

## **Swiss Embassy – CSP event 6 June 2012**

Your Excellency, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, dear friends,

On behalf of Initiatives of Change International, I must add my thanks to those expressed by Dick Ruffin, to the Swiss government for their continued support of our peace building initiatives in the Great Lakes, and for their sustained support for the Caux Forum for Human Security. I have also been asked by Cornelio Sommaruga, former head of the International Red Cross and the first President of Initiatives of Change International to thank you and your staff for hosting this event celebrating 20 years of the Caux Scholars Programme in Switzerland.

Although I have visited other cities in the United States of America, this is my first visit to Washington and it is a pleasure to be here and take part in this event. As I wandered around this magnificent city – I was inspired once again by the ideals of equality, dignity, respect and justice on which this country is based and also reminded of the huge sacrifices, at home and abroad, that have been made to continue to uphold these ideals. A reminder that, at both personal and national level, the ideals we believe in are always accompanied by sacrifice to ensure their continuance and durability.

Purely by chance, today coincides with my late father's birthday. Just over 60 years ago, my father's first posting as a young diplomat was as a member of the Egypt's UN delegation to New York. He was there when Egypt's independence revolution occurred in 1952. Last year during the "Arab Spring", a second revolution occurred when a fear barrier was broken and the ruling government changed. This was followed last autumn with parliamentary elections and two weeks ago the first round of presidential elections.

In the past, elections had largely predictable outcomes and rarely elicited widespread discussion. I have just spent a few weeks in Egypt during the lead up to the first stage of these presidential elections. Everywhere there were heated debates; the pros and cons of the serious contenders were widely discussed. No one could predict who the final two contenders would be. Egyptians do not normally wait in lines. It was amazing to witness the patient lines to register votes, people's pride in taking part and their realisation of the significance of their vote. The outside world may be more interested in the results, but the process is just as important as the outcome. These small fragile steps are important steps on a path that many hope will bring dignity, justice and equality to all Egyptians.

Whatever the final outcome in a few weeks time, I am still quietly optimistic – as my father would have been – about our future. We are a resilient, tolerant diverse people with a great sense of humour in adversity and pride in our long civilization and strategic history. People will hold the government to account and expect it to deliver the basic needs of security, equality, prosperity and development. "Big brother" might have been watching you in the past, but now it is the people who are watching the government.

However the system of government is not enough to guarantee the basic needs of people. For sustainable change, systems of good governance need to have at their heart men and women of moral integrity. The “good” in governance is about the value based, moral integrity that people embed in systems to enable them to meet the deepest needs of all people.

There is increasing recognition that civic, government and diplomatic processes are not enough for sustained development and peace. They need to be supplemented and strengthened by “track two diplomacy” and by individual peace building efforts. The interdependent world that we now live in means we are all world citizens. We have to be active participants: working more closely together to meet basic human needs, heal the wounds of the past, build lasting peace, encourage ethical leadership and ensure sustainable development.

Ever since I can remember I have felt called to be a doctor and more specifically a paediatrician. While this is a rewarding and satisfying career I have never felt that this was enough of a contribution to meet the pressing needs in the world. Like many others in this room and elsewhere, I have always felt equally called to a second vocation - to build bridges of understanding between people who are different. This is not an end in itself but a necessary step in enabling different people to work together to create pluralistic communities that join together on common tasks answering local needs and global concerns. It is this second vocation that has led me on an amazing adventure in many parts of the world in an effort to bring healing, wholeness and hope to an ailing world.

“Initiatives of Change” is a worldwide movement of people of diverse cultures and backgrounds, who are committed to the transformation of society through changes in human motives and behaviour, starting with their own. IofC focuses on the vital link between personal change and global change. Our approach is to encourage everyone to draw on inspiration from the resources of their own religious and philosophical traditions to live the change they want to see in society. Each person has something unique to contribute to building a just, peaceful and sustainable world. I believe that IofC’s greatest strength is people who start with themselves and take action locally but think globally.

“Initiatives of Change” is active in many areas. Two areas of focus, that are particularly important to underpin peace building efforts in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, are

- Building trust and reconciliation across national, religious, ethnic and cultural divides to enhance peace and social cohesion.
- Developing a culture of ethical leadership, decision making based on moral integrity and service necessary for good governance.

Our contribution in these areas is through individual and grass roots initiatives, training programmes and films like the “Imam and the Pastor” as well as through dialogues and conferences.

Last’s year’s Caux Forum for Human Security in Switzerland hosted a Mediterranean dialogue that included participants from newly emerging democracies in Tunisia, Egypt and Iraq who explored together and with others the human factors needed to underpin lasting changes.

This theme of good governance was continued at our International conference centre in India in January 2012 “Making democracy real - a dialogue”. At this conference participants from 32 countries, including large delegations from Egypt and South Sudan, continued to explore the foundations of democracy, how to put in place systems of good governance, heal divisions and create pluralistic communities at grass roots level and government level. “Good governance and ethical leadership” was also the theme of the recent Pan African conference in Cameroon which I attended in May and will continue to be addressed again at the Caux Forum for Human Security this year.

To be effective agents of change, trust builders and peacemakers requires personal transformation, deep listening skills and principled leadership. For this reason IofC has also focused on inspiring, equipping people with the skills and tools that enable them to fulfil their potential wherever they are and contribute to global social change. We have a track record of training programmes such as “Foundations for Freedom” in Eastern Europe which was started after the fall of the Berlin wall and now conducts visiting courses in Africa; “Harambee” training programme in Africa which has trained more than 135 young Africans in ethical leadership, “Asia Pacific Youth Conferences”, “Life Matters” courses in Australia, “School for Changemakers” in United Kingdom, and “ethical leadership” training courses in India to name but a few.

Today we are here to celebrate the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Caux Scholars Programme, which takes place in Switzerland. Conceived, co-ordinated and directed by Americans with a track record as changemakers - this programme is a course in conflict transformation for emerging leaders. It brings together students from around the world to learn about the moral and spiritual dimensions of peacemaking and about the relationships between individual transformation and change in the world. The course focuses on transitional justice and how to utilise the mind, heart, spiritual and cultural resources of communities to transform individuals and societies affected by violence.

Since 1991 when the CSP started, 368 students from over 88 countries have taken part in this programme. Many of these have gone on to play key peace building roles in their own communities at huge risk to their own lives. I know that we will hear more about the programme and some of its exceptional graduates shortly. I thought I would just recount my recent encounter with one of the Egyptian graduates of the CSP; he took part in the revolution last year and was imprisoned during the early days; he is now facilitating grass roots workshops on dialogue and citizenship between young people with very diverse views (Salafists, Muslim brothers, liberal and conservative Muslim women and others) to help the reconciliation and building work needed at this point – an encouraging seed of hope for the future of Egypt.

I would like to end by congratulating the Caux Scholars Programme on their remarkable track record in equipping a new generation of peace builders around the world. Long may this Swiss, American partnership continue to deliver the principled leaders needed to build trust, transform conflict and make sustainable peace become a reality in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. **Omnia Marzouk June 2012**