

Becoming Truly International: The IB at 40

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Ladies and gentlemen

Many of you are probably familiar with our history, but if you'll allow me some time now I would like to reflect upon what their actions meant for the future of the IB.

These IB founders were people of vision, educators who had witnessed the horrors of two world wars, the tragedy of financial crisis and all their consequences. They saw the need to educate young people from different countries together and wanted to develop a program to promote peace and international understanding while at the same time offering its graduates the ability to enroll in universities around the world. The idea of such a diploma came first to some teachers at the International School of Geneva, a school that had been created to serve the children of employees of the League of Nations, an institution meant to end all wars. Like the United Nations, its successors, these two institutions were the products of American vision and leadership in the world of the XXth century.

This IB program was also very much needed by the students attending Atlantic College in Wales, the first United World College, whose idea had been born in the mind of a brilliant German educator, Kurt Hahn who inspired the title of this conference. Upon visiting NATO war college and seeing officers from formerly enemy nations study and work together, he decided, under the patronage of Lord Mountbatten, to create a school where young people coming from the four corners of the world would be educated together, learning to appreciate and respect each other. They would make international friends before returning home to become leaders and agents of change in their own country, and it was hoped that these friendships across borders would be the best weapon against another world war. Just like the students of international schools, the United World College students needed a common diploma, recognized by universities around the world, in order to return to their countries of origin, and study there.

This is how the IB was born, to serve international students and give them the international credentials to attend universities worldwide.

The ideals aimed at building a better and more peaceful world that were part of the birth of the IB diploma program have evolved over the past 40 years into something much bigger, into a whole education system from pre-school to

completion of high school. We have now a series of three programmes where students feel part of a much larger world and are prepared to share their humanity with their fellow human beings.

All around the planet, adolescents live in a world of wider horizons and shorter distances, thanks in no small part to the communication revolution. Despite geographical, social and economic differences, they listen to many of the same television programs, to the same music. IB students in Africa, Europe and the Middle East have a kinship with fellow young people around the world that was unknown to previous generations. Some of these youngsters have high material expectations and occupational ambitions and some, like their IB counterparts, are preparing to attend universities. Soon, they will study next to each other, and IB students can play a crucial role in bringing all these people together by their ability to understand other traditions and viewpoints. We, as educators, need to have inculcated in them the notion that whatever career path they choose in the future, they must always remember that the authority of their profession originally derived from its service to society. IB graduates should never allow their understanding of the public good to be an aggregate of self-interest. An IB education is a privilege; never let your students forget it. They will have a moral responsibility and a professional responsibility towards those who will respect and trust their knowledge. They will be able to contribute so much to international understanding and respect through the education you will have imparted to them.

This IB education is not only about study skills, cognitive skills and critical thinking skills, it is a preparation to work in a knowledge economy and it also involves character building. I am not going to repeat to you the attributes of the learner profile, attributes that we all, as adult members of the IB community, need to model for our students, but I want to insist on a specific aspect of an IB education, one that is at the core of who we are: this IB education is meant to position students to further the advancement of knowledge in this world by making connections, finding similarities and complementarities, probing contrasts and conflicts not only in their own surroundings but in the global society we live in now. This is where for me, a well taught IB program is at its best when it combines an academic education with a sense of duty, a sense of service as responsible local, national and world citizens.

Originally the IB was mainly considered international because it was offered in schools around the world and from its inception tried to educate young people in the respect of other cultures. It was steeped in a Western tradition of learning. Learning another language, learning *in* another language different to one's own was at the core of the first international schools with their diverse populations of students who were united by the common language they studied in. The IB then reached out to other cultures by integrating, over the years, works of literature and a focus on world history from other countries and cultures. More recently, in the development of an IB continuum and in the ongoing review of our programmes, we have tried to focus more and more on a global and pluralistic

humanism, on a cosmopolitan ethic whose values can be shared by people the world over, in order to help young people develop into world citizens who can relate and communicate with each other, who have a culture in common and who are able to respect their planet and each other.

Among those initiatives, I want to mention our collaboration with the Aga Khan academies. It will not only allow us to offer our programs, in parts of the world where we may not normally have had easy access outside of international schools, like Central Asia, Africa and the Middle East but will also offer us the wealth of research in Islamic studies that the Aga Khan Development Network has put together in the past 50 years.

The Peterson lecture that the Aga Khan delivered in Atlanta in honor of the IB 40th anniversary raised many important topics that are related to the IB becoming more international, more aware of the realities that the rest of the world faces.

He raised questions about the future of education in a world where communication is linking people from East and West, North and South, developing and developed economies, between urban and rural settings. He acknowledged that the IB is positioned to be a major force of understanding and asked how can we better help schools and students become those forces of understanding? How could/should these forces impact the curriculum?

What does this mean to everyone of you in your school and classroom? As you know, whenever the IB does a curriculum review, it looks at international mindedness and searches for ethical values that can be common to the various cultures of the world. How can all of us develop this world humanism that will allow people to live in peace with each other?

The Aga Khan summarized areas of focus that he felt were essential within a curriculum that responds effectively to both the global and the tribal impulses... He added that the Aga Khan Academies intend to place special emphasis on the value of pluralism, the ethical dimensions of life, global economics, a broad study of world cultures (including Muslim Civilizations) and comparative political systems.

The Aga Khan gave us a challenge that is somewhat a tall order. Playing on the words of Samuel Huntington and his book the Clash of Civilizations, he asked us to bridge the learning gap that leads to, what he calls, a Clash of Ignorances, a powerful expression to coin the source of so many of our world's problems.

Monique Conn, previously IB academic director and now academic director of the Aga Khan Academies has prepared guiding questions on the Online Curriculum Centre drawn from the speech of the Aga Khan to enlighten a discussion for all of you and for all IB teachers around the world and I strongly invite you to go to the OCC to find them along with the speech of the Aga Khan and contribute to the online discussion:

<http://opls.ibo.org/events/ib-peterson-lectures/40th-anniversary-lecture>

The IB organization can only benefit from this collaboration with the Aga Khan academies and it should work at developing many more partnership. We need to make sure we reach also to other cultures, and we are working on it.

The key for us in the IB, in order to truly focus on our mission, is to make sure that we serve all the different communities where our schools are located and, through the education we give our students, educate new generations by preparing them to be positive forces in our globalized world and well equipped for a meaningful life.

I have a passion for the IB, I have high hopes for its future, I truly believe we can have a major impact on our times and it is with mixed emotions that I address you today—with pleasure to be among such a diverse group gathered here, passionate educators who span a vast and very diverse region. Next April, I will be coming to the end of my service as IB chairman after my 6 year-long term and therefore be deprived of the energy one always derive from such gatherings. Yet, my heart will remain with the IB and I hope I will be able to continue to contribute to the organization and follow my passion, which is to help many more students benefit from an IB education.

One of the good things about this stage of my involvement with the IB, however, is that it provides me with the opportunity to reflect upon the things achieved, and the things as yet undone. If you will allow me the opportunity today, I would like to look at the progress of the IB and the challenges it has faced over the past six years and will continue to face into the future, through a variety of perspectives. This will allow you to gather some more questions for our discussion about how the IB can affirm its commitment to being truly international.

When looking at the world, it always makes sense to start by asking whether one's own house is in order. I hope many of you have heard yesterday Jeffrey Beard speak about the organizational changes in the IB that we have made and will make in the next few years to ensure that the IB is prepared for the demands and opportunities that will present themselves in the 21st century. With the huge demand upon the IB from IB World Schools for more and better services, the need to preserve educational excellence and rigor, and the steady double-digit growth of IB programmes each year, it is clearly incumbent upon the IB to get its own house in order so that we can reach out to as many students as possible regardless of their personal circumstances. In brief, we have looked first at our governance structure—our central house—and made significant changes to our constitution and our membership, followed by a look at our management, and are undertaking the necessary changes to ensure we can meet your needs, and the needs of the many who wish to join the fold.

The theme of this conference is “Challenging the mind, Inspiring the soul” An IB education reaches out not only to the world of academe but also to the world of shared sensibilities, of what truly not only challenges the mind, but also what inspires one's soul. I am proud to say as the chairman of the IB Board that we have worked hard to exemplify this within ourselves. It will be

hard for you to find any member of our board of governors who doesn't want to promote a challenging education, and a education that inspires the soul, the deep goodness present inside of every one of us.

I am sure you have witnessed many changes and improvements over the last couple of years. These will continue to take place over the next several years will the full imprimatur of the Board of Governors.

At the same time, although we could be the best governed, best managed organization in the world—and indeed I hope we will be— if we are only looking to board members and management, and not to our community at large, and how they perceive us and support us, our role is meaningless. We are always to remember whom we are here to serve: today those are 630,000 IB students around the world attending close to 2,400 schools offering IB programmes in 128 countries. From this broad perspective, let's now look at your region, Africa, Europe and the Middle East and the milestones of progress they have achieved over the past five or six years. In 2003, there were 467 programmes (52 PYP, 67 MYP, 348 DP) in 377 schools, now we have 800 programmes in 630 schools located in 80 countries. This includes 110 PYP, 111 MYP and 578 DP. Here attending our conference in Marrakech, not to lose sight of this wonderful city in a marvelous country, with such a cultural heritage, we have 655 participants coming from 55 countries.

This diversity of schools continues to be important to us, both in the region and worldwide. Why? In my mind it is because we are a much stronger organization for all the breadth of cultural identities, languages, experiences and perspectives, added to the great depth of experience in the programmes that many of you bring. We can learn, we are learning, a great deal from one another. The strength of sub-regional associations such as IBSCA in the UK, and I encourage you all to belong to one of them and hopefully you have listened to Philip Herrick yesterday, and the sharing of best practices within the IB learning community are some of the ways in which the IB has continued to renew and strengthen itself.

What I think we are beginning to see in the IB is that as our experiences grow, we are able to apply our work in many different arenas that were unexpected to us. Our experience with French and Spanish language Primary Years Programmes has led us to translate documents into Turkish, many of which will be posted on the OCC in the next few weeks. A new community of Turkish educators will be able to share their experiences in their mother tongue, without the IB having to turn Turkish into an official language. The IB has no official languages; it has only working languages and different levels of service. We are

now planning to do the same with Arabic. A major new grant of \$25 million from a foundation in the Gulf region will allow us to translate our programs in Arabic, train teachers and develop an IB community there, in a region where there are hundreds of millions of Arabic speakers.

So many opportunities are open to us to make the IB truly international and this obviously requires drive and funding. This led the board of governors of the IB to decide during a retreat in Costa Rica last year that we needed:

- To create a council of IB Fellows, though leaders from around the world that would inform our thinking about the future of education in a globalized world
- To study and research best practices in education the world over to incorporate them into our curriculum and pedagogy
- To offer IB students the ability to study and communicate with fellow IB students in schools around the world
- To take as board members the responsibility to search for funds beyond our schools fees

As the IB grows, as it expands its reach, we need to increasingly reach out beyond the schools and the schools' fees in order to strengthen our impact. We are actively working on growing our fundraising programme from a small office in North America to one that is reaching out to donors around the world. This is a cause that is very close to my heart, and one to which I intend to continue devoting my personal energies on behalf of the IB. Seeking support from people beyond our walls is critical, not only to continue our mission, but to bring others to join in. Whether we are talking about the Waffa Bank in Morocco and the support it has given to teacher training in IB pedagogy in a state school in Casablanca, or a global steel company based in Luxembourg supporting the implementation of IB programmes at the United World College in Mostar and IB teacher training for three IB schools in Bosnia Herzegovina, or the many individuals who share talents and treasures and volunteer their time, energy and expertise to support the IB in a myriad of ways, this is a critical step for the IB to grow its community and increase its impact worldwide.

A good example of such leadership is the work of Ron Auckland from Toronto and his dedication to our Cambodia project. This project works with IB teachers and preschool teachers in a teachers-training college and four local schools in Cambodia Kandal province. From a small project begun in 2002, Ron has used a cascading, "train the trainers" approach, to work with over 30 teacher trainers, 120 mentor teachers and some 450 student teachers. Furthermore, IB teachers have been instrumental in working with the Cambodian ministry of education to change the curriculum for teacher training. This has been supported by the IB and by donor funds, and will, we hope, continue for many more years.

The learning that we gained from that project stood us in good stead for the challenges presented by the tsunami of December 26th 2004 and the resulting IB tsunami project that has evolved into our IB Schools to Schools program. In projects both in Aceh, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka, we have had IB teachers working with in-service teachers to strengthen their teaching environments and experiences. We hope to find the funds that will allow us to

significantly expand upon those programmes, and to continue to learn from the work that we have had in the field

So, by giving you this brief world tour, and looking back on the IB over the last five years, I hope I have given you the following insight:

First, in our most focused of lenses we see that the IB Board of Governors is carrying out its primary responsibility to guarantee the continued health of the organization and to drive its international reach. Through our own reorganization, we have put ourselves in a much better position to govern effectively. Second, in our next level of focus, the leadership of Jeffrey Beard is taking us on a path of restructuring and reorganization that will bring the best in academic excellence and service to existing IB World Schools and to those schools for whom it is still just a dream, enabling us to have balanced growth the world over. Third, in our next level of focus, we are beginning to share our international and intercultural knowledge with those schools who would like to share in the IB community like in the case of the Aga Khan Academies so that they may do so in a way that both reaffirms their own cultural identity and broadens their international outlook. Fourth, we are learning how to maximize our knowledge by working with teachers and schools who may never become IB schools, but who can benefit from our experience. Fifth, we are learning how to use our experiences of working in the world, and bring them back to our students, classrooms, schools and communities to reinforce the meaning of our mission and purpose, to make every single one of our classrooms an international community where students not only understand the world with their mind but also with their heart.

This is good news. But I wouldn't want us to stop here.

As the IB continues to grow, our community of worldwide schools are united in the same effort: to educate new generations to work towards a better and more peaceful world and to understand that other people, with their differences, can also be right; you represent great diversity, and the enormous energy that is characteristic of the region. If I were to leave you with two requests for the next phase of the IB beyond my leadership, it would be these.

First, let us continue the philanthropic tradition that is present in all the great cultures of the world and promote in our students the power to give and the will to serve.

Second, let us ensure that we are always true to the IB mission and prepare our students for our global world. Let us continue to learn from other cultures and look beyond our communities, our schools, and our classrooms. Let's find ways in which the IB might become a catalyst of common understanding, a force of change, a beacon of hope for the future of our beautiful planet.

These two tasks will have a major impact in our role as an international education institution in the world of the 21st century.

And now, I open the floor to questions