmed **by all religions** despite their "dogmatic" differences and should also be supported **by non-believers**.
- This consensus of values will be a decisive contribution to **overcome the crisis of orientation** which became a real world problem.

And in the recent discussion on human rights Asians insisted rightly on the fact that in their traditions there was from the beginning a great insistence on duties, obligations, responsibilities and that these rights are a relatively new development in Europe and America originating with the enlightenment of the 17th century.

But one of the most astonishing and at the same time most welcome phenomena of the last decade of the twentieth century is the almost explosive spread of the notion of a world ethic, not only in theology, philosophy and education, but also in world politics and the world economy. The most important developments are:

3 World politics discovers the global ethic

When I published the book "Projekt Weltethos" ("Global Responsibility. In Search of a New World Ethic") in 1990, there were hardly any documents on a global ethic from world organizations to which I could refer.⁴ Of course

⁴H. Küng, Global Responsibility. In Search of a New World Ethic (SCM Press, London 1991; Continuum, New York 1991). See for a bibliography on Global Ethic: Hans Küng and Karl-Josef Kuschel (eds.), Wissenschaft und Weltethos (Piper Verlag: München 1998), Bibliographie zur Weltethos-Debatte, 493-511; and the homepage of the Foundation Global Ethic, Website: <http://www.uni-tuebingen.de/stiftung-weltethos>.

there were declarations on human rights, above all the 1948 Declaration of the United Nations, but there were no declarations on human responsibilities. However, now, seven years later, I can refer to three important international documents which not only acknowledge human rights, but also speak explicitly of human responsibilities. Indeed they programmatically call for a global ethic and even attempt to spell it out in concrete terms.

1. The report of the **UN-Commission on Global Governance** bears the title **Our Global Neighbourhood**⁵ (1995) and calls for a “**neighbourhood ethics**”: “Global values must be the cornerstone of global governance”.⁶ And for the “**ethical dimension of the world political order**” this document gives the **Golden Rule** as the main basic principle: “People should treat others as they would themselves wish to be treated.”⁷ In connection with this a request is made. The authors were presumably unaware that it had already been made in a discussion in the Revolutionary Parliament of 1789, in Paris, one which could not be met at that time: “**Rights need to be joined with responsibilities.**”⁸ For the “tendency to emphasize rights while forgetting responsibilities” has “deleterious consequences”.⁹ “We therefore urge the international community to unite in support of a global ethic of common rights and shared responsibilities. In our view, such an ethic - reinforcing the fundamental rights that are already part of the fabric of international norms - would provide the moral foundation for constructing a more effective system of global governance.”¹⁰ The international commission expresses the hope that “over time, these principles could be embodied in a more binding international document - a global charter of Civil Society - that could provide a basis for all to agree on rules that should govern the global neighbourhood”.¹¹
2. The Report by the **World Commission on Culture and Development** (1995) bears the title **Our Creative Diversity**.¹² Here the presupposition is a “commitment to pluralism,” but this statement is preceded by a chapter which stresses what is held in common rather than the differences: “**A New Global Ethics**”, an **ethic of humankind**, a **global ethic**.

⁵Our Global Neighbourhood, The Report of the Commission on Global Governance, Oxford 1995.

⁶Ibid., 47.

⁷Ibid., 49.

⁸Ibid., 56.

⁹Ibid., 56.

¹⁰Ibid., 56.

¹¹Ibid., 57.

¹²Report of the World Commission on Culture and Development, Our Creative Diversity, UNESCO Paris 1995.

Why a global ethic? Because **collaboration** between people of different cultures and interests can be made **easier** and their “conflicts diminished and limited” if all peoples and groups “see themselves bound and motivated by shared commitments”.¹³ Hence the call for a global ethic: “So it is imperative to look for a core of shared ethical values and principles.”¹⁴ The Commission on Culture and Development emphasizes the agreement between its concern and the efforts of the UN Commission for Global Governance, and states: “The idea is that the values and principles of a global ethic should be common points of contact which offer a minimal **moral stimulus** which the world must observe in its manifold efforts to **overcome** the **global problems** mentioned.”¹⁵ To this degree today there is a whole “culture in search of a global ethics”.¹⁶ Such a search is already in itself a cultural activity par excellence. Questions like “Who are we? How do we relate to one another and to humankind? How do we behave to one another and to humankind as such? What is our meaning?”, stand at the centre of culture.

What are the **sources** of such a global ethic? The formulation of a global ethic must draw its content from “the cultural resources, the insights, emotional experiences, historical memories and spiritual orientations of the peoples”.¹⁷ Despite all the differences between cultures, there are some themes which appear in almost all cultural traditions and which could serve as the inspiration for a global ethic.

3. The **InterAction Council (1997)**, which consists of former Presidents and . Prime Ministers (Helmut Schmidt of Germany, Honory Chairman, Malcom Fraser of Australia, Chairman) proposed in September 1997 to the United Nations to accept a **Univeral Declaration of Human Responsibilities**.¹⁸ This Declaration is based on the conviction that “global problems demand global solutions on the basis of ideas, values and norms respected by all cultures and societies”. The Introductory Comment of this Declaration emphasizes that “it is time to talk about human responsibilities”. Therefore the Univeral Declaration of Human Responsibilities “seeks to bring freedom and responsibility into balance and to promote a move from the freedom of indifference to the freedom of involvement. . . . The basic premise

¹³Ibid., 34.

¹⁴Ibid., 34.

¹⁵Ibid., 35.

¹⁶Ibid., 35.

¹⁷Ibid., 35.

¹⁸A Universal Declaration of Human Responsabilities, proposed by the InterAction Council, Tokyo 1997; see: H. Küng and H. Schmidt (eds.), A Global Ethic and Global Responsibilities. Two Declaration (London: SCM Press, 1998); and the homepage of the InterAction Council, Website: <http://www.asiawide.or.jp/iac>.

should be to aim at the greatest amount of freedom possible, but also to develop the fullest sense of responsibility that will allow that freedom itself to grow.” The Comment stresses “that a better social order both nationally and internationally cannot be achieved by laws, prescriptions and conventions alone, but needs a global ethic. Human aspirations for progress can only be realised by agreed values and standards applying to all people and institutions at all times”.¹⁹

The **responsibilities** which “should be taught and promoted throughout the world” contain “Fundamental Principles for Humanity”, “Non-Violence and Respect for Life”, “Justice and Solidarity”, “Truthfulness and Tolerance”, and “Mutual Respect and Partnership”.²⁰

4 Not only rights but also responsibilities

Already in the debate on human rights in the French Revolutionary Parliament of 1789 the demand was made: if a declaration of the **rights** of man is proclaimed, it must be combined with a declaration of the **responsibilities** of man (*Déclaration des devoirs de l'homme*). Otherwise, in the end all human beings would have only rights which they would play off against others, and no one would any longer recognize the responsibilities without which the rights cannot function. After a controversial discussion over three days a vote cleared the further proceedings by 607 voices against, but also 433 in favour for this demand.

(a) Human beings have responsibilities from the beginning In our historical retrospect we saw that the responsibilities were formulated millennia before the rights. But 200 years after the 1789 Revolution we are living in a society in which individuals and groups constantly appeal to **rights against others** without recognizing any **responsibilities** of their own. Hardly anyone can build a house or a street, hardly an authority can enact a law or a regulation, without an appeal being made to rights in connection with it. Today countless claims can be advanced as rights, in particular against the state. After all we live in a society of claims which often appears to be a “litigious society”, and thus makes the state a “judiciary state” – as it has been called in the Federal Republic of Germany. That is above all the case in the USA, where a third of all the lawyers in the world practise; there the costs of damages use up around 3% of the Gross National Product. Don’t we perhaps need a new concentration on responsibilities, particularly in our over-developed legalistic states, to balance all the justified insistence on rights?

¹⁹Ibid., 1.

²⁰Cf. ibid., 2-5.

Responsibility obligation, duty; in German all are expressed by the same word "Pflicht". And of course as **duty** it has been **badly misused**. "Duty" (towards those in authority, the Führer, the people, the Party, the Pope), has been hammered home by totalitarian, authoritarian hierarchical ideologies of every kind; fearful crimes are committed out of "duty" or on the basis of some "oath" which backs up obedience with divine authority. "Duty is duty" and "an order is an order". Neither of these must again become slogans: blind obedience, whether in state or church, is immoral. But all the abuses should not prevent us from taking up the concept of duty in a discriminating way. It is a term which has had a long history since Cicero (De officiis) and Ambrose, Bishop of Milan (De officiis ministrorum), and became a **key concept of modernity** through Immanuel Kant.

The fact cannot be overlooked that duty in particular - this was Kant's key thought - distinguishes man as a rational being from animals, who only follow inclinations, instincts, drives or external pressures and training. But human beings are not just rational, quite naturally following their reason and therefore needing no obligation. Human beings, who are both **rational and subject to drives**, have the possibility - which is both an opportunity and a risk - to **make decisions in freedom** and to act in accordance with their reason. In this sense, understood in modern immanent terms, an obligation is a claim of reason which is binding and yet aims at freedom. However, in principle it does not exclude other "external" authorities (God, positive law), since a human autonomy grounded in theonomy need not mean heteronomy, i.e. being governed from outside.

Moreover, it is important to see that while duty exerts a moral compulsion, this compulsion is not physical. Leaving aside external authorities, it follows from **reason**, which is not purely technical nor economic but **ethical, prompting** and compelling **human beings to moral action**. But in modern discussion of human rights one thing is overlooked. All rights imply responsibilities, but:

(b) Not all responsibilities follow from rights I shall demonstrate this first by three examples, one more special, one more general and one quite universal, and then make a more precise definition of the relationship between rights and responsibilities.

1. A special example: the **freedom of the press** enjoyed by a newspaper or a journalist is guaranteed and protected by the modern constitutional state: the journalist, the newspaper, has a **right** to report freely. The law may not only not attack this right, but on the contrary must protect it actively, and if need be even establish it with its authority. Therefore the state and the citizen have the **responsibility** to respect the right of this newspaper or this journalist to report freely.

However, this right does not in any way affect the **responsibility of the journalist or the newspaper itself**, namely to report objectively and fairly, not to caricature reality and not to manipulate the public, but to inform it truthfully.

2. A more general example: the **right of each individual to property** is guaranteed by the modern constitutional state. It contains the legal **obligation** for others (the state or the individual citizen) to respect this property and not to misappropriate it.

However, this right does not in any way affect the **responsibility of the property-owner** himself not to use the property in an anti-social way but to use it socially, to restrain the unquenchable human greed for money, prestige and consumption, and to develop some sense of proportion and moderation.

3. A quite general example: the **freedom** of any individual to decide in accordance with his or her own **conscience** entails the legal obligation that others (individuals or the state) should respect a free decision of conscience; the individual conscience is guaranteed protection by the constitution of the state. However, this right by no means entails the **ethical responsibilities of individuals** in every instance to follow their own consciences even, indeed especially, when this is unpleasant or abhorrent to them.

It follows from all this that rights imply certain responsibilities, and these are **legal obligations**. But by no means all responsibilities follow from legal rights. There are also **original ethical obligations**. The Protestant natural-law ethicist Samuel von Pufendorf (1632-1694) and the Jewish philosopher Moses Mendelsson (li2S-86) distinguished between:

- “perfect” obligations, obligations in the narrower sense: these are **legal obligations**, for example, to respect freedom of conscience and religion, obligations which the state may enforce, punishing violations of them; and
- “imperfect” obligations, obligations in the wider sense: these are **ethical obligations**, for example the obligations of conscience, love and humanity which rest on one’s own insight and cannot be compelled by the state, unless it wants to be a totalitarian state. That constitutes their greatness but also their practical limits. Here, though, we should reflect:

(c) What would rights be without morals? This distinction between legal and ethical obligations is important for a more precise distinction between the levels of law and ethics, which has many implications, in particular

for the implementation of human rights. First of all we need to clarify the question: can one develop an ethic valid for the whole of humankind simply on the basis of human rights? The levels of law and ethics are related in many ways: the origin as well as the presence and application of the law already presupposes an ethic. On the other hand, however, ethics is not exhausted in the law. The levels of law and ethic are thus to be distinguished in principle, and this is of particular significance for human rights.

- Human beings have fundamental rights which are formulated in declarations of human rights. To these correspond the responsibilities both of the state and of individual citizens to respect and to protect these rights. These are legal obligations. Here we are at **the level of law**, the laws, the regulations, the judiciary, the police.

In practice that means that outward conduct in conformity with the law can be examined; the law can be appealed to in principle and if need be enforced ("in the name of the law").

- But at the same time human beings have elementary responsibilities which are already given with their personhood and are not based on any laws: there are ethical obligations which are not fixed in law. Here we are at the **level of ethics**, customs, the conscience, the "heart"...

In practice this means that the inner, morally good disposition cannot be examined; so it cannot be brought under the law, let alone be compelled ("thoughts are free").

- The conclusion to be drawn from this is that **no comprehensive ethic of humanity** can be derived **from human rights alone**, fundamental though these are for human beings; it must also cover the human responsibilities which were there before the law. Before any codification in law and any state legislation there is the moral independence and conscious self-responsibility of the individual, with which not only elementary rights but also elementary responsibilities are connected.

The distinction between **law and ethic** has momentous consequences: because law and ethic are not a priori identical but can **fall apart**. The law very often does not function. That is particularly true of politics: if, as happened in the recent war in Yugoslavia, one or both partners in a treaty a priori do not have the ethical will (which cannot be directly examined, far less be compelled) to observe the cease-fire that has been negotiated, then the cease-fire treaties co-signed by the great powers and all their legal provisions are of no use; the parties will continue the war as soon as there is a favourable opportunity, with whatever political or legal justification. The realization of the fundamental principle of international law, "treaties are to be observed" (*pacta sunt servanda*) quite decisively depends on the ethical

will of the partner in the treaty. It only needs Bismarck's secret addition ">as things are" (*rebus sic stantibus*, which also can-not be guaranteed) for even the most solemn legal treaty to be built on sand, and one-sidedly to be declared no longer valid in a changed situation.

On the level of international law, in 1955 **Max Huber** (1874-1966) pointed out the relevance of the distinction between law and ethic. In his reflections, Huber, who was not only a renowned Swiss international lawyer, but also the President of the International Court of Justice at The Hague from 1925 to 1928 and President of the International Committee of the Red Cross (1928-1945), develops the concept of an "international ethic" transcending the law, standing behind and above it, and therefore not grounded in law.²¹ For the international lawyer it is a matter of principle that: "Neither the law nor morality can assert themselves in the long run without the authority of an ethic which stands behind them and comes from another, higher, realm that elevates mere custom to morality." In respect of international law, which accords the sovereign states very great freedom of movement for politics, the ethic has "the task of giving criteria for this broad area of political action, and setting limits".

So, "Quid leges sine moribus?" runs a Roman saying: what is the use of any laws if no morals, no moral inclination, no obligation of conscience stands behind them? What is the use of a peace treaty which only exists on paper, which has not found its way into human heads and, since it is not just a rational event, into human hearts? There is no overlooking the fact that the realization of peace, justice and humanity depends on the insight and readiness of . human beings to give the law validity. In other words, **the law needs a moral foundation!** For a **new world order** that means:

- A better world order cannot be created or even enforced with laws, conventions and ordinances alone.
- Commitment to human rights presupposes an awareness of responsibility and obligations for which both the human head and the human heart must be addressed at the same time.

²¹Cf. M. Huber, Prolegomena und Probleme eines internationales Ethos, in: Die Friedens-Warte 53, 1955/56, 4, 305-29; the following quotations are on 305f. and 328f. Professor Dieter Senftleben recently drew my attention to this important article by Max Huber in which, happily, the term "global ethics" (Weltethos) already appears (329). It (still) seemed impossible to Huber to get beyond the multiplicity, variety and contrast in the existing religions and ideologies and to bring them together in a "global ethic"; in his view a "global legal organization" could be achieved more easily than a global ethic. Huber also points out: "Law can be broken like iron when it is not itself ethic. But ethic is like a diamond" (329). To this it may be replied, from a present-day perspective: while diamonds may differ in size, form and brilliance, they have similar internal structures. Today we know that despite all the differences between the religions, there are basic common factors particularly in their ethics, and thus it has proved possible to arrive at a global ethic.

- Law has no permanent existence without ethics, so there will be **no new world order without a world ethic.**

5 Contribution of Religions

A former communiqué of the InterAction Council bears the title **In Search of Global Ethical Standards** (1996). It openly addresses the **negative role** which the **religions** have often played, and still play, in the world: "The world is also afflicted by religious extremism and violence preached and practised in the name of religion."²² But the **positive role** of the religions is also noted: "Religious institutions still command the loyalty of hundreds of millions of people",²³ and do so despite all secularization and consumerism. "The world's religions constitute one of the great traditions of wisdom for humankind. This repository of wisdom, ancient in its origins, has never been needed more."²⁴ The minimal criteria which make it possible to live together at all are important; without ethics and self-restraint humankind would revert to the jungle. "In a world of unprecedented change humankind has a desperate need of an ethical base on which to stand."²⁵

Now follow some statements on **ethics and politics**: "Ethics should precede politics and the law, because political action is concerned with values and choice. Ethics, therefore, must inform and inspire our political leadership."²⁶ To respond to the epoch-making change which is coming about, our institutions need a re-dedication to ethical norms: "We can find the sources of such a re-dedication in the world's religious and ethical traditions. They have the spiritual resources to give an ethical lead to the solution of our ethnic, national, social, economic and religious tensions. The world's religions have different doctrines but they all advocate a common ethic of basic standards. What unites the world's faiths is far greater than what divides them."²⁷

This declaration defines much more precisely the core of a global ethic which can also be found in the other declarations. The InterAction Council achieves this precision by taking up the "**Declaration toward a Global Ethic**" passed by the **Parliament of the World's Religions** which I had the honour and burden to prepare²⁸: "We are therefore grateful that the Parliament of the World's Religions, which assembled in Chicago in 1993,

²²InterAction Council, In Search of Global Ethical Standards, 1996, no. 2.

²³Ibid., no. 2.

²⁴Ibid., no. 9.

²⁵Ibid., no. 8.

²⁶Ibid., no. 9.

²⁷Ibid., no. 10.

²⁸Cf. H. Küng and K.J. Kuschel (eds.), A Global Ethic. The Declaration of the Parliament of the World's Religions, London and New York 1993.

proclaimed a Declaration toward a Global Ethic which we support in principle.”²⁹

The “Declaration toward a Global Ethic” of course, does not aim to invent a new morality and then impose it on the various religions from outside (and even from the “West”). It simply aims to make known what religions in West and East, North and South already hold in common, but is so often obscured by numerous “dogmatic” disputes and intolerable self-opinionatedness. In short, this Declaration seeks to emphasize the minimal ethic which is absolutely necessary for human survival. It is not directed against anyone, but invites all, believers and also non-believers, to adopt this ethic and live in accordance with it. In the words of the Declaration:

“On the basis of personal experiences and the burdensome history of our planet we have learned

- that a better global order cannot be created or enforced by laws, prescriptions, and conventions alone;
- that the realization of peace, justice, and the protection of earth depends on the insight and readiness of men and women to act justly;
- that action in favour of rights and freedoms presumes a consciousness of responsibility and duty, and that therefore both the minds and hearts of women and men must be addressed;
- that rights without morality cannot long endure, and that **there will be no better global order without a global ethic.**”

And then the following two fundamental demands are developed:

1. “Every human being (white or coloured, man or woman, rich or poor) must be treated humanely.”
2. “What you do not wish done to yourself, do not do to others!” Or in positive terms: “What you wish done to yourself, do to others!” (found already in the Sayings of Confucius and practically in every great religious tradition on earth).

On this basis four irrevocable directives are developed. All religions agree on the following commitments:

1. Commitment to a culture of non-violence and respect for life: “You shall not kill”! Or in positive terms: “Have respect for life”!
2. Commitment to a culture of solidarity and a just economic order: “You shall not steal”! Or in positive terms: “Deal honestly and fairly”!

²⁹InterAction Council, In Search of Global Ethical Standards, 1996, no. 11.

3. Commitment to a culture of tolerance and a life of truthfulness: "You shall not lie"! Or in positive terms: "Speak and act truthfully"!
4. Commitment to a culture of equal rights and partnership between men and women: "You shall not commit sexual immorality"! Or in positive terms: "Respect and love one another"!

According to the Parliament of Religions we should commit ourselves to a common global ethic, to better mutual understanding, as well as to socially beneficial, peace-fostering, and Earth-friendly ways of life. This is the only efficient way to a universal civilization. As far as the religions are concerned this means: In view of a universal civilization their prime task must be **making peace with one another**. That must be done with every means available today, including the media, and at every level:

- clearing up misunderstandings,
- working through traumatic memories,
- dissolving hostile stereotypes,
- working through guilt complexes, both socially and individually,
- demolishing hatred and destructiveness,
- reflecting on things that are held in common,
- taking concrete initiatives for reconciliation.

The change of consciousness needed here is a task for the new century, the "world century". And it is for the young generation to realize decisively the sketch for the future presented here, as the famous french writer Victor Hugo says, the future has many names:

For the weak it is the unattainable.
 For the fearful it is the unknown.
 For the bold it is the opportunity.

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