

LESSONS AND CHALLENGES FOR PEACE-BUILDING FROM LATIN AMERICA

Miguel Alvarez Gándara
Former Executive Secretary of the CONAI
and Director of SERAPAZ, Mexico

1. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE INTERNATIONAL FRAMEWORK

The imperialist hegemony of the U.S. government and economy weigh upon the world in a new way, reducing the margins for national sovereign states to generate their own alternatives. Demands for a new international order and the strengthening of international rights and of multilateral institutions for insuring justice and equilibrium have been surpassed by a new context of war, authoritarianism and armament that restructures everything around us.

The context of all former struggles and alternatives has varied considerably showing itself as the *neoliberalism of war*. War is now a more visible reality, since not it not only refers to the dozens of international armed conflicts that are proliferating throughout the world, but also to a new form of global, face-to-face, non-conventional combat against *those who are different* in the name of the alibi of terrorism and protection of imperial interests. This new war led by the U.S. government is intimately linked to national and transnational security in favor of the political, financial and commercial interests of the powerful. It involves First World governments and alliances in new ways to impose the neoliberal model with greater authoritarianism.

Within this context, resistance and tensions have worsened, increasing differences, deepening polarizations and diversifying social conflicts. Today, the main struggle of the affected populations has been shifted to the terrain of human rights, autonomy, cultural identity, the generation of new democratic forms of participation in public issues, solidarity economy and the sustainable defense of natural resources. The *other vision of peace* has its roots with the people who are resisting the powerful and their neoliberalism. Resistance has become a strategy and the seed for alternatives of poor peoples faced with neoliberalism. By helping to rescue peoples identity and autonomy, it is possible to redefine the meaning of globalization and to sow alternatives to the dominant agenda. From this vision, indigenous peoples are an important example. Essentially, with their defense of identities, autonomies or rights, the struggle for human *dignity* has been strengthened and revitalized.

This is the key factor for understanding the intense reactivation and resurgence of social movements, new armed conflicts and the kind of peace that should be built. It is also a factor for valuing the importance of the growing interconnection and articulation of civic movements

that have quickly progressed from simple stances that reject globalization to developing political agendas and alternatives to address the world's fundamental problems. Now, old and new movements are surfacing with new agendas, new initiatives and new kinds of strategies. These movements are re-fashioning the tasks of politics as their own, no longer solely depending on their ties with political parties. In this new stage of social movements, the effort to interconnect agendas and struggles is noteworthy. Moreover, there has been progress in the search for a shared agenda, in which new themes unifying Human Rights and Peace, linked to Justice and Democracy, are appearing.

Also, the movements exhibit new characteristics at a local, national, Latin American and international level. With their new dimensions and visions, these movements are multi-sectorial, multi-class based, multi-ethnic, multi-gender-based, and multi-thematic. These features are an expression of the in-depth transition that all social organisms experience. Now, a new generation is appearing on the horizon, with new leadership and codes, new forms of interlink age, new agendas and unified initiatives.

The main task at hand is not the diagnosis of needs or problems, rather the generation of alternatives from within the movements themselves. This is an enormous political and conceptual challenge, since power is no longer seen to be an indispensable precursor for beginning to build alternatives; on the contrary, the process occurs on the very terrain of the movements and from there, the action of political parties and the State gain meaning. The alternative proposal has dignity, legitimacy, ethics and moral authority. This alternative generates new forms of political relations and action among the different kinds of movements and social, civic, academic and citizens organizations.

Although recent networking efforts have brought together different kinds of movements, we have yet to see joint action that results in greater cohesion, permanence and political influence. Perhaps the key to achieving this joint action lies in articulating the different agendas. Consequently, we consider that PEACE could become a *vital articulating force* along three different dimensions by:

- a) Building peace in all places where there is injustice. Where there are national situations of injustice, peace is a process of social construction, even in the absence of war, based upon the alternative proposal and actor that seeks to articulate all social agendas.
- b) Finding a political and fair solution to the existing 58 armed conflicts in the world today. In the presence of situations of war, peace requires political channels for dispute, negotiation and solution that are not limited to the terms of military confrontation, rather to the promotion of a process for social and State construction based upon the fulfillment of substantial agreements.
- c) Saying no to the imperial and world war. In the presence of global hegemony, the anti-terrorist scaling of armaments and neoliberal imposition, peace is not the order that

favors the powerful; rather, it is a fair claim that requires a new global legal, political, and economic framework.

II. THE ALTERNATIVE SCHEME: JUSTICE FOR FREEDOM, EQUALITY AND PEACE

As stated in a recent study of the Peace and Justice Commission of a Mexican initiative to define national priorities, peace cannot be set apart from justice. There can be no peace without justice, particularly without social justice. Without social justice, true peace is absent because peace is not merely a simple absence of war. Wanting peace does not mean wanting to return to previous situations or wanting to preserve the status quo at any cost. Peace does not coincide with a conservative attitude. In contrast, *peace that is associated with a will for change encourages urgent transformations of the living conditions for the majority of people.*

The essential key to the different conceptions of peace lies in the battle for JUSTICE. In recent times alternative discourse was hidden away and agendas were developed to strengthen conservative outlooks with their current day neoliberal formulations. These outlooks claim to be moral conceptions that are engendered as theories of justice. The substance of these outlooks is that they seek to simultaneously defend these principles as universal and shielded by the prestige of ethics. Thus, any other proposal appears to oppose the universality of reason (as something achronistic, backward, irrational, contrary to unstoppable historical tendencies, etc.) and above all, an offense to morality. This gives neoliberalism tremendous ideological, political and electoral strength.

New liberal thought has revealed the good news that a society can have strong inequalities and still be just. It contends that liberalism is able to morally sustain the preeminence of individual liberty, above and beyond any egalitarian pretension that arises from collective, social, cultural or political interests. This is the basic issue that must be contested. We must pose a clear and convincing alternative to this thinking. This is an essential task for a sound and progressive foundation of priorities and alternatives that will comprise principles capable of giving legitimacy to and fostering social equality. Additionally, we must make an enormous effort so that citizens will assume these minimal principles as their own.

Unfortunately, the principal elements that constitute the contemporary neoliberal conception that has penetrated the minds of millions of people, have become a kind of common sense that supposedly does not even need to be discussed. *This lack of articulation between justice and social equality* stands out to the degree that certain inequalities are conceived as just. Hence, the liberal theory of justice seeks to define principles that allow its theorists to determine the just character of inequalities, that is to say, we supposedly live in *an inequitable but just world.*

Despite the ingenious principle of difference included in the theory, the liberal disposition continues, prone to place rights according to a new hierarchical traditional order: giving preeminence to freedom over equality. Values based in individuality are erected as incompatible with (or exclusive of) other values that place importance on collectivity and equal relations. This theory imposes the rejection of all shared or collective goals grounded in culture or the unique tradition of each society (and, thus, also of collective rights) for self-organization.

The hard-line version of neoliberalism contradicts and sterilizes a collective and pluralist perspective that reclaims both *diversity* and, at the same time, social equality as superior values of society. Collectives are denied from having any ethical priority over individual freedom. This liberal viewpoint causes many injustices, particularly against national ethnic groups and other collectivities with their own identities. The supposed neutrality, in itself, blankets the conceptions of what is good that underlies public policies, and by excluding others, results in favoring certain interests almost always in detriment to the needs of the majorities.

New liberals profess that their focus far from being an adversary to social and cultural rights asserts that these rights are a natural extension of individual rights. But what happens if these terms were reversed and we were to say that individual rights are a natural extension of collective rights? Do individual right only gain meaning in the framework of a determined collectiveness? Thus, social and cultural rights (collective rights) would not be adjective rights (instrumental or dependent on individual rights) but rather substantial rights, or ends in themselves.

So, it is absolutely necessary to define our principles of justice. The progressive conception adds another element to the conditions of justice: that human rights (and the interests they represent) are not completely harmonious in nature and that the exercise of collective rights should take *priority* over the individual exercise of rights. The point is not that collectivity annuls individuality, rather that when a conflict arises between these orders of rights, the first ones will receive special considerations and be placed on the front page at the time of choice. This idea of equality is associated with the priority that places what is public over what is private, in addition to being related to inclusion and ethics, and above all, to human dignity. So then, we must prioritize our principles and certain principles will stand out for defining our social priorities. Our task is to define a new model for society, founded in basic principles of justice that are egalitarian, pluralist and democratic. And, that is, in the end, a task of peace.

III. TOWARDS A NEW CONCEPTION OF PEACE

Not all definitions of justice speak of the same things, nor are all conceptions of peace alike, particularly now that the neoliberalism of war as a model frames and repositions,

renews and re-dimensions former armed conflicts, generating a new kind of internal conflict as well. The challenges of war and the differences of peace have also been globalized.

To this extent we are in critical need of a *New Conception of Peace*, one that is not imposed by the powerful, one that is not pacification nor does it solely put an end to wars or foster political solutions for military actors. Peace is once again, now with more urgency and clarity, a worldwide priority task that encompasses different dimensions, from specific conflicts to the troubling imperialist international problem. Thus, from the peoples logic, solving the structural problems of injustice (in addition to stopping the global war and healing those societies that are tearing themselves apart), peace is building conditions for equality that resolve the causes and not just offer solutions to the effects and actors of armed conflicts. Peace is a question of justice, not just of power. Hence, peace does not run from, nor does it nullify conflicts; it faces conflicts and converts them into opportunities for engendering change in favor of justice and dignity. In the presence of the growing distance between social and political arenas, peace presents itself as a *process for building alternatives* to the crisis of State legitimacy and representation and of the necessary sovereignties of nations and the autonomies of their peoples.

Peace is no longer a local problem for a country where a conflict explodes militarily. Peace is no longer the search for particular political solutions for military or armed parties. Instead, it becomes a *construction of broadly participatory political channels for resolving the structural and political CAUSES that illustrate that excluded peoples are the social foundation of an armed rebellion. Peace is not the mere absence of rebellions or the formal maintenance of political stability, but it is the solution to the underlying conflicts generated by the injustice of a society.*

The real conflict, whose causes should be the focus and guide for the peace-building process, *underlies* a particular armed conflict; its borders are not national borders. Neither are the genesis and logic of violence purely local, since the use of force is fed globally as the right and industry of the powerful. Although the problems of peace are expressed through internal conflicts, peace is central to and articulated in the global agenda.

Together with new characteristics of old yet active conflicts, rooted in previous national and global situations, a new type of conflict has appeared as well. This conflict does not only exclusively refer to problems of nationality, territory, independence or power, nor solely to the generation of revolutionary conditions for national change.

As in the case of Mexico, the novelty is defined by the causes for needed change to the State, society and its economic, political and cultural models, as alternatives to globalization based in the recognition of peoples. The actor does not create the conflict, rather the actor, finding himself in his severe state, engenders the conditions of an armed actor. We therefore affirm that given the worsening of tensions that have led to the current hegemonies, the conflict in Chiapas represents a kind of armed conflict that could be reproduced in multiple

places and by multiple actors in the world's current situation, particularly in Latin America and the Caribbean.

These significant causes transcend and unite multiple actors in many ways generating plural and democratizing processes to reclaim the recognition of other identities, autonomies and cultures as features of new states and projects of a Nation, under whose design the difficult economic and social dispute is played out.

Therefore, these new conflicts, as well as the new characteristics of other older conflicts, can be explained by the intersection of external and internal factors as:

- Inequality and the problems of a national economy within a neoliberal framework,
- The crisis of the State and political problems,
- The interaction of new kinds of agendas, actors and movements, that from the local to the global level, comprise cultural, political, economic, social and environmental factors,
- The prompting of old and new national causes -in regards to collective rights, cultural identities, structural crisis and new political practices-, and
- The search for alternatives to the neoliberal model.

IV. LESSONS FROM THE PEACE-BUILDING PROCESS

In regards to these new characteristics and conflicts, Latin American peace-makers have not reached sufficient clarity. We also have failed to value and fully assume all of the lessons from the processes we have undergone, nor have we sufficiently strengthened our joint action in terms of common political causes and solutions. Nevertheless, from the Latinamerican experience, including Chiapas, already very clear and enlightening lessons are emerging in regards to the following themes:

LESSON 1: Causes as contents of the peace-building process and politics as the path

In every case, old, renewed and new conflicts in Latin America and the Caribbean show that in contexts of extreme poverty and exclusion, and in situations of polarization and violence, the main factor that leads to armed rebellions continues to be political in nature. Hence, politics continue to be the *thematic focus* for building a negotiated and process-based solution. A quick political solution limited to military actors is no longer sufficient, since peace requires politics to be a long-term process to promote the tendencies towards reconciliation and the participation of other actors in the dispute for in-depth changes related to the different causes of the conflict.

In simpler terms, in many different explicit peace-building processes two main stages have been developed: a first stage of military logic in which the Parties develop desirable scenarios by measuring their military capacities head-on and a second stage from a logic of political negotiation to reap what has been gained on a military front. This second stage can

be initiated to the extent that the military logic and stage has been exhausted, matured or come to a head; that is to say, once the political negotiation becomes the best channel for both Parties to favorably resolve the armed conflict.

Nevertheless, the rationality of new conflicts does not lie in these strategies of confrontation, rather in their causes. Thus, the key to the solutions cannot and should not lie in measuring the military capacities until they are fully exhausted, rather in *subordinating the military logic to a political logic* and moving from military confrontation to political struggle. The causes cannot depend upon the strength of the military actor who rises up, neither should the political negotiation be ensnared in the *measurement of the balance of political and economic power*. This is a serious limitation for peace, particularly when in the middle of the crisis of political structures and societies, national governments and armies as *Parties to the conflict* act in an authoritarian State logic, deploying their strength in a disproportionate fashion. Democratic States should promote, rather than hinder, any necessary changes, assuming that just causes and social movements are the principle actors and substance of peace.

LESSON 2: Peace as a process for national transformation

Above and beyond the Parties in an armed conflict, the keys to peace lie in the causes (pre-military) and in the actors and processes necessary for resolving said conflicts within a larger process of building new political conditions (post-military). Thus, *the nature and the solution of the new-armed conflicts are related to the solution to the crisis of political societies*, not because they suffice in their own accord, but because they are necessary for resolving other agendas and causes.

Hence, the nature and solution to new armed conflicts are related to the *solution to the crisis of political societies* and therefore are also linked to *the participation and proposals of social and civic movements and actors as full actors for peace*, just as they are for democracy, human rights and justice.

If what matters for peace is the cause of the conflict rather than the strength of the military, then the actors for creating a solution are not the actors of war, rather they are all those political, economic, social, religious, etc., actors *who are necessary precisely to help resolve the very causes of the conflict*, by means of beginning in-depth constitutional, political, cultural and social transformations.

Conflicts require new political dynamics and co-responsibilities. In a strict sense, it is not necessary to take up arms if politics are an effective means for transformation. Likewise, peace would be solid to the extent to which it builds sound political channels for action and political actors. The problem is that when political societies are in crisis, in terms of their weakened credibility and representativity, and when current political parties are part of the political model that needs to be transformed, then the task of providing the elements for a *strategy for Peace with Democracy* becomes a task for social and civic actors, above and

beyond what arises from the dispute and balance of powers between the armed Parties or the political parties.

Peace, then, is a much longer and complicated process, whose true solution will be found when it becomes a process of national transformation. Thus, the question about the soundness of peace -based in democracy, justice and human rights- *brings us to a solution involving the State and the maturity of society itself.*

The new conceptions, strategies and methodologies for encouraging the Peace process face a special challenge of *achieving gradual formation and incorporation of all social and civil actors, and with them all political, economic and social powers necessary to build a new pluri-ethnic and pluri-cultural State capable of a new political, economic, social and cultural pact.*

LESSON 3: Peace as a task for social and civic actors

For new conflicts, the presence of entities that are mobilized and conscious of society in all its diversity is necessary for giving course and confluence to the political, social and cultural features that democracy, justice and peace require. Moreover, civic participation is necessary in order to put an end to the tendencies of polarization and violence, those that society undergoes prior to and during the armed conflict, and instead to further tendencies towards tolerance and dialogue.

Undoubtedly, civil society, both as a reality and a concept, is complex. Nevertheless, as an organic expression of society as a whole, civil society entities create a mosaic of wills and social and civic actors and processes that develop a natural diversity. From this diversity, it is possible to promote *the political and social will necessary to make changes that truly resolve the causes of the conflict and curb the tendencies towards polarization and violence.*

This is not about substituting the Parts or the political society as a whole, but neither is it about limiting the civic role of accompaniment or solidarity. Here I am referring to other conflicts in Latin America where, despite the strength of the military logic and the actors of war also serving as the principal actors in the negotiation process, the dynamics and support of the civic actors many times in a secondary fashion or in solidarity to the movement, has become indispensable for making progress towards peace.

As they take a position in regards to the kind of peace to be built, the social and civic movements and organizations can develop their own dialogue and negotiation with the Parties, but they also *will consolidate their own autonomy in regards to the Parties.* Thus, they will be actors with a pro-active and committed voice to the extent to which Peace becomes *one of their own tasks and processes.*

In this sense, there is a huge series of theoretical and conceptual, as well as strategic and programmatic, challenges to Peace. The question is how to bind peace to the other social

and political agendas and actors that seek to guarantee justice as a solution to the causes of a conflict. Social movements, due to their identity, character and links to the causes, are once again today the *alternative force and option for networking*.

LESSON 4: A new kind of negotiation for orienting the strategic peace-building process

As we have said before, where there are armed conflicts (old conflicts but particularly the new kind), the implications for peace go far beyond achieving a negotiation process between the Parties that affirms the exhaustion and transition from the military conflict to the political conflict. *Rather than being defined by the will of negotiation between the Parties in the armed conflict, the scope of peace is defined by the will of the main actors of the State and society to assume the causes and the changes to be made.* The changes that peace requires are not just those that the Parties in the conflict can assume or fulfill. Hence, *the more isolated or exclusive the negotiation process, the more limited the peace.*

The causes, the conflict, the model of negotiation and the peace process in each country reflect the society behind them, its fragmentations and its different projects. Although complex in-depth changes are at the heart of the negotiation, the fulfillment of the agreements and the degree of change are not guaranteed with the signed agreements (and less so when these agreements are not allowed to mature and are not concrete enough to be implemented immediately, or when other key actors have not appropriated them, or when the dispute is left open to interpretation or to discussions about the kind of instrumentation).

Neither peace nor the conflict are concluded with the signing of the Agreements that bring an end to the stage of military confrontation and formalize the transition to political confrontation, at which point then these Agreements become instruments for resolving the causes of the conflict -and not just its military expression-.

It has been said that the most difficult changes have to do with the natural political struggle, so the negotiation process faces the challenge of achieving the largest changes possible in the short-term in order to consolidate a strategic route aimed at rebuilding an unequal reality mid-term nourished by the hegemonic world dynamic. Even when there are Agreements, the changes will be defined and disputed within the terrain of institutional and legal political struggle, so the peace and negotiation processes should not only be designed as *expressions of the military capacities of the Parties*, that is to say from the present towards the past, rather *in function of this new stage of political confrontation in which the gravity and degrees of change that the country can undergo are truly defined* according to the will and the Agreements between the two Parties.

Thus, the negotiation process must be understood, experienced and furthered as an element of a *process-based and State strategy*, and not just as a negotiation process, nor the

articulation of several processes, nor only of the Parties, rather with the participation of the different political and social actors necessary for processing in-depth changes.

The negotiation should be focused on the subsequent political struggle in two senses: by elevating the tasks for peace to the greatest level of representation and composition of existing political and social forces (centripetal) and by broadening links to other agendas and arenas of a country's political, economic, cultural and social life (centrifugal). The idea is how to bind the Agreements to other agendas and actors even though they might defend another principle kind of struggle and passage to political and social change.

One of the keys lies in the capacity of civil society to generate not only a policy for negotiation, rather a policy for peace that gives meaning and depth to the negotiation process. These in-depth processes, where several structural causes of the conflicts are substantiated, *cannot be resolved with the mere negotiation and signing of the Agreements*. The challenge is how to convert these Agreements into constructive, non-military and democratizing instruments that help to generate the necessary willingness, attitudes and changes for finding a solution to the objective causes of the conflicts and violence.

LESSON 5: A new kind of mediation

The negotiation process in itself, as well as the necessary models and actors for carrying it out, should also be understood in new ways. The same is true for mediations. They should not be reduced to the framework of the political negotiation after a military conflict has matured. Instead, mediation should be understood as a process for peace, *as the service that propels civil maturity in a national political process to generate the necessary negotiations and changes*.

So, the task of mediation should be understood as *an expression of the civic participation* and it will have the task of establishing the elements and strategies for peace that help and orient the struggle of the Parties in the conflict, encouraging the incorporation of other actors. Of course, in order to define a new kind of strategy for civic mediation, the characteristics of the country, the conflict, the actors and the margins for solution must be taken into consideration.

Thus, this new civic mediation must have a *broad-based social commitment* that strengthens its capacity for summoning others to the task and its moral authority before the Parties, in order to *provide methodological leadership to the process* in the midst of pressures of confrontational strategies. *The challenge is to make the process a trustworthy one, to politically move the conflict and dispute to a new terrain with conditions for democratic participation without violence*.

Faced with this challenge, the criteria for mediation should not be ones of simple neutrality, since a mediation *must forge its identity and take a stance* in regards to the kind of peace to be built. *Neither can it adopt a criterion of equidistance, since the process-oriented and*

comprehensive vision will set the norms for providing this service during the negotiation process. This mediation should move in an autonomous, flexible and creative fashion among the inequalities of the Parties and other actors, in order to favor the construction of *political parities and convergent movements* among the different interests and proposals at stake.

Although peace is a global task, for this kind of negotiations and processes *it is better for the mediations to be national processes, if they have sufficient backing and international collaboration*. All peace processes require international civic and political facilitation, as well as the direct and permanent advisory support of actors and experts from other experiences. It is important to have the support of governments and multilateral bodies, but not so that they promote rapid solutions based on their own logic; it simply cannot be said that international, multi-national and governmental perspectives are the best for in-depth change, nor that the United Nations has patrimony over fair mediations...

In general, it is difficult for any single actor, person or collective to provide a mediation service throughout and in all areas of the difficult process. During the initial stages of several conflicts, it has been necessary to have the mediation of religious figures, although later on, when the political matter of the process has become more complicated, national political figures or bodies have become more adequate for mediation purposes; later, to the extent that local mistrust or fatigue has set in, the convenience of calling upon international actors increases.

In regards to the participation of churches, in general their natural and permanent role in the peace-building process is recognized, precisely because they are not political actors nor do they pretend to substitute the roles of political actors. Thus, the sense of mediation that churches can play is more important when the entire peace-building process has been defined, and not only in the initial stage of negotiation. Although religions and churches cannot guarantee negotiations, solutions, nor the fulfillment of agreements, their labor has to do with the courageous and ethical denunciation of agendas, problems and causes that must be addressed, as well as with the prompting of reconciliation, dialogue, human rights and the bridling of a culture of violence, in addition to the summoning and backing of grassroots and civic consciousness and participation.

In any case, the peace-building process requires a strategy wherein the Parties gradually start to coincide with other national actors in regards to the main questions of the conflict. Of course, in the beginning, the diagnosis, the conception and the kind of peace will be factors in dispute where each actor has its own strategies. During these heated stages of the conflict, it is fundamental that the mediation has an *overarching strategy*. The task of involving other national and local actors is a natural part of the labors of a mediation process, although it must always affirm that it is promoting the strategy required by the solution to the conflict.

The national and international actors that become involved can serve the process by supporting the procedure and its actors, but they can also hamper or divert it if they pretend

to mold the negotiation or transformation process to their own agenda or intentions. Involving other actors should not imply interference, diminish sovereignty or reduce the centrality of the negotiation or its principal actors.

An important need and task of the mediation process is developing a *clear and comprehensive vision of the conflict*. Based on this vision, the mediating can administer the rules, time and procedures, as well as offer information, orientation and analysis to link the negotiation and actors to the peace-building process and to the national and international political situation.

LESSON 6: A new strategic design of the process and agreements towards post-conflict challenges

Wars are so bloody that ending them seems like a worthy end in itself, whatever happens. This is relatively true because a country cannot return in time to a previous situation. Nevertheless, the *second* main effort for Peace is what allows a country to convert the grief and conflict into a great opportunity for *interconnecting social hopes to reality*. So that the process does not only result in the achievement of some changes of a political nature, the key is the intense push for changes of a *cultural and ethical* nature, as well as to institutionalize the commitment and need for more in-depth changes that include economic projects (without forgetting the problem of the current liberality of the economy, which is not governed by the logic nor the organs of the political structure, since power has been transferred and repositioned without borders by neoliberalism).

Without achieving cultural and ethical changes, peace loses its mystic, its stimulus and its capacity for summoning others to these new stages, and remains wasting away or weakening the process *for overcoming the tendencies and logics of polarization and violence, the ones that do not end with the cease fire*. Contrary of how a war grows and becomes complex, the peace-building process has to be developed as a POSITIVE CLIMB that is mindful of, values and nourishes its progress, the achievements and the convergences. *The challenge of transforming a country should become the principal axis of building a national consensus for peace*. In this regard, one should be mindful that *pain and truth are not simply the repairers of the effects of the conflict, but that they should be transforming stimulants of the causes*.

In order to promote these later and crucial stages more effectively, we should modify our ways of understanding the *meaning of the signing of the Agreements and the cease fire*, so that these are not just bright but fleeting moments of national unity for closing this stage of the war.

This climatic moment is crucial, since it generally represents the simultaneous beginning of the dismounting of military capacities, the mounting of a new political scenario and the fulfillment of the different Agreements and processes in the hands of other actors. However,

when an Agreement is signed but its fulfillment is postponed and *the space for the negotiations of the Parties and their national and international support structure are dismantled*, the doors are left wide open to the reaction and later dispute over the interpretation and the finalizing of the Agreements, without having the *sufficient mechanisms or strength* to avoid the delays, unfulfillment or weakening of the process.

Here, the enemies of Peace or of change have won many times. The very signing of the Agreements includes a risk that the Agreements stay on paper, reducing their capacity as useful tools for generating other real changes to resolve the conflict.

The negotiation cannot pretend to last as long as other in-depth changes are taking place in a country. The negotiation generates initial changes, which become political processes, laws and instruments for promoting other changes -the in-depth ones- but they also cannot guarantee in the short-term what the natural process of political and class struggle are responsible for.

So, two needs arise: a good strategic design of the peace process that is oriented to the post-armed conflict challenges, and the push for a large social movement with the sufficient political pressure and strength to guarantee the fulfillment of the Agreements and the later in-depth and political peace-building process.

In this sense, both the signing of the Agreements and the establishment of a definitive cease to all hostility are the climatic, representative and privileged moment that should be *fully taken advantage of and simultaneously completed with the carrying out of the first substantial changes, without postponing the principal constitutional and programmatic fulfillments*. This initial celebration of peace will be more joyous if it is more productive and committed to the future, and imagined as a short, public, special, decisive and strong period (since it has the sympathy and willingness of the majority of the political, economic and social forces in the country) with a strong international presence, etc., in which extraordinary or special sessions of Government, Congress, courts, programs, banks and all kinds of social, political, religious, academic, and civil organizations are held to adopt the Agreements and means necessary for taking a truly qualitative historic leap.

LESSON 7: The relation between social expectations and the conditions for progress and fulfillment of the Agreements

The strategic design of peace should also contemplate the *different and most deep-felt social expectations of the Parties*. In all cases, we must be mindful that the expectations *indicate but do not do not step out of tune with the process*; thus, the civic tasks of information sharing and public consciousness, as well as the languages, discourses and proposals made by both Parties and the other actors towards peace, must be oriented to encourage hope but in a very realistic and concrete fashion.

It is not convenient to promise that the more in-depth changes will be easy and quick. The conflict at the heart of the matter, related to poverty, exclusion and the lack of opportunities, the respect for human rights, the construction of the rule of law, the reign of justice and development with equality, *are not resolved with the mere signing of the Agreements and the cease fire*. These issues are also not just the responsibility and dispute of the political society, political parties, or economic forces; rather they are precisely the responsibility of the *social and civic dynamic* in its broadest sense.

Signing a peace agreement is not sufficient in and of itself. Peace should be a *process for national transformation that is built in the terrain of political and social dispute, backed by the signing of the Agreements, laws and other instruments*. Throughout the peace-building process, peace requires the accompaniment of external actors and the mounting of special *structures* to watch over and support it. The Agreements of a negotiation never exhaust the peace-building process; peace should be promoted through strategic means for opening new and better stages, scenarios and channels for political struggle. *The signing of Agreements that are so generic that they are unable to be fulfilled do not contribute to this process; likewise, when important issues are not defined and left to later interpretation or reclamation and dispute, no progress is made*. Once again, all of the previously mentioned would not be possible without the full participation of the political society, but also without the substantial contribution of actors and initiatives from civil society, particularly of the social or peoples movements.

For these same reasons, although peace does not nullify the dispute between projects, it democratically channels peace based upon the negotiated agreements. The role of the different *communications media and public opinion media* are fundamental for promoting conditions and will for dialogue and generating local features for a Culture of Peace. Based on their respective visions, ideologies and interests, the media should also reflect the efforts towards negotiation and building common solutions.

For these new stages, it is important to have active international solidarity in support of the national movement that is working so that all of the sorrow, transformed into a seed through the Agreements, is soon made into a productive plant. If this is not guaranteed, the risk of deep-seated frustration is very great, since peace can remain in a formal and incomplete process that does not progress to resolve neither the violence nor the social conflict.

LESSON 8: Political transformation of the Parties, centrality and ties with other actors and agendas in the post-conflict stage

No armed party can allow itself to think that it will automatically or lineally conserve its status as a main political actor as a result of the Agreements. There are several examples that show that new political roles and capacities will depend on *how the strategy is played out at each moment*. Political, social or electoral strength *is not inherited* from the previous armed

capacity during the post-conflict or democratic processes. Many times the lucidity shown during the negotiation process does not endure. These are different stages and logics.

This factor also represents a crucial challenge at the beginning of a new stage, since peace requires recasting the political channels and actors **THOROUGHLY AND WITHOUT PAUSE**; this implies that they once again debate and rediscuss all of their negotiations and political balance of powers. Civil society's presence is necessary in order to mobilize and reshape political actors, since their roles and identities cannot be substituted. So, for true peace the Parties in the conflict and negotiation process must not neglect the fact that the process needs them, and they should continue to play central roles in the political struggle and the promotion of peace. The same is true for actors and movements from civil society, who must assert themselves as principle and co responsible actors for Peace.

Foreseeing this post-conflict situation, assuming that all of the Agreements do not have the same significance or relevance as for those who committed themselves to the negotiation process, we find another reason why *broad political participation and interconnection between the negotiation agenda with other national agendas, spaces and actors is so crucial* because, for these tasks, the civic dynamic and diversity allow for huge progress to be made.

So, it is necessary to assume the need for *mature social and civil movement's capacities for networking and the development of proposals and political initiatives, based on the linkage with different agendas in regards to peace*. One task is to support the peace-making process and actors and another is to support the negotiation process for a solution to the armed conflict. Many efforts (including international and governmental initiatives) have been aimed at supporting the negotiation process, more than an in-depth peace-building process. Therefore, *without weakening, substituting or isolating any of the Parties from the armed conflict and negotiation process, we must seek to support all-important Parties in the peace-making process*.

Therefore, a peace process must be in tune at three different levels: *with the causes, with the negotiation and with the political dynamic and struggle*. The more in sync and articulated the three levels of the negotiation process the more fruitful the peace-building process will become. In this same sense, the more out of step and disarticulated the three levels are, the process itself will be more difficult, incomplete and indefinite (the current situation of the México case is a good example of this).

In consequence, civil society's role is fundamental, not just to back the negotiation between the Parties, but more importantly to *frame it within the broader peace process, strengthening ties with the rest of social forces and political actors* that are necessary for resolving the causes of the conflict.

Furthermore, civic participation is also necessary for *arresting the tendencies towards polarization and violence; those that society endures that underlie armed conflict*. Thus, if armed conflicts reflect this general situation of deterioration and mistrust, then it is also civil

society's role together with the other tasks that favor negotiation and changes, to promote *tendencies towards tolerance and dialogue*, curbing the logic of polarization and violence that is growing and diversifying in any society living an armed conflict in any of its stages.

LESSON 9: A new kind of international action and solidarity

Giving another meaning to the negotiation is a civil task in the peace-building process. The negotiation between Parties in the end is a limited and transitory space in a country's lifetime and its historical relevance will depend upon the degree to which the results have future transcendence and not only on the prior military explanation. *The negotiation loses impact and its capacity to create change if the Parties only enter into military dispute and discussion of the current situations at hand.* Also, this process is not furthered by external pressures to hold a short negotiation process that is limited to resolving the actor's interests, without resolving the causes of the conflict. It has been seen that when a negotiation puts an end to the armed conflict just by opening political arenas or scenarios, without resolving the causes of the social conflict, the *conflict is merely postponed or recycled*, but it has yet to be resolved.

This point would be sufficient for *coming to know and compare the different experiences of negotiation and peace in recent years*, as well as for *evaluating international participation*. (Even though progress and different efforts have been made, it is unfortunate to state that academic and/or civic circles the world over have been insufficient for comparing and sharing the lessons learned from negotiation and peace processes throughout history; so the new actors or mediators have to learn everything for themselves from the beginning and are trapped in the logic of the peculiarities of each case, committing useless errors).

So once again we come to another limit or paradox. If new conflicts are proposing alternatives to the models imposed by globalization, then the in-depth solution to the causes of the conflict also require general *global conditions and changes*. The paradox implies that although the facilitation and participation of *multinational organisms and governments* are helpful to the national peace processes, *such processes are not focused on producing global changes, rather national ones that are allied to dominant schemes*.

International participation, solidarity or collaboration are also disputed. They have meaning for a peace process due to their potential to influence the relations between actors and the orientation of the negotiation. Thus, *not every international collaboration is favorable* to the process; it depends what kind of peace or solution is being sought.

Moreover, we should remember that the world has consolidated the concern and mechanisms for the promotion and defense of human rights, whose specific agenda, dynamic and actors are intimately linked to peace (although not yet to the in-depth change that this requires). In this sense, although they are vitally articulated to the calls for Human Dignity, *the logic and discourse for Human Rights should not be confused* with the logic and

discourse for Peace, nor should the peace agenda and dynamics be reduced to the agenda and dynamic for Human Rights. Both are necessary, albeit different.

Notwithstanding that the kind of negotiation and Peace that are presented here are distant from the labors for Human Rights and Peace that multilateral organisms and governments are currently promoting, it is also clear that in different experiences the participation of the United Nations and governments that are friends to peace have been definitive. While international participation does not make peace, it does contribute five important elements:

- It legitimizes the negotiation and recognition of the actors;
- It facilitates direct dialogue and willingness of the Parties and their military counterparts;
- It maintains and concludes the dynamic of negotiation;
- It finances the process and promotes the initiation of programs to address specific community, regional and sectorial problems, and;
- It principally helps to create the political spaces necessary for resolving the problems of military confrontation, for improving respect for human rights, and for channeling later political participation of multiple actors.

The creation of arenas, rights and political processes is one of the most important tasks, but *peace is not reduced to this either*. This opening of new political scenarios should become a process *based upon and not marginal to the contents of the Agreements*; it will always favor a Peace that defends both the form and meaning of the Agreements, as well as the seriousness of their fulfillment, *remembering that they are worth the effort due to the size of the processes and the changes they generate*.

This new process-based and in-depth way of understanding international participation, once again, seems more like a challenge and task for internal and external civil societies. A large breadth of civic agendas and ties remain open for favoring not only the changes that new-armed conflicts require, but also for insuring political and social influence upon the necessary world changes.

LESSON 10: Peace as a process of inclusion and hope

Finally, peace is a *building process that turns conflicts into national opportunities, and the causes of the conflicts become guides for needed structural changes and changes to the State*. It is a *process of struggle, an organized dispute* that becomes long, complex and painful. Of course, the will of the Parties in the conflict is fundamental, as is the participation of political and economic forces, but the *process will be more in-depth the more it involves society itself as a central actor* and the more it articulates the different agendas and demands to favor a joint proposal that furthers justice.

Therefore, for peacemakers this is not a process for the *vanguards*. The principal challenge and fidelity are *with the poor and excluded peoples*. From this stance, the search for peace is a vital form of struggle, and it is also a process of hope that defends the appraisal and historical memory for designing peace in a participatory, articulated and democratic fashion, always looking to the future, always building inclusively. The process to peace is already *a route for social and political reorganization*.

In order to support the previous affirmations, the deployment of all kinds of initiatives that strengthen ties between actors in similar processes in different countries has greater meaning and importance. They can thus identify lessons learned and references, approach and mature civil solidarity towards more regular and significant actions, prompt the conformation of international peace collectives and make committed contributions to the building of conditions for peace.

V. STRATEGIC CHALLENGES TO PEACE-BUILDING

1. Take on a new conception of peace:

- As a process that goes beyond situations of war, and thus, as a process linked to the causes of the war. We understand peace as a process of local, national, regional and global struggle bound to the grassroots call for in-depth changes for justice and dignity in the economic, political, social and cultural order of our world and its nations.
- As an answer to the existing imperial hegemony and the external imposition of the neoliberal model, that has put the fragile experiences of electoral democracy in our continent in crisis, that have accelerated the conditions that worsen social conflictivity and thus foretell the generation of new forms and agendas for struggle.
- As a process for building substantive and just solutions to the causes that gave birth to the social conflictivity and the internal armed conflicts in Latin America and the Caribbean.
- As a priority focus of the social and civic Latin American agenda for reactivating social movements and alternative networking efforts towards justice, for human rights and for democracy based in economic and political changes.
- As an articulating axis of talks, processes, agendas and alternative strategies, both at a national and regional level as well as globally, where the offenses and models that cause injustice and conflictivity are maintained. Peace is not only an alternative struggle for the country's problems wherever dissatisfaction explodes, but also an answer to hegemonic countries and models that generate such conditions.

2. Assume a new civil strategy for Peace, in regards to the following challenges:

- a) Link peace to the global situation, the transition to democracy and the democratic Reform of countries.

- b) Generate a positive and transforming correlation between the peace-building process and the political transition, in order to build new political, legal, institutional and cultural scenarios for the representation of different social interests in the definition of crucial themes for the society and the nation.
- c) Promote five fundamental conditions for forging a viable path to a political solution addressing the relevant causes, that puts in play different resources and political and social capabilities.
- The subordination of the military logic and actors to the political logic and the needs of politics.
 - The uprising, permanence and reinforcement of interests and incentives for the process of dialogue, agreement and fulfillment. This implies a revision of the legal framework and institutionality in order to regain credibility in the process, its rules, its procedures and its guarantees.
 - The strongest possible link to and importance of the peace-building process on the National Agenda and in the process of social and political reform of the Nation. The civic task of working on the tie between the armed conflict and the structural conflict, between what is social and political, between what is strategic and what is current, between what is local with what is national and global is very important.
 - To broaden and strengthen national will and consensus in regards to the political reforms that the peace process require.
 - To strengthen the processes for national and international networking among civic and social actors and initiatives as necessary actors to the peace-building process.
- d) Curb the growing militarization, paramilitarization, impunity and polarization, by means of pushing for a general and inclusive process for dialogue and negotiation that, while simultaneously regaining the centrality of the conflict and its main actors, is articulating the necessary actors for governability and the in-depth changes implied in the solution.
- e) Further consensus building in terms of an alternative Project of the Nation, reflecting this project in necessary State Reform and providing the best conditions possible for democratic participation and transition:
- Because globally we have entered into another stage of the historical struggle of the progressive movement and of grassroots forces faced with an anti-popular and now hegemonic project.
 - Because the historical process of social movements and civic actions is rich in contributions and alternative lessons.
 - Because this route to human dignity involving the struggles and lives of peoples is viable.

- f) Promote the diversification of initiatives and movements that facilitate the incorporation of other process and agendas in the construction of the peace-building process, to further the comprehension of the causes and solutions for peace in relationship with democracy, justice and comprehensive and in-depth human rights.
- g) Strengthen existing unifying spaces and processes by promoting new forms of social organization and national articulation:
 - Promote values, criteria and organizational forms grounded in solidarity, consensus-building, the capacity to develop an alternative project, the strengthening of indigenous, social and civic organizations and movements, with bottom-up dynamics that begin with the grassroots social processes and the horizontal relations between different sectors and agendas.
 - Promote broader articulations that are able to interlink other agendas and access other sectors, beyond our own movements, in a social-indigenous-civic scheme.
- h) Develop a national and global assessment on violence, and develop criteria and policies regarding conflictivity, militarization and paramilitarization.
- i) Continue to promote mechanisms and instruments for discussing and promoting a Culture of Peace, favoring dialogue and negotiation for all kinds of conflicts, distant from the tendency of violence and polarization promoted by the powerful.

3. Promote an intensive international civic campaign ANOTHER PEACE IS POSSIBLE with the following goals:

- Promote arenas, dynamics and actions to define a new conception, strategy and joint action for peace.
- Foster networks for systematization and exchange in order to pick up the keys, lessons and criteria that are being sown in the historical channels and in more recent experiences.
- Develop articulations among concrete experiences and initiatives in the peace-building process.
- Create solidarity committees or unifying spaces in each country that are interlinked to Latin American tasks and the demands of each process.
- Jointly develop unified plans for national and continental plans for peace that strategically interlinks and orient solidarity action, regionally as well as globally.
- Organize horizontal information systems that favor networking and joint action.
- Insure dialogue and negotiation among different social, civic, religious and political actors so they take ownership for the peace-building process, based on an ethical vision, Hope and Truth, and deep-seated commitment to grassroots causes and processes.

VI. SPECIFIC CHALLENGES AND TASKS FOR RELIGIONS AND CHURCHES

Finally, assuming that social conflictivity is reflected in religions and churches, and that in some way, they become involved in situations of violence and war that do not arise as such, all religions have common characteristics and values (being over having, the value of life, the respect for human dignity, justice, truth, generosity, compassion, community, reciprocity, solidarity and fraternity). Therefore, in faith, all religions and churches are called upon to respond to the following challenges and tasks in the active construction of Peace:

- The option for the poor, as never before due to the current demanding realities since poor peoples, who have been excluded by the neoliberal system, equal more than 70% of the world's population.
- The backing of the peoples struggles and their alternative contribution, particularly of indigenous peoples, in defense of their land, their life experience and their own cultural identity and social autonomy;
- The promotion of authentic and reciprocal solidarity among peoples and religions.
- Committed participation to the different tasks necessary for Peace and Mediation.

In regards to these stances, religious traditions and churches have some contributions to make through joint effort:

a) Based on the option for the poor:

- Unceasingly denounce the inequity of neoliberalism as a total market, a system of exclusion, idolatry of profit and uncontrollable ecocide; as well as the increasing escalation of arms and repressing militarism and paramilitarism.
- Jointly denounce all agreements, programs or judgmental accusations against peoples together with the other voices that are arising in different parts of the world.
- Struggle permanently for the abolition of the External Debt and for the payment of Social Debts that have been accumulated against the life and dignity of our peoples.
- Reclaim the in-depth reform of multinational institutions and mechanisms that currently privilege interests based on logics of accumulation and exploitation; and also reclaim the reform of our States political, legal and social institutions.
- Support the processes for liberation and peace through effective solidarity and work against impunity and institutionalized violence that are growing in our world.
- Stimulate the co-responsible participation of people in politics and in the different manifestations of the popular and civic movements.

b) Based on mutual recognition of all religions and churches:

- Accept ourselves as complementary trustees of truth and sanctity, and based on the common traits of our Faith, take on the tasks of Justice and Peace as our own.

- Overcome wounds, errors and historical ambitions that harm fraternity as well as minor doctrinal disquisitions and ecumenicalism that are reduced to isolated intentions, discourses and gestures.
- Serve in a prophetic fashion in the construction of Justice, peace and the integrity of creation. We will only achieve justice if those of us who work for peace, sow peace.
- Foster macro-ecumenical dialogue with all religions, based on the faith in only one God and in one single human family, within the spirit of refuge and conversion that is both self-critical and critical of others, leading us to recognize God's presence and fraternity in all peoples, irregardless of his/her race, culture, language, color, political options or religious beliefs.
- Overcome the Catholic Church's attitudes of ethnocentrality and authoritarianism, the atomization of other religions and churches, and particularly confront the fundamentalist deviations that use religious elements as their basis for other logics and purposes.
- Recognize all men and women in equality and religious freedom, fostering the participation of adult lay people, and particularly women, in all the different ministries and decision-making positions of our churches.
- Encompass all liturgy, theology and pastoral work in the light of faith.
- Build religious and church communities where people envision themselves as God's people, living a faith-filled life through the Christian based communities that have creatively become part of social alternatives.
- Denounce and collaborate in eradicating the roots of violence that have been sprouted, not from religion, but from social injustices, political interests or ideological disputes.
- Give continuity and strength to the Parliament of World Religions process and the Interreligious Council of Peace process.

The power of Faith creates conditions for a new kind of solidarity and joint action among religious, social, and civic movements and alternatives in the North and the South. In this process, by promoting the human and social values that sustain Faith, all traditions, religions and churches can make a vital commitment to seeking Peace with Justice and Dignity.