



Remarks by Abiodun Williams

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Introduction

- Ladies and Gentleman, it is an honor to address you today and to bring this conference’s discussions to a close. The mission of the International Baccalaureate Organization is one for which I have great affinity, not just because I am myself a survivor of the IB – and a graduate of the Lester B. Pearson United World College of the Pacific – but also because the community that is represented here has important work to contribute to my current role as the President of The Hague Institute for Global Justice.
- There is, of course, no more appropriate venue to discuss the role that education has in conflict prevention and the rule of law than The Hague, and no more fitting occasion than the year in which we celebrate the centenary of the Peace Palace. The Peace Palace, and the institutions which it houses, both symbolize and realize a rule-based international order. In the century since it has opened its gates the rule of law – both international and domestic - has made significant progress. No longer does ‘might make right’. No longer are heinous crimes against civilians dismissed as the inevitable, if tragic, consequence of conflict.
- History shows us that peace and justice do not prevail through good intentions alone, but through committed action by states, organizations and individuals who combine idealism with considered means. Educators and students alike have a crucial role to play in this regard, and it is this topic which I will address in my remarks today, arguing that as we collectively take on the mission of “innovating, education and creating”, there is no better cause than realizing the universal enjoyment of peace and justice.
- To some, the relationship between education and peace may be self-evident, but to others these are disparate fields. My own career in the United Nations, academia and international think tanks has continuously reaffirmed my belief that stemming the tide of conflict begins in the classroom. And though the global challenges we face may seem insurmountable, I remain optimistic that innovation that begins in fora like this one can go a long way to resolving the most intractable of issues. Today, I therefore want to talk to you about:
 - *how* international education promotes peace and justice;

- *why* this must be an urgent mission for all involved: educational institutions, academics and students; and
- *what* the distinctive contribution of your organizations to these goals can be.

How International Education Promotes Peace and Justice

- Education serves many functions. It begins with the individual, but pays dividends for communities and nations. It is an instrument for economic growth and safer streets. It is no coincidence that the countries which enjoyed tremendous development in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were those that had made education compulsory. But education is not just a tool of state planners. It is, as Nelson Mandela has said 'the most powerful weapon you can use to change the world'.
- Within a country's own borders, an educated citizenry is the *sine qua non* of a functioning democracy. Jefferson recognized that only a well-informed people were capable of 'preventing the corruption of power, and restoring the nation to its rightful course if it should go astray'.
- If education can hold the arbitrary exercise of power to account within the state, it can also serve to reduce tensions between nations and thereby hold back the dogs of war. This was the fundamental insight of Senator William J. Fulbright, an archetypal innovator and the founding father of international education in the United States, who contended that 'educational exchange can turn nations into people, contributing as no other form of communication can to the humanizing of international relations'.
- We talk often of peace and too little of justice. But there can be no peace without justice. True justice on the global level can only come through mutual respect. That is where international education has a unique role to play. We live in an irrevocably global age, but the ready transfer of our goods does not inevitably lead to a constructive exchange of ideas. Our era is international, but it is up to us to become internationalists.

A priority for our times

- Harnessing international education in pursuit of peace and justice is certainly a noble goal, but it also one grounded in the urgent needs of our times. It is both a moral and strategic imperative. The contradictions of interdependence and the ongoing realignment of global power make education more vital than ever.
- It is axiomatic to say that we live, today, in a global age. There is a faster flow of goods, capital and finance than ever before. This has lifted many out of poverty, but

has also left many communities at the mercy of global forces beyond their control. Globalization has also led, moreover, to the readier spread of pandemic disease, terror and crime and accelerated the rate of global climate changes which puts our planet in peril.

- When our problems are global, so too must be our tools. Certainly, this means better international institutions and a more innovative global governance architecture, but as IB's mission fundamentally recognizes, it also means global citizens with the mindset to confront this century's challenges, to collaborate beyond their borders and to affirm our common humanity.
- Globalization is viewed by many as an alienating, amorphous process. We confront on a daily basis the contradiction that we have better information than ever before about the outside world, but retreat increasingly into the immediacy of our own lives. Populaces confronting the impotence of the nation-state may paradoxically take refuge in nationalism. As we have heard this morning, the technology which connects us can be liberating, but it can also be dislocating. Many are too preoccupied with their smartphones to engage with those around them, never mind the wider world. Changes wrought by global processes have left communities feeling powerless and threatened by 'the other', whether that outsider takes the form of an economic migrant or a foreign worker whose cheap labour leads to factory closures at home.
- Education, which at root concerns the enrichment of the individual; which, when properly conceived, seeks to 'light a flame rather than fill a vessel', is an important way of making our global age personal again. It is the *only* way to counter the backlash against globalization which has readily understandable causes, but which has too often sought out scapegoats and seldom reflects the humanity of supposed rivals in the global race.
- Much more must be done to promote dialogue and exchange as these changes in the international order take place. St Augustine's insight that 'the world is a book, and those who do not travel read only one page' reflects the self-imposed limits of a world where education remains tethered within a single nation. When we view other peoples as alien, their rise is an inherent matter of concern. As IB curricula propound, when we study, visit and experience other cultures, potential threats become potential partnerships.

The Role of Educational Institutions

- Global challenges will force us to innovate. How, then, should we educate? Educators have an indispensable role to play in promoting peace and justice. In

today's world, these are core responsibilities for every university, every school and every department. Three things are essential: knowledge; an international outlook; and sensibility.

- *Knowledge:* Achieving a more peaceful and just world is an all-encompassing enterprise, not the special preserve of professional politicians or diplomats. Economists, scientists, lawyers, engineers, doctors, financiers, industrialists and, of course, educators, should all play a very active and important part in it.
- The knowledge required cannot be confined to political science or economics. The project is much too important and complicated for that. It requires innovative interdisciplinary education and scholarship, and greater openness across the boundaries of disciplines – a sensibility that the International Baccalaureate fosters more than most other programs. Fostering such knowledge must begin in the classroom, extend to universities and last a lifetime. We need a new generation of dedicated people who understand not only the societies in which they live, but also other cultures, as well as the political, economic, strategic and social currents of the wider world.
- *International Outlook:* Building a secure world is also about shaping the attitudes and outlook of a new generation. Schools and universities should make every effort to give their students a sound international outlook. Educational institutions benefit enormously from the presence of foreign students. We must create opportunities for students to study or work abroad as part of their education; promote the learning of foreign languages and ensure that knowledge about foreign countries is deeply embedded not just in history and geography curricula, but across the range of courses that students undertake. Presenting a world of possibility to students, including by providing information on opportunities to pursue higher education in other countries, is one of the invaluable roles that teachers can play.
- *Sensibility:* Building a secure world is not just about producing educated people with the skills and outlook required to meet the challenges of a changing world. I submit that knowledge and outlook are not enough. Future peacebuilders must have the sensibility which underpins the idea of civilized life. In the 16th century Spenser called that idea “Courtesy”. In 18th century thought it was called “Good-nature”, which Fielding not only illustrated in his novels but defined in an essay: “Good-nature is that benevolent and amiable temper of mind, which disposes us to feel the misfortunes, and enjoy the happiness of others; and consequently, pushes us on to promote the latter, and prevent the former; and that without any abstract contemplation of the beauty of virtue, and without the allurements and terrors of religion.” Education that develops this sensibility helps to promote understanding among nations, peoples, and religions.

Ladies and Gentleman,

- Education is rightly becoming more international and there are centers of excellence in the promotion of such a vision. The international baccalaureate has been a key instrument in this regard and the discussions over the past few days have been a testament to the global vision of its architects.
- We all have a part to play in the pursuit of peace and justice, but those with the opportunity to advance international education enjoy a special role. Academic detachment from the world is not an option for education in the 21st century. The stakes are high, but so is the potential of an internationalist vision that begins in the classroom with innovative curricula, grows through exchange programs and culminates in greater cultural understanding. As you leave The Hague, I encourage you to continue “innovating, educating and creating” considering that as you do so, you are helping to achieve a more peaceful and just world through the power of education.

Thank You