

The IB, educating hearts and minds to meet the challenges of today's world

Ladies and Gentlemen, Mesdames, Messieurs, dear Colleagues, chers Collègues,

To address an audience of education professionals and to follow such distinguished speakers onto this podium is a great honour for me and the IB, the International Baccalaureate Organization, which I represent here today.

Thank you, Nick, for this invitation and for giving me the opportunity to pay tribute to the International School of Geneva and its teachers who, for more than 80 years have provided a centre of reflection and practice at the forefront of international education.

When founded in 1924, the International School of Geneva was a pioneer of international education, and it is the first school of this type to have endured to this day. Following the First and, particularly, the Second World War, the creation of international bodies and the development of multinational companies saw the expatriation of many families and a need for schooling for their children. International schools were born and continue to come into being throughout the world. The designation international indicates that they offer schooling, usually in English, to students from expatriate families plus a number of local families, where national legislation permits, who are anxious to broaden their children's cultural horizons. And to meet those same requirements, but also to offer national curriculums, English and American schools, French schools abroad, German and Japanese schools, etc. also came into being.

The International School of Geneva, the longest-standing of these many international schools, also had a well-defined aim, namely to promote peace in the world, a mission which it continues to pursue and which is also part of the IB's mission. Indeed, Écolint played a key role in the creation, in 1968, of the International Baccalaureate, a challenging pre-university course of study leading to a diploma which gives access to the universities around the world. The origins of this diploma are two-fold: pragmatic on the one hand, aiming to establish a common curriculum and a university-entry credential for internationally-mobile students, and idealistic on the other, aiming to foster understanding between different peoples. The teaching of this diploma spread rapidly throughout international schools and its high quality became recognized by a great many universities.

In the 90s, building on the reputation of its diploma and eager to prepare its students more effectively, the International Baccalaureate Organization added two further programmes, which again were initially developed by international schools, and which preceded the final two years of schooling leading to the diploma: the Middle Years Programme for students aged 11 to 16 and the Primary Years Programme designed for children aged 3 to 12.

Together, these three programmes constitute the IB curriculum. Independent and at the same time complementary, these programmes can be offered individually or as a continuum depending on the needs of the specific school. They are taught in international schools or in national schools, be they state or private, denominational or non-denominational.

There are currently 2,194 schools offering 2,468 implementations of IB programmes in 125 countries. At present, the Diploma Programme is available in three languages: English, Spanish and French, but with some subjects also being taught in German. In addition, in 2007, the IB offered at diploma level 71 languages A1, 16 languages A2, 21 languages B and 12 languages *ab initio*. The Middle Years Programme is offered in 11 languages (Arabic, Bosnian, Danish, Finnish, Dutch, Indonesian, Japanese, Russian, Chinese, Thai, and Turkish) in addition to English, Chinese (Mandarin), Spanish and French. And finally, the Primary Years Programme is taught in 16 languages (German, Bengali, Cantonese, Greek,

Hebrew, Indonesian, Mandarin, Dutch, Polish, Portuguese Farsi, Romanian, Russian, Swedish, Thai, and Turkish) in addition to English, Spanish and French. The Primary and Middle Years Programmes were, in fact, designed from the outset to be offered in the language of the host country.

Originating within international schools, IB programmes have been faced since their inception with the greatest change of our era: globalization – a phenomenon which was then beginning to emerge and which nowadays is inescapable. This globalization, buoyed not only by new means of communication and single markets but also by immigration and the flow of refugees, is dramatically transforming the world we live in and is impacting on our economic as well as cultural and personal life.

Our subject today, as addressed by the three eminent university professors speaking before me, has been to attempt to re-think education as we now know it in response to this globalization.

For my part, I am going to try to present to you what the IB can do to continue to adapt its programmes and how it can act as a model or inspire education systems facing globalization – a phenomenon which has so many advocates and so many critics.

Such a debate immediately raises a semantics issue. There is not always consensus on the interpretation of terms covering such huge topics as internationalism, multiculturalism, pluralism, diversity or globalization, which are at the heart of this day of reflection on the role of the school in a changing world. We are not here today to analyse the various definitions, but that said, the complexity of finding the right word, of agreeing on the meaning of a particular term, a spontaneous translation, has captured my attention ever since I began thinking about the topic of this speech: “The IB, educating hearts and minds to meet the challenges of today’s world.”

Having lived for only 8 years of my life in France and the last thirty in the US, my linguistic awareness has been shaped primarily in English, the language I use every day for my work, rather than French, my mother tongue, even though, having learnt it at the same time as Italian, I was confronted very early on with different interpretations of a word which could appear to mean the same, a false friend, a term which has filled me with dread since my childhood. Maybe this is the reason why I translated “challenges” by “défis” rather than “mutations” (changes), since the first challenge which came to mind was to talk to you today in French! I would have started by asking for your indulgence if I had not had the help of a colleague, Serge Ansar, who was kind enough to check and correct my text.

English is the language in which I have been teaching for thirty years, the language I write and communicate in, but it seemed impossible to address you here in Geneva in any language other than French. I would otherwise have felt I was betraying the culture instilled in me by my parents and also the French state system – a system to which I am immensely grateful for providing me with an education which was not only of the highest quality but also free. Before returning to study at university in Paris, I attended several French schools abroad and am therefore a product of the type of education for expatriates we have just discussed.

But as I am talking to you as the chair of the International Baccalaureate Council of Foundation, it is within the framework of the IB and the role its programmes can play and the example they can set, that I would like to consider with you the challenges of the 21st century.

In a recent document entitled “What is distinctive about the IB”, the former director general of the IB and also former director of Écolint, George Walker, identifies three consequences of globalization which will challenge 21st century education systems: diversity, complexity and inequality. The IB, whilst offering students an academic standard recognized and valued by universities around the world, is responding to each of these.

In response to inequality, which creates both winners and losers – and neither can ignore the other if the world is to live in peace – the IB supports school communities which are involved in world affairs and community service and develops *inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect.*

In response to complexity – which is not only the result of increased information but also new types of information, different cultural perspectives, greater power accorded to individual actions, making problems more difficult to resolve – the IB encourages students to develop critical-thinking. This critical-thinking includes the ability to search out and assess information, to debate an issue, to give a presentation and to work in a team. The IB recognizes that future citizens of the world must know how to tolerate more ambiguity and to be less inclined to look for quick solutions. The IB encourages students of all ages to be actively engaged in their learning and *to this end, the organization works with schools, governments and international organizations to develop challenging programmes of international education and rigorous assessment.*

In response to diversity, brought about by communication, migration, international exchange, the IB provides a network of schools and its programmes where students develop cultural awareness by learning new languages, reading works of world literature and studying different perspectives of world history. Every aspect of the IB – its programmes, assessment systems, the professional development of its teachers, its administration and governance – strives to present a broad vision of the world so that its students understand that *other people, with their differences, can also be right.*

At the outset, the primary purpose of IB programmes was to offer quality education at international schools serving expatriates and the local elite. This is generally the image of the IB which persists today in the international arena, despite the fact that more than half of IB World Schools are state schools, with international schools representing less than 20% of our total number of schools around the world.

How can we explain this transformation, this growth, particularly when you consider that during its 40 years, the IB has never done any marketing and that its annual growth of 17% since it began is due solely to its reputation and word of mouth? It must be said that quality is the best sales tool, but I would like to add that if there had not been a need for IB programmes, the organization would not have had this degree of success and would not have been faced with such a demand.

So, what does the IB offer and what are the specific aspects of its three programmes which explain this level of success? I would ask those of you here at Écolint, who are already very familiar with at least a part of these programmes, for your indulgence while I give a summary of the advantages.

Currently we offer schools:

- a curriculum or curriculum framework
- a method of student assessment
- professional development for teachers
- support, authorization and evaluation of schools.

It is important to emphasize the fact that the IB does not own or manage any schools. Instead, it works with schools (both state and privately-funded) around the world that share its commitment to international education. Schools that have been authorized by the IB to offer one or more of its programmes are known as “IB World Schools”.

These “IB World Schools”:

- share the same mission and same commitment to quality international education

- play an active and supporting role in the worldwide community of IB schools
- share their knowledge and experience in the development of IB programmes
- are committed to the professional development of teachers.

IB programmes have been developed independently of national influences or government intervention. Their primary concern is to develop future citizens of the world by providing them with a high-quality education, to promote their cultural and language development and to teach them to respect our shared humanity, our planet and our environment by being active citizens in their own country but also by supporting their fellow citizens around the world. These programmes provide a common international curriculum with emphasis on the skills, attitudes and knowledge needed by young people to participate in an increasingly global society and to develop international-mindedness. They encourage learning through individual subjects and transdisciplinary learning, individual and collaborative learning, intercultural and intergenerational learning as well as worldwide interdependence and international cooperation, whilst preserving personal identity and cultural diversity. They are subject to regular review and updates and therefore keep abreast of and respond to the requirements of our world. Their flexibility, particularly in the case of the Primary and Middle Years Programmes, allows them to continue to develop, as other schools from diverse regions and cultures begin to teach them. The Diploma Programme, which, as a pre-university course of study, is inherently much less flexible, nonetheless offers a wide choice of subjects including the teaching and assessment of 71 languages; it also gives schools the opportunity to develop courses in conjunction with the IB which are school-specific and can be adapted to particular requirements.

An IB education places particular emphasis on “learning how to learn” and on developing attitudes towards learning which students will retain throughout their lives. The opportunity for “learning by doing” rather than “learning by receiving” is an integral element. This begins in the Primary Years Programme where students are actively involved in inquiry and continues through to the Diploma Programme where, for example, students practise the arts rather than learn about them, where mathematical investigation is a key part of this subject and where during philosophy classes, students practice philosophical reasoning.

The fundamental themes of all IB programmes are as follows:

- developing citizens of the world – cultural and linguistic development as well as learning to live together
- building and reinforcing students’ sense of identity and cultural awareness
- fostering students’ recognition and development of universal human values
- stimulating curiosity and inquiry in order to foster a spirit of discovery and enjoyment of learning
- equipping students with the skills to learn and to acquire knowledge, individually or collaboratively, and to apply this knowledge adequately across a broad range of areas
- providing international content while responding to local requirements and interests
- encouraging diversity and flexibility in pedagogical approaches
- providing appropriate forms of assessment and international benchmarking.

From the outset, IB programmes have aimed to develop students’ minds as well as hearts, not only through formal teaching but also through service to others. This is an integral part of both the programmes and the organization’s philosophy.

Two years ago, I came across a book which made me view the IB as a true panacea for the troubles of our world! The book was Tom Friedman’s “The World is Flat”, which I would recommend to anyone who has not read it. The author brilliantly presents the dramatic changes our world has undergone during the past 20 years. Friedman suggests that schools must focus on training the hearts and minds of young people, giving them a businesswoman’s brain and a social worker’s heart. Thus equipped, future generations would be able to confront the social inequality and exclusion undermining our society.

How does the IB intend to provide this training? From the Primary Years Programme onwards, IB students are made aware of the needs and feelings of others and are taught to serve their peers and their community.

In the Middle Years Programme, the concept of service becomes ever-present with the dual aim of:

- 1) understanding through action, enabling students to put into practice what they learn in class
- 2) serving others in order to learn to become responsible, active and compassionate citizens

Feeling supportive and taking part in service activities represents a first opportunity to become involved. From their schooldays, young people learn that “there’s strength through unity” and recognize the difference they can make in the world around them. They do not feel powerless and this gives them hope – an essential element of well-balanced development. In many cases, this also reveals skills and personal abilities which would not necessarily have come to light through a purely academic education. Many young people develop leadership skills through community service. Whereas in the past, people’s involvement stemmed from religious or revolutionary convictions, nowadays it is motivated by a sense of solidarity which engenders humanism and philanthropy. By introducing young people to voluntary work, whether they are believers or agnostics, the IB prepares them to be responsible and community-minded adults who are able to look beyond social and cultural divides and make socially responsible investments.

One of the greatest privileges I have as chair of the IB Council of the Foundation is to visit schools around the world where I am able to witness the extraordinary voluntary work undertaken by students with the assistance of their teachers, in both the first world and in countries where social inequality is much more obvious.

So, for example, in a school in Colorado Springs, young adolescents aged 12 and 13 have not only collected funds from a local philanthropist and via public fundraising, but have overseen and helped with the building of a community centre in their district specifically for the elderly and for children who go home alone after school. The centre is now built and is run by these young people. One of them, a 12-year old boy explained to me that he felt very lucky to be able to study at a school which shared the same values as his family.

In Manila, students from an international school are sponsoring an extremely disadvantaged community located 2km from their school. For the moment, they are building strong permanent dwellings for the people living in this shantytown and are then planning to build a school there and to help in the children’s education by offering art, dance and music classes and organizing sports activities.

In Jakarta, students from an international school have not only put in place a programme which provides children from families living from rubbish picking with a box of fresh food once a week, but some of them have also adopted young children who are in prison; this involves visiting them, providing them with legal assistance and also educational opportunities. The youngest prisoner was 9 years old and, upon his release, was welcomed into this school.

In a private school in Toronto, the students, teachers and parents are involved in an extraordinary tripartite collaborative effort which consists of pairing this wealthy school with a state school for the educationally-deprived children of immigrants in the neighbouring district, as well as with several disadvantaged schools in South Africa.

Of course, some of my visits are not as rewarding or such a source of inspiration. I have a deep conviction that if we do not educate our students to demonstrate compassion and to develop a sense of social responsibility, then we are failing totally in our mission as educators and in our responsibilities as citizens. These ideas are shared by many teachers and school

heads, as is evidenced by the success of the *Schools to Schools* initiative set up by the IB following the tsunami.

And the IB must set an example and make its access policy a reality, broadening access to a far greater number of countries. This is part of its strategic plan, which set out that IB programmes must be accessible to anyone wishing to access them, regardless of personal circumstances, and that we promote the educability of all, to cite an expression sometimes used by Professor Meirieu.

We place particular emphasis on the fact that we are not an elitist organization and that the IB community welcomes both state and private schools, with the former, as I have stated before, making up more than 50% of our total. But we know that we need to do more and we are tackling the issue by aiming to help disadvantaged schools, as just presented to us in such a moving way by Professor Bottani. The vast majority of state schools offering one or more IB programmes are in the USA, Canada, Great Britain and Australia. I should add that this is not solely due to economics and the cost of our programmes, but to the domestic policies of some countries which have a very centralized education system. France is a good example of this, even if this has a sense of nostalgia for me personally: having played a key role in the creation of the IB, and even being responsible for its name, with the founders initially talking about a "*maturité internationale*", the French Ministry of National Education backtracked, removed IB programmes from French state schools where they had been highly successful, and created its own French Baccalaureate international option. A collaborative effort could have been so much more fruitful and rewarding.

This dual aspect of education which encompasses both academic and social learning and which focuses on both the hearts and minds of our students is encapsulated in our learner profile. It is called a learner profile rather than a student profile since the best method of teaching is by example and we therefore expect IB teachers as well as administrators to model it to students and their parents, thereby representing our mission statement in action.

To be part of its community, the IB asks all its members to strive to be:

inquirers
thinkers
communicators
knowledgeable
reflective
principled
open-minded
caring
risk-takers
balanced.

What lessons can the IB offer? The organization has the advantage of already having considered for several decades, within its international schools, the impact that early globalization has had on its programmes and students. There is therefore no doubt that the IB can provide answers in this field by presenting practical examples of the way it tackles the challenges of an international education. As a non-profit, non-political foundation, the IB also has the flexibility to reflect and to experiment, to take advantage of the experience of an international network of education professionals, trained and teaching in many countries, to draw upon varied research by such people as Piaget, Dewey, Freinet to name but a few, and, more recently, the work of our colleague, Howard Gardner, who is here today. On this basis, the IB is well-qualified to be at the forefront of any exploration of the changes that education systems need to make to meet the challenges of the 21st century, to act as an example and even to become a research laboratory, thanks to a number of schools offering its programmes or by creating its own laboratory schools, possibly in conjunction with universities, to test, within an international teaching context, various styles and methods of learning, the teacher-student relationship, but also the impact of available resources, of families, of new

technologies, and of virtual, diverse or pluralist communities. The education of the future must keep evolving, not simply focusing on the acquisition of knowledge and its routine application but also on developing understanding and technical skills to enable the effective analysis of information in assessing and solving complex problems. There is often talk nowadays of the fact that we live in an information economy, but that is open to confusion. Yes, it has never been easier to access information, but it is extremely important to teach students how to sort, evaluate, analyse and synthesize information – to use it appropriately to solve problems and progress. To do so, students must learn not simply to regurgitate what they have been taught, but to use sound moral values as well as critical thought and their own individual abilities to put their knowledge into practice. This is an area where cultural differences are particularly noticeable and where there is still a long way to go to align learned knowledge, assimilated knowledge and creativity – three essential elements of an effective education where human ingenuity comes to the fore. This can only be achieved if students have well-developed social skills and a good system of values. Voluntary work and service activities play a particularly important role in this respect.

The IB must be at the forefront of this movement and this is why it is currently introducing a number of options to ensure its own programmes meet the identified requirements more effectively. I would like to stress here the crucial role played by school practitioners in the creation, assessment, review and renewal of IB programmes. School heads, IB coordinators, teachers, all from different countries and diverse traditions, have the chance to participate in and contribute to our academic committees, our examining board, regional councils and our Council of Foundation.

We need to continue to set ourselves priorities to meet the demands of today's world more effectively:

- Research – two types of research should be used as sources of information for the organization:
 - ongoing research into best educational practices via its worldwide network of schools so as to base its new initiatives on truly international data
 - research and analysis of the outcomes of its own practices so as to continue to build upon them and to enable other schools or education systems to benefit from them, as appropriate.
- An online diploma – this will allow students who cannot attend an IB World School to benefit from an IB education; this will extend the choice of subjects offered by IB World Schools and create international and multicultural classes which many schools are currently unable to provide. A minimum of one online course as a prerequisite for the award of the diploma should become a requirement as preparation for learning about the virtual world in which young people will be operating.
- Transdisciplinary themes – these are found in the Primary Years Programme where they help students to reflect on the human condition, to gain an understanding of the commonality of human experience and to open their minds to considering the point of view of others, a critical element in the development of an international perspective from a very early age. Transdisciplinarity is also one of the fundamental elements of the Middle Years Programme and one of its strengths. It allows teachers to plan and work as a team. Together they decide on what is most important for their students to learn, on how to instil in them a sense of responsibility for their learning and how different disciplines can contribute in the most effective way to their learning how to learn. Finally in the Diploma Programme, the Theory of Knowledge course completes this exploration of disciplinary and transdisciplinary learning by offering students and teachers the opportunity to reflect critically on diverse ways of learning and areas of knowledge. This not only enables them to consolidate what they have learnt over the years about the highly interpretative nature of knowledge, but also, with the prerequisite maturity, to demonstrate an awareness of the values and limitations of their individual outlooks and to recognize

the points of view of the communities and cultures to which they belong as well as the views of other cultures and communities across the world. On the other hand, at Diploma Programme level, the IB has as yet been unable to develop transdisciplinary study as much as it would like to and, to remedy this, is collaborating with Harvard University and its Project Zero team. There is still a lot of work to be done and the IB recognizes the importance of making progress in this area so as to address new educational requirements using a truly transdisciplinary approach.

- Collaborative work – whilst the IB has been able to promote collaborative work in the Primary Years Programme and in the Middle Years Programme, this has proved more difficult in the case of the Diploma Programme, principally due to its system of assessment. Currently, with the resources at our disposal and our skills in large-scale assessment, this is a huge challenge, and the IB is well aware that it must focus on this essential aspect of the education it provides. We are currently looking into the possibility of setting up a collaborative work project between two geographically and socially distinct IB World Schools, which would form part of the diploma assessment. Similarly, the IB community theme, which has just been launched, will allow a number of these schools to work together on a service project focused on a common theme, enabling collaboration between schools and an enhanced shared experience.
- The IB career-related certificate – currently at the pilot stage in around a dozen schools, this is an IB-specific qualification which is intended to enhance and consolidate vocational education. To be awarded this certificate, students have to study at least two Diploma Programme subjects, one of which being a foreign language. In addition, as in the case of the diploma, this certificate includes a core element which comprises a course in ethics and a service component.
- Recognition of our teacher training – since its inception, the IB has offered professional training to its teachers and this has been constantly improving. Currently, a number of universities are starting to offer IB approved training which prepares teachers to teach within the IB programme framework. We are also constantly reviewing, improving and broadening the training for our teachers, not only to meet the needs of existing schools, but also since many countries do not offer the training required for teachers of IB programmes.

We have just described some initiatives which are specific to the IB. These can be adapted to any type of schooling provided the IB makes a real effort to promote its programmes and asks IB World Schools to act as intermediaries as regards the education systems in their region, state or country.

When considering the role of tomorrow's schools, I feel it is essential to emphasize the pivotal role played by universities. The skills required by universities are the ones being passed on by pre-university schools and will be imparted through teachers who have been trained by these same universities. Universities and centres of educational research must therefore work hand in hand to shape the training given to teachers who will be working in schools. These teachers will, in turn, equip students with the requisite skills either to go straight into the world of work or to follow a course of study at university. Therefore, it is the role of universities just as much as that of schools which needs to be explored when considering how to rethink schools in response to changes in today's world, in terms of training of students as well as of teachers.

I personally would like to focus on a number of developments which I consider to be of particular importance in adapting schools in general and the IB in particular to the changes of the 21st century:

- Competency in modern technology – technological knowledge and skills are essential elements of a modern education. The IB includes them in each discipline as appropriate and also provides specific courses which are constantly reviewed not

only in terms of their technological content but also to ensure students are able to recognize the actual value of the information and understand, analyse and evaluate for themselves the ethical implications at local, national and global level. This model should, if this is not already the case, be developed in all schools with the necessary resources. In the days of the “one computer per child” initiative, this is becoming an urgent necessity.

- Collaboration between schools – this already exists in both IB World Schools and other schools, but collaboration, particularly on an international level, encourages international-mindedness and gives young people multicultural experiences which cannot fail to open their minds to others and the world.
- International-mindedness – this is already integral to IB programmes and plays a key role in the regular review process. The assessment of its impact, however, leaves something to be desired. International-mindedness must be part of all educational programmes and these, including the IB, must strive to find suitable forms of assessment to measure it and also to measure all aspects relating to social skills. I would like to hope that one day the IB will be able to set up an “IB network” where former members of the IB community – teachers, administrators, parents, alumni – offer their skills and spread around the world this spirit of international-mindedness, which they were amongst the first to benefit from.
- Emotional intelligence – international-mindedness is an important dimension of emotional intelligence and of social skills which all schools have a duty to foster in their students. The role of the IB and that of all schools is to create a caring environment. As long as 40 years ago, Célestin Freinet, founder of the “Modern School” stressed the fact that, on both pedagogical and moral grounds, schools cannot overlook the errors and injustices in society affecting a child even if this exceeds the school’s level of supervision and responsibility. This role of the school as a social worker is also one asserted by Daniel Goleman, an expert in the field of emotional intelligence. In his eyes, the school must revert to its traditional role as a socialization centre for children. Our modern society is no longer concerned with ensuring that children are taught how to control their anger or how to resolve conflict. It does not expect schools to teach empathy, the control of impulses, self-control. And yet, this must be learnt at an early age, at a precise stage in the development of a child’s brain. Wherever possible, schools must work with parents and must sometimes equip them to help the young develop their emotional skills. Research has consistently shown that emotional literacy improves children’s results and their attitude at school. This undoubtedly can only enrich the quality of their adult life and that of their fellow citizens. St. John Bosco, a wonderful educator and founder of the Salesian Society, recognized as early as the 19th century that violence was a symptom of an inadequate education. What does it tell us about the failure of our schools when we see the destructive forces around us, the gang violence, terrorism, suicide bombings? One of our century’s priorities is, in my opinion, to see schools focusing on becoming socialization centres where children learn their emotional ABC, the basis for the formation of their character, their moral development and their civic education. Without individual discipline, living in a society becomes an impossibility, and self-control is the key to a successful life. Schools have a lot of work to do in this respect.
- Ethics – for a number of years now, the IB has been pursuing its decision to increase the ethical content of its programmes. Extending the learner profile, from the Primary Years Programme to the three programmes, was an important step in this respect. However, the decision was taken not to give actual courses in ethics but to incorporate the principles into all our teaching and into our continuum of programmes, starting from an early age and continually building upon what has been learnt. This is a long-term process and is a key element in the review of our programmes. We would like to be able to integrate our success in assessment, but there is still a lot of research to be done in this field. This same approach could be used by many schools. In the teaching of ethics, there is special emphasis on learning to make choices, and teachers have a responsibility to teach their students

how to make a moral and responsible choice. It is paramount that students are made to understand that ethics addresses an area which exists between the scope of the law and that of free will – free will where our actions are only concerned with and affect ourselves. It is also a matter of teaching students that the “right” decision is not always clear-cut and that they have to learn to live and survive with moral uncertainty. But this moral uncertainty must be underpinned by values which they have to be taught. The question will always be asked: “But which values are you referring to?” All cultures share a number of common values and the first step would be to teach these, with the main one being not to do to others what we would not have them do to us. I believe that all cultures and traditions are worthy of respect insofar as they are respectable and that they themselves respect the fundamental rights of men and women as outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, approved by all the member states of the United Nations. Since 1948, this declaration should have been disseminated, displayed, read and expounded principally in schools and other educational institutions in the member states. So a first step would be to check this is being done and where this is not the case, to remedy the situation as soon as possible. I would also like to remind you here of a quotation by U Thant, the third secretary-general of the United Nations who said: “As a Buddhist, I was trained to be tolerant of everything except intolerance.”

And that brings me to the end of my presentation as I wanted to close with the heart of the matter. An education of any kind is only of value if it is underpinned by moral principles and a sense of ethics. What is the use of providing an education if it is used to advance the cause of dishonest individuals or to do harm? I am firmly convinced that the spirit of the IB education system, even though there is always room for improvement, can effectively help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect where students across the world are encouraged to become active, compassionate and lifelong learners who understand that people, with their differences, can also be right.

It is the IB’s wish that this mission can be shared by a multitude of schools and that it can influence or inspire a great many education systems to help our planet and its inhabitants to experience peace and prosperity.

For my part, I hope that through education we will be able to solve the problems of our world, protect the environment and pave the way for a peaceful and prosperous future for generations to come. Rather than suffering from hunger or worrying about the gross national product or the crime and unemployment rate, those generations will be able to follow the example of Bhutan, each year calculating first and foremost the happiness index of their citizens and yes, why not, their schoolchildren.