



一九八九年國際青年會議
THE 1989 INTERNATIONAL YOUTH CONFERENCE

**A CHALLENGE FOR INTERNATIONAL YOUTH DEVELOPMENT:
COMMITMENTS AND VALUES—IN SEARCH FOR UNIVERSAL LOVE,
FRIENDSHIP AND UNDERSTANDING**

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(THE THIRD SESSION-I)

**AUGUST 20-30, 1989
CHIANTAN OVERSEAS YOUTH ACTIVITY CENTER
TAIPEI, TAIWAN.
REPUBLIC OF CHINA**

1989 INTERNATIONAL YOUTH CONFERENCE, TAIPEI
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Introduction:

Universal Love, Friendship and Understanding are vital concerns for young people and for adults alike. No matter what age group, we are all confronted today with the fact that our world has shrunk to the size of a global village. Satellites beam the latest news from far away countries directly into our homes and goods in our stores from all over the world remind us with increasing certainty that the times of self-sufficiency and isolation are part of the past. If we like it or not, we have all become members of a large, global family.

Within hours, we can now fly to the remotest areas of the world and become a participant in the lives of people in far away countries. This newly found closeness is a blessing and a curse at the same time. We are all perfectly aware, for instance, of the unpleasant fact that nuclear war heads could destroy, within hours, not only the two super powers but also the rest of the world.

We have to live with this threat of global destruction. Equally true is the fact that such a mad destruction can be avoided if we all learn to live with each other in peace and harmony which means if we can reach beyond ourselves and turn this beautiful planet into a global village where all races and religions have their own rightful and due place under the sun.

Developing International Understanding

Our world has become inter-dependent economically, politically, socially and culturally. The international division of labour, for instance, makes it possible that countries can import and export industrial and agricultural products, that students, professors and managers can learn, teach and work in various parts of this world. Technical know-how is being shared by the world's centres of higher learning which in turn leads to a cross-fertilization across continents whereby countries learn from each other and share with each other the fruits of their academic efforts.

Growing inter-dependence does not mean loss of identity nor abandonment of sovereignty. National borders have not dissappeared nor have the nations of this world been transformed into peace-loving altruists. Quite on the contrary. If you read the newspapers it becomes apparent to you that regional wars and civil wars abound and that the suffering inflicted on so many innocent people in all parts of this world has not diminished nor does it look like this belligerence will be stopped in the foreseeable future.

However, in contrast to past centuries, no country can escape anymore the scrutiny of the world media. Wars and tensions between countries or conflicts within countries are now brought to our attention every day by newspapers, televisions, radio stations and often surface later on in the soul-searching contributions of our artists. The world has been put on stage and we are all on stage as well.

Living in this situation of increasing economic and political inter-dependence and being faced with a situation where no country can really escape from international scrutiny leaves us of course not much choice than to accept the fact that we have become more public than ever before. We are integrated into the fabric of this global village. We all play our parts but unlike the past where life was more like being casted into a play with a finished script, we now have more opportunities to participate in the writing and enactment of our life's scripts. Living in this global village of ours means accepting the fact that we are continuously asked to improvise together with the rest of the world. Inter-dependence means reconciling dependence with independence in such a way that nobody remains forgotten and isolated while nobody remains at center stage either.

Values and Commitments: The Psychological Dimension

Opting for measured and reasoned cooperation rather than sticking to the aggressive confrontations of the past requires of course sufficient maturity. Being committed to cooperation, international understanding and universal love are signs of psychological growth. Psychological growth in turn is a function of a human being's ability to develop from primitive self-centeredness to a level of mature, adult moral behaviour.

Development of conscience and of moral judgment starts early in our life. During preschool years, children begin to manifest, in rudimentary form, a conscience or superego. By identifying with the parents and by striving to be similar to them, children take on parental values, attitudes and standards of conduct, in other words they learn to accept their parent's views on what is "right and wrong"

The first signs of conscience generally become evident in the second year of life and are related to learned prohibitions against specific acts. Gradually, the child's conscience becomes more internalized and less simplistic and encompasses more idealized standards – including not only prohibitions but also goals and conceptions of what one should do with one's own life in the future.

The development of conscience, or superego, is reflected in a wide variety of responses, opinions, and judgments; for example, in being honest; obeying rules and regulations; resisting temptations to cheat, lie, or steal; acting in kind, considerate, altruistic ways; considering the rights and welfare of others and in making moral judgments in which justice is tempered with a sense of mercy towards others.

Piaget (1), a Swiss psychologist, showed that from ages 5 to 12 the child's concept of justice passes from a rigid and inflexible notion of right and wrong, learned from his or her parents, to a sense of equity in moral judgments that takes into account the specific situation in which a moral violation has occurred.

Piaget suggests that as the child becomes a member of larger and more varied peer groups, rules and moral judgments may become less absolute, less authoritarian and more dependent on the needs and desires of the group with which the child interacts.

Kohlberg (2), an American psychologist, has expounded on Piaget's work and found supporting evidence for Piaget's developmental view of how morality evolves over time. Commenting on his own research on moral development, Kohlberg states that as children develop concepts of time, of future gratifications, of consequences, of right and wrong, of values and ideals, they become increasingly aware of the effects of their actions. Their perception of the feelings of others also becomes more acute, and they begin to see the logical necessity for people to cooperate with one another in the interests of everybody concerned.

Reviewing studies done in many parts of the world, Edwards (3) found cross-cultural validation for Piaget and Kohlberg's claims to have identified universally valid sequences of moral development. Edwards further found evidence that moral development is a function of the amount of role-taking opportunities that are available to children. In other words, societies which provide ample opportunities to take up different social roles could bring about faster and more mature moral development in their children while societies who limit the role-taking of their children, because for instance of restrictive cultural or religious values, slow down and even limit the level of moral development that can be achieved by their children.

Erikson's Life Cycle Model of Human Development

Erikson (4), a German-American psychoanalyst trained under Freud in Vienna, looks at human development from a life cycle point of view whereby every human being, independent of race or religion, is thought to pass through stages in his or her life time. His life cycle model offers a meaningful overview of human development and can help us further appreciate the importance that human development has on us all in general but also on youth development and the development of international understanding and cooperation in particular.

In Erikson's views, each stage is associate with a specific psychological conflict which needs to be overcome by a specific resolution of the conflict. Lessons learned from each of the earlier stages, if mastered well, become the foundation for the successful mastery of the next stage.

Erikson's stages of psychosocial development are linked to specific age groups and to other features corresponding to this stage namely psychosocial conflict, radius of signifiant relations, psychosocial modalities and favorable resolution of conflict.

Figure 1.

Eight Stages of Psychosocial Development

Stages (with approximate ages)	Psychosocial crises	Radius of significant relations	Psychosocial modalities	Favorable outcome
I. Birth through first year	Trust vs. mistrust	Maternal person	To get To give in return	Drive and hope
II. Through second year	Autonomy vs. thame, doubt	Parental persons	To hold (on) To let (go)	Self-control and willpower
III. Third year through fifth year	Initiative vs. guilt	Basic family	To make (going after) To "make like" (playing)	Direction and purpose
IV Sixth to onset of paberty	Industry vs. inferiority	"Neighborhood" school	To make things (competing) To make things together	Method and competence
V. Adolescence	Identity and repudiation vs. identity diffusion	Peer groups and outgroups; models of leadership	To be onself (or not to be) To share being oneself	Devotion and fidelity
VI. Early odult isolation	Intimacy and solidarity vs. isolation	Partners in friendship, sex, competition cooperation	To lose and find oneself in another	Affiliation and love
VII. Young and middle odult	Generativity vs. self-absorption	Divided labor and shared household	To make be To take care of	Production and care
VIII. Later odult	Integrity vs. despair	"Mankind" "My Kind"	To be through having been To face not being	Renunciation and wisdom

SOURCE: Erikson (1959)

Definitions of what exactly means Youth vary from culture to culture. While Chinese understand Youth to range between 20-40 years, Europeans limit their use of the term to the period ranging from late childhood to early adulthood. Keeping in mind the age group represented at this conference, namely 20-30 years, I propose to look more closely into Erikson's description of two life cycle stages, namely those of 1. Early Adulthood and 2. Young and Middle Adulthood.

1. In Early Adulthood, according to Erikson, the major conflict is between finding a balance between lasting intimacy and the need for isolation and privacy. The complexity of relationships have to be acknowledged and a balance has to be established between closeness and distance, between advancing and retreating, between tender, private love and a more open loving intimacy with significant others.

Intimacy has to be lived out over time and all the complications of intimacy have to be worked out within a long range relationship. Anyone can flirt around with many relationships, but commitment is crucial to the development of real intimacy. Loving better comes from understanding the complications of a long term intimate bond with a significant other. In order to successfully master this stage, we have to add to passion the qualifying capacity of tenderness. Mastery of intimacy, the challenge of this stage of development, can be difficult especially if previous conflicts of an earlier developmental stage have not been resolved. I am thinking here especially of the conflict in early childhood regarding dependence and independence which, if not resolved successfully, can resurface at this later stage.

2. In Young and Middle Adulthood, we are faced with the conflict between what Erikson calls generativity and caring on the one hand and self-absorption and stagnation on other hand. Generativity expresses itself in the passing on to the next generation of positive values which help assure survival of the next generation but also of our planet in general. The resolution of this stage of development is "caritas", a Greek word for charity, meaning in a broad sense the caring for others, and of "agape", another Greek word, meaning love in the sense of what we today call empathy.

Intimacy and Friendship between Cultures

While it is our personal responsibility to struggle with the issues of these two stages, namely intimacy with and caring for others, it is also true that we are all responsible to actively develop intimacy and caring between all citizens of this world.

The world has shrunk and the multiple inter-dependencies between all people of this world have put us into multiple relationships with people from far away lands. We need each other, we exchange with each other raw materials, finished industrial goods, technological know-how and manpower, and we enjoy each other's cultural artefacts be this in form of paintings, music, dance, novels, poetry, literature or theatre performances.

This growing global inter-dependence puts our cultures into intimate contact with other cultures of this world. We have to find ways to establish partnerships between cultures which can bring about understanding, solidarity and cooperation without abandoning most of our own cultural identity. We have to be open enough to find a middle ground which allows us to share closeness and friendship and nurture affiliation based on genuineness and authenticity of all parties involved in such cultural exchanges.

When bridging the gap between ourselves and people from other cultures, we must be aware of the fact that intimacy and friendships across cultural boundaries can be even more difficult to accomplish than developing intimacy and friendship with significant others at home. Communicating across cultures is exciting but also frustrating at the same time. We can easily get lost in the morass

of multiple misunderstandings. Basic courses on intercultural education and intercultural training have proven to be of great help for everybody involved in relating to people from other cultures and countries.

Smith (5), a Canadian expert on multi-cultural training, has pointed out that clashes of values and beliefs are almost inevitable when people of different cultures first meet. The first steps towards mutual understanding is the development of tolerance, of appreciation of pluralism and of withholding of judgment. There are many ways to happiness and many interpretations of truth. Ethnocentrism has no place in this rapidly shrinking world of ours. When relating to people of other cultures, it is an absolute must to listen first and to judge later. While stereotypes help us initially to orient ourselves when we travel abroad or meet somebody from afar, they are, on the other hand, more often than not wrong, misleading and detrimental to the establishing of friendship with people from abroad.

Lets not forget the fact that if we are right then by deduction the other or others have to be wrong. Stereotypical thinking easily leads to such impasses. What we need is a minimum competence in relating and communicating with people from other cultures. If we cannot muster such an intercultural competence, then I am afraid we will end up with misunderstanding, disappointments, frustrations, mutual withdrawal and renewed isolation. Avoiding such impasses means that we have to stretch ourselves intellectually and emotionally in order to reach out to people from other continents and cultures.

Mastering personal intimacy and friendship at home and mastering international friendships abroad go hand in hand. If we can resolve one we should also be able to tackle the other one successfully.

Empathy and Caring between Cultures

The challenge of Young and Middle Adulthood, according to Erikson, means finding ways to look after others and to assure the survival and well being of our next generation. Today there are unfortunately plenty of real threats to the survival of our newborn brothers and sisters. I have mentioned previously the nuclear arms threat, the lingering armed conflicts between nations and the ongoing internal disputes within countries which endanger the live and happiness of so many people in so many countries today.

Besides war and belligerence, there is also the growing threat of ecological catastrophies which endanger the survival of our next generations be that due to industrial accidents or due to general unchecked environmental pollution of all sorts. Limiting the damages inflicted on nature by man-made ignorance and greed has become a necessity for guaranteeing the survival of all of us. No matter what social and political system, the threats to the environment are real. Environmental catastrophies do not stop at national borders. We need to safeguard the survival of our planet's environment by internationalising the prevention of environmental pollution and by controlling the possible outbreak of environmental catastrophies.

When transferring the issues of this life stage from a personal to a global level, we have to learn to expand our caring from caring for the people we know to caring for the people we do not know yet. By this I want to allude to the less fortunate people in other countries who are faced with many difficulties and who need our assistance in order to survive multiple calamities.

We might have heard of the terrible suffering in many third world countries, but due to our self-righteous attitudes we are often quick in blaming them for their own misery rather than to hold back with our judgment and first inquire about the causes of the problems at hand. Clinging to our

own prejudices and stereotypes makes it even more difficult to see the need in others and to extend our help for their benefit.

Hofstede (6), a Dutch social psychologist, has studied the differences that exist between countries in regard to values. He has found that the bigger the value gap, the more difficult it is to empathize with other cultures. The less we can empathize, the less we can understand and the less good-will exists for genuine cooperation and friendship.

Technical cooperation programmes and humanitarian assistance are excellent ways to develop care and empathy for people of other cultures. Caring across borders means helping others help themselves. Technical cooperation and humanitarian aid also offer effective ways to overcome self-congratulation and stagnation which are so often observed in the so called developed countries of the northern hemisphere.

I will now describe a few such technical cooperation and humanitarian aid programmes which have been in existence for some time. I will not cover all existing programmes but instead I'll focus on some programmes whose goals and activities I consider representative of other programmes with similar objectives and scope. Since I live and work in Europe, I will focus on European programmes. Other countries, such as Canada and the USA, have of course similar programmes and are contributing as well to the betterment of people in need in many third world countries.

Technical Cooperation Programmes: The Road Towards International Understanding

Through development aid programmes, we can express our care and empathy. Sharing ourselves with the less fortunate is not only gratifying for those who receive our help and support. The process of helping others is in fact gratifying for us helpers as well. Through the eyes and ears of our less fortunate brothers and sisters of third world countries, we get to know ourselves better. We learn about our own prejudices, stereotypes, egotisms and general weaknesses.

Technical cooperation means cooperation between partners and the creation of relationships with people outside of our normal sphere of influence. New intimacies and friendships can be created which always leave lasting positive impressions on all parties involved in such a cooperative endeavour. People in need receive assistance while we as helpers receive ample opportunities to grow personally and to mature into full global citizenship.

Governmental and Inter-governmental Development Aid Programmes

1. United Nations Based Youth Programmes

Technical cooperation programmes are organised by many U.N. agencies notably UNDP, WHO, ILO, FAO and UNIDO. Especially relevant for Youth participation are the following two programmes:

1.1 United Nations Volunteer Programmes

The U.N. Volunteer Programme (UNV) was created in 1970 to serve as an operational partner in international development at the explicit request of any UN member state. Since its inception, some 6000 UNV volunteers, specialised in a wide variety of technical, economic and social fields, have worked in over 100 countries offering practical responses to the countries development needs.

UNV specialists are recruited from some 95 countries all over the world including industrialised as well as industrialising countries. A total of nearly 160 volunteer-specialists currently serve in about 100 countries with over half of them being assigned to the 41 countries classified as Least Developed.

The minimum age for becoming a UNV specialist is 21 years but there are in fact no upper age limits. The average age of UNV specialists today is about 39.

1.2. United Nations Associate Expert Programme

The objectives of the Associate Expert (A.E.) programme is to contribute to the respective U.N. agencies' technical cooperation programmes and through this, to render assistance to developing countries. The A.E. programme is normally limited to a two year engagement and at present involves young professionals originating from Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Federal Republic of Germany, Japan, The Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland.

The basic principles of the Associate Expert Programme have been set forth in Resolution 849 (XXXII) issued by ECOSOC in August 1961. Several U.N. agencies and participating donor governments make use of this scheme. An Associate Expert in general is a young graduate with either an academic degree or an equivalent technical qualification in combination with some years of working experience. The maximum age limit is generally 32, but 35 is acceptable at the donor government's discretion.

2. European Governments' Technical Cooperation Programmes

Most European governments offer technical cooperation programmes which are quite similar to the Canadian (CIDA) and the American (USAID) development aid programmes. Such government sponsored development aid programmes most commonly fall under the responsibilities of the respective Ministries of Foreign and Economic Affairs.

Some western European countries like France and West Germany allow a qualified number of their young military recruits to serve in development programmes instead of serving in their national armies. Many European countries also offer development aid through various Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) who execute technical cooperation programmes on behalf of their national governments. A brief overview of two West European development aid programmes follows below. The examples selected for illustration are the German Development Service (DED) and the Voluntary Service Overseas programmes (VSO) of Great Britain. Development Aid agencies similar to the DED and the VSO exist practically in all West European countries.

2.1 German Development Service

The German Development Service (DED), founded in 1963, has been able to send over 8000 qualified young volunteers to 150 developing countries of the world. An average of 950 volunteers per year work on technical cooperation projects abroad. The qualified young professionals, 60% come to the service with a graduate degree, spend in general two years in the field and offer assistance in over 100 different fields ranging from engineering to agriculture, education, health, social well fare, trade and enterprise development.

2.2. Voluntary Service Overseas (U.K.)

The Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) programme was founded in 1966. VSO volunteers make a commitment to work for at least two years on projects where their skills and expertise are passed on. There are at present over 1100 volunteers working overseas in 40 different developing countries. 45% work in various forms of education, social and business development projects. The

average age of the VSO volunteer is 32. 45% are female and 55% are male.

International Humanitarian Aid: The Direct Road to Universal Love

Humanitarian Aid aims at the alleviation of human suffering caused by natural catastrophies such as floods, volcano eruptions, typhoons etc. and suffering caused by man-made disasters like war and other forms of violent destruction. Humanitarian aid flows through many channels, some being U.N. Organizations like UNDRO, UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP; others being Inter-Governmental organizations such as the ICRC and the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, and again others being Non-Governmental Organizations such as the World Council of Churches, the Aga Khan Foundation and the Order of Malta.

The International Committee of the Red-Cross (ICRC) is one of the best known humanitarian agencies. Inspired by Hernri Dunant and founded in 1863, the ICRC has constantly pursued its original aim which is to protect and assist the victims of armed conflict. Those victims were, at first, soldiers wounded in battle, to whom were later added shipwrecked sailors, then prisoners of war (P.O.W.) and later on also the civilian populations who are often an easy target in modern warfare, namely women, old people, and children. They get easily killed, maimed and orphaned due to indiscriminate bombing. Later on ICRC added to its list of victims displaced people and tortured and detained political detainees who often enough are being abused by persons in authority who are making excessive and malicious use of their own power.

At present, the ICRC has 240 Swiss and 360 expatriate staff who work closely together with 3800 local employees in 80 different countries. On the average, the ICRC staff is 29 years old, has completed a graduate university degree and is mostly single. The large majority speak at least two languages in addition to their mother tongue, 65% are men, 35% women, ICRC staff normally serve an initial two-year term which upon completion can be renewed based on mutual agreement between the organization and the ICRC staff.

Humanitarian work is certainly emotionally and intellectually satisfying. To help save people's lives or at least, to alleviate intense suffering, is the major motivating force behind the commitment of young ICRC staff. But visiting P.O.W.'s and political detainees in various detention centres and conducting large scale relief operations in all parts of the world under often less than ideal conditions puts enormous stress on the young ICRC staff. Stress shows in terms of high accident rates, fatigue, insomnia and other forms of stress-related dysfunctions. Witnessing the whole perverse palette of cruelty inflicted on fellow human beings can be very taxing over time. Many ICRC staff therefore restrict their service to a single 2-year term.

CONCLUSIONS

We have talked about how our world has turned into a global village, how conventional boundaries between nations have shrunk dramatically and how we are now, for the good or the bad, faced with multiple inter-dependencies which bind us all together across the continents.

We have then talked about the psychological components of youth development in general and of international cooperation in particular. Taking into consideration our age bracket, namely 20-40 years, we have then discussed the implications of being at this age juncture in our own life.

Looking into the issues and conflicts inherent for this age bracket, we have subsequently discussed the need for moral development and for a coming-to-terms with the issue of intimacy be this with significant others of our own societies or with important others of other countries and cultures.

Following the life cycle stage model of Erikson, we then also looked into the issues pertaining to Early Adulthood namely the need to express care and empathy for others. Reminding ourselves again of the global village with all its inter-dependencies, we then discussed ways to care for others by making contributions in the field of development assistance and humanitarian aid as a way of mastering the challenges inherent in the stage of Early Adulthood.

Helping others help themselves, the domain of development aid, and helping others who cannot at this point help themselves, the domain of humanitarian assistance, we subsequently discovered, are also gratifying for the one who does the helping. We can safely say that by helping others we also help ourselves become more mature, wiser and more humane.

As a way of closing, I would like to quote from Eric Fromm's (7) classic book titled "The Art of Loving". Describing different forms of love, Fromm writes:

"Love is the only satisfactory answer to the problem of human existence. Yet most of us are unable to develop our capacities for love on the only level that really counts—a love that is compounded of maturity, self-knowledge and courage. Learning to love, like other arts, demands practice and concentration. Even more than any other art it demands genuine insight and understanding".

Ladies and Gentlemen, thank you for your attention. May we all enjoy the challenges of the various stages in our own personal life cycle and may we share our humanity with our brothers and sisters in all homes of our wonderful global village.

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ABSTRACT

Taking into account the inter-dependencies of modern life, the author discusses the implications of psychological development on international friendship and understanding. In particular, the theories and insights of Piaget, Kohlberg, and Erikson are applied to the age group of Early and Young Adulthood (20-30 years). Conflicts inherent in the developmental stages of these two age groups are discussed and solutions suggested such as involvement in development aid or in humanitarian assistance programmes. Several related programmes are subsequently described namely the United Nations Volunteers Programme, the United Nations Associate Expert Programme, the German Development Service, the British Voluntary Service Overseas and the International Committee of the Red-Cross.