

**Evropski centar
za mir i razvoj**
Terazije 41
11000 Beograd, Serbia

ECPD Headquarters

**European Center
for Peace and Development**
**Centre Européen
pour la Paix et le Développement**
**Centro Europeo
para la Paz y el Desarrollo**
**Европейский центр
мира и развития**



University for Peace est. by the United Nations

40th Jubilee Year

XVI ECPD International Conference
THE FUTURE IS TO BE INVENTED
(Belgrade, 28 October 2023)

REPORT

The European Center for Peace and Development of the University for Peace established by the United Nations (ECPD), celebrated its 40-year Jubilee by organizing the International Conference on the theme "The Future is to be Invented".

With an accelerating climate crisis, conflict in Europe and the Middle East, and increasing polarisation between nations, the need for peace is greater than ever in what is environmentally and economically a single global system where only global solidarity can save the world from drawn-out suffering. Leaders who deny this new reality are unable to respond effectively to the challenges their citizens are facing. The conference highlighted how the efforts of the ECPD University for Peace United Nations for peace, reconciliation and international cooperation are especially important today.

The conference theme responded to the many signs that the world as we have known it is disintegrating. The UN Secretary-General, in his 6 February 2023 **briefing to the General Assembly** on priorities for 2023, warned about "a confluence of challenges unlike any other in our lifetimes. Wars grind on. The climate crisis burns on. Extreme wealth and extreme poverty rage on. The gulf between the haves and have-nots is cleaving societies, countries and our wider world. Epic geopolitical divisions are undermining global solidarity and trust. This path is a dead end." War is the antithesis of development, except for the arms industry. The pandemic exposed the weakness of global solidarity. The climate crisis is accelerating, our war on nature destroys biodiversity, and widespread waste and pollution have contaminated the whole planet and even ourselves. A fragile and unjust economy, social fragmentation, and many other symptoms show that our society is seriously ill and we have yet to find the reme-

Phone: +381 11 3246-041, 3246-042, 3246-043, 3246-044, 3246-045 Fax: 3240-673, 3234-082

E-mail: office@ecpd.org.rs, ecpd@EUnet.rs • www.ecpd.org.rs



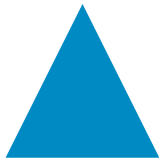
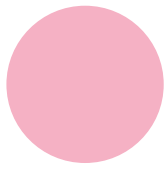
dy. In our consumer society, it is the affluent who are the cause of most of our environmental problems. Despite the great increase in wealth, half the population struggles to make ends meet. We have overshot the planet's carrying capacity and are rapidly degrading the natural environment and resources upon which our future and that of our children depend. These challenges are far beyond what the United Nations was designed for, and despite many accomplishments, it is not up to present needs and must be transformed for the 21st Century. What is clear is that there is no going back, and the past is no guide to the future. That future is yet to be invented and the conference was one effort to explore the best ways forward.

CONFERENCE OPENING

The conference was opened by Prof. Dr. Don Wallace, Conference Chairman, President of the ECPD Academic Council and President of the International Law Institute, Washington D.C., who emphasized the importance of human security to human flourishing, achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and preparing for the Summit of the Future in 2024, and by Prof. Dr. Jonathan Bradley, Conference Co-Chairman, President of the ECPD Executive Board and professor at the University of the West of England, who recalled all that ECPD had accomplished since its founding in 1983, a time of great threats and conflict, in bringing people together for peace and development. H.E. Federico Mayor, President of the ECPD International Council and long-standing UNESCO Director-General, said we had no other choice but to invent the future, with democratic multilateralism at the world level, and a new science based, socially responsible concept of security. Prof. Dr. Francisco Rojas, Rector of the University for Peace established by the United Nations (UPEACE), with headquarters in Costa Rica, called for developing a culture of peace through education, opening a new dialogue to understand each other with compassion and solidarity as we construct a better world. Prof. Dr. Jose Graziano da Silva, long-standing FAO Director-General, referred to the strong support for global governance for sustainable solutions acknowledging our interdependence, while emphasizing the importance of food security. H.E. Oscar Arias Sanchez, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate (1987) and former President of Costa Rica, called for an irreversible commitment to a culture of peace, with the courage to change from a culture of war. Finally, Prof. Dr. Laurent Bourdier, of the EUPeace Network, spoke of its promoting universal values in diverse multiethnic societies with justice and respect, to produce creativity, not conflict. Ms. Marina Ivanović, Chief of the Department for United Nations at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, expressed full support to the work of the ECPD University for Peace United Nations on behalf of the host-country.

PANEL I – ECONOMY, ECOLOGY AND SECURITY

The initial panel presentations described the complex problems we face in a polycrisis, with 35 conflicts around the world. The immediate future looks grim, with no immediate end of crises and catastrophes in sight as the negative side of human nature continues to dominate the economic, political and social frameworks of present world society. International law is limited as not all obey it. A rules-based approach does not work when the powerful dictate the rules. The US and Europe on the decline can no longer dominate in a multipolar world



ECPD



40th Jubilee Year

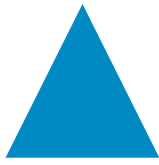
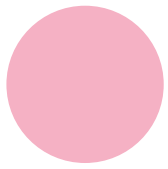
when the BRICS are bigger than the G7. One element of uncertainty is the technological revolution reaching maturity, and the next revolution, possibly including Artificial Intelligence (AI) jeopardising many jobs and traditional education. Health is one area where digital technologies may make health care more efficient. With the Middle East tragedy only the latest failure to prevent war, there is an urgent need for a Declaration of Human Responsibility as the mirror to Human Rights. Then there is the impact of climate change threatening to displace permanently half a billion people, and again increasing hunger and food insecurity. The climate crisis will not get better in our lifetimes, but hopefully the next generation will build peace. These all represent challenges for businesses trying to manage supply chains, protect biodiversity, maintain community recognition, earn a license to operate, provide a return to shareholders and generate enough profits to reinvest. Much needs to be done to improve crisis management, with better cooperation in both preparedness and response, understanding that the effects of a crisis are always local.

PANEL II – GEOPOLITICAL TRENDS

The initial focus of this panel was on the challenges for the Western Balkans and their efforts to join the European Union (EU). Only Croatia and Slovenia have so far succeeded in joining, while the others are still waiting. The reverse situation was the United Kingdom Brexit leaving the European Union, which led to an increase in non-EU migration into the UK when they could not get good EU workers. Many promises were not fulfilled and internal unity was weakened. Within the EU, migration has been weaponized, while labour shortages threaten the EU economy. A more balanced and cooperative approach is needed. The four new EU states: Latvia, Lithuania, Romania and Bulgaria, experienced a rapid outflow of population to more prosperous parts of the EU. In Latin America, always in the shadow of the US and trading with Europe, China has now become the main trading partner and market. The countries are threatened by climate change and want to improve the conditions of their people. More generally, the creation of a new World Order is facing increasing challenges with the beginning of the end of globalization. World trade is opening with some countries and closing with others, with the increasing role of China as economic blocs form. Among the scenarios are a new cold war between two blocs, a new global treaty with new rules, and a rivalry of all against all. Participants paid special attention to the unsustainable policy of government spending on weapons by the most developed countries and their impact on societies, as well as current wars and the latent threat of their extension.

PANEL III – SOCIAL TENDENCIES

The panel discussed social tendencies as a reflection of the underlying values in society. Our economic system reflects materialistic values founded in nineteenth century colonial laissez-faire philosophy, generating the negative forces fracturing the world today, with extremes of wealth and poverty, persisting injustices, and moral failures in the economy. A new values-based economic model, based on the existential imperative of human responsibility, could aim for a dynamic, just and thriving social order that is strongly altruistic and cooperative, provides meaningful employment, and helps to eradicate poverty in the world. Its goal



ECPD



40th Jubilee Year

would be human and environmental well-being with justice and equity, giving priority to values and moral principles. A fundamental systems transformation is called for, and the present disintegration and breakdown may clear the obstacles to change. The forces of global integration need to be reflected in institutions of global governance able to address planetary problems.

We are technologically advanced but egocentric, not responding to the human condition and human rights and responsibilities. The panel emphasized the central role of information and its depositories including libraries, with ethics as essential in its access and management. How do we bridge aspiration and impact, and offer solutions with real meaning, when policies have not made a difference? More generally, we are a single human family, and we need to join youth in celebrating our coming together, with a focus on hope. We must build social trust in a multipolar world. Identity is important, but within the context of unity in diversity, recognising our shared humanity and differences as strengths, teaching understanding and empathy, overcoming biases and stereotypes and breaking down barriers. Hopefully this conference will reinforce ECPD in its important role in Europe with its positive efforts to build unity in diversity.

FINAL DISCUSSION

Three concerns were raised that showed why a new future must be invented. We are destroying the value system upon which our present multinational system was based. After the fall of communism, the path of capitalism was chosen, teaching that greed is good and solidarity and responsibility are not needed. But the 2008 financial crisis brought fear, and now climate change is an existential threat. Second, the present path is not viable economically, with accumulated debt double global GDP, and interest payments at unsustainable levels. Third, the investment in armaments, diverting funds from education, climate change adaptation and other critical needs, shows how our priorities are all mixed up. Human security is not military security.

The conference chairs responded to questions from the audience. For example, what can you do to make young people part of the climate solution? How can people find the values they want to live by, in new humanism, religion or individual search? In a post-rational world, are we heading for a dark age, or can we find our way back to humanity? What can ECPD do to renew itself and advance these interests?

Participants of the ECPD international conference "The Future is to Be Invented" expressed their full support for the efforts of the UN Secretary-General to uphold UN Charter values in the present conflicts.

This conference was an opportunity to imagine the future we should like to live in, and what we need to do now in order to get there. It questioned our assumptions about what is normal or right, which trap us in old patterns of behaviour that are at the root of most of our problems. Our identity should not be a cause of separation but a contribution to our unity in diversity.

We reflected on the qualities of our communities, the systems of organization and governance required from the local to the global levels, how the economy would function, what



would be everyone's rights and responsibilities, and most fundamentally what would be the underlying principles and values to guide this ever-evolving system. It drew on the wisdom of older generations and the new perspectives that the youth of today can bring, as concluded at the ECPD Youth Forum the day after this conference. The more we build forward, the more that future opens up before us.

At the most fundamental level, the conference explored those essential values that express our higher human purpose and that enable successful social organisation. These determine our human rights and responsibilities and are essential to human dignity and to achieving unity in diversity. They may have deep roots in faith and belief, and draw both from science and religion. We need to learn how to rein in our lower animal side and cultivate our higher human virtues. No transformation at higher levels of organization can be effective if we do not also transform the individuals within the system.

Within this larger framework of reflection, the conference discussed what all this means for the Balkans, and the transformations needed within the region to respond to and integrate with the broader regional and global processes. The region needs to understand its special characteristic, the strengths to build on, and lessons already learned. For the ECPD, as an educational and research institution, this can define new directions in what it offers its students to prepare them for future leadership.

While this was an agenda for a generation, it did leave everyone with new inspiration, possible immediate goals, new potential partnerships, and thoughts to be shared with ever-larger circles, so that a better future can begin now. The ECPD Global Youth Forum, as a continuation of this conference, held on October 29th, passed the torch to the next generation, for the future is really theirs.

9 November 2023

