



Dear friends of Caux – Initiatives of Change,

The same old early hour, and its attendant mug of black coffee; the same old office, but with new colleagues; the same old view, but it keeps its power to amaze afresh. We start a new conference season, and I don't know the names of perhaps two thirds of the 270 people in the house! Another summer in Caux begins. It seems as if we've been here for ages already – and for several of us, that's not far from the truth, what with the preparation week and the outside let that took place (see the Extranet and World Bulletin) with Israelis and Palestinians. But we're only just coming to the point where all the planned work and changes – packed into in that narrow space of time after the end of the hotel school's year – are safely in place. Yesterday, the coffee machines in the new pantry were used for the first time. Tonight the Caux Round Table have their opening dinner, and tomorrow, for the first time, they use the splendid new meeting room on the third floor, over the kitchen. The arriving 'old hands' are struck afresh by the constant care lavished on this dear old house, and the steady flow of improvements.

The now-traditional official day on Saturday saw over 100 ambassadors and diplomats from Geneva and Bern local dignitaries, joining neighbours and the many young conference participants in the Great Hall. The Mayor of Montreux, who is also a Federal MP, and is now a real friend (he came and spoke last year), gave another welcoming speech. The spokesman of the Geneva Mosque and a representative of the Vaud Protestant Church Synod were among the guests. There was a very real sense that many who first came as part of their official duties, or out of curiosity – to see what their friend Cornelio Sommaruga had got himself into – are now coming back out of interest for the ideas of Caux, and as friends. Amina Dikedi from Nigeria hosted the day with grace and talent, and an impressive team piled in to help with the thousand details under the efficient generalship of Clementine Lue, a young Jamaican.

Cornelio Sommaruga, the president of Foundation *Caux – Initiatives of Change*, welcoming the guests, quoted from a letter that he'd received from UN Secretary General Kofi Annan in response to the report of the Muslim dialogue held in Caux last year. 'Nothing is more important than keeping the lines of communication open,' Annan had said. Sommaruga continued, 'No single nation – no matter how strong or rich – can act alone as policeman or do-gooder for the whole world. Multilateral international cooperation must be promoted through globalizing responsibility, without neglecting the spiritual values that our societies need.'

After tea, many went in to the theatre for the summer's first Caux Lecture, by Juan Somavia, the Director General of the *International Labour Organization* in Geneva. The Chilean condemned the 'win at all costs mentality', with TV screens constantly up-dating us on the latest share prices. There were other figures, he believed, that it would be more profitable for us to be constantly reminded of: 'the more than one billion unemployed, under-employed or working poor; the half of humanity struggling to survive on less than \$2 a day'. He warned that the North and the South, rich and poor shared a growing sense of insecurity.

Somavia hailed 'the transforming power of dialogue', and called for 'decent work' to be placed at the heart of the social agenda. Work was not a commodity like any other, since it directly involved the lives of human beings, he said. Many, he claimed, say 'Yes to a market economy, but no to a market society.' There was often talk of new values to confront new situations, he noted, 'But I am convinced on the contrary that the spiritual values of different traditions and cultures have given us a sound basis on which to build better societies: the dignity of the human being, the sanctity of our earth, the need for social justice, the sense of caring and solidarity' he said. 'Values don't need to be re-invented. They need to be applied!'

The tall, bearded and warm-hearted Latin American concluded, 'Caux holds a special place in my heart. Caux is about hope and healing. It is about generating ideas, forging networks, strengthening moral foundations. It is about values and practical action.' He joked that after reading the conference programme, he'd been tempted to spend his entire summer in Caux. Also in the audience was his predecessor as Director General of the ILO, Francis Blanchard, an old friend of Caux.

Then after supper, where the guests mixed in an unplanned manner with conference participants in the dining room (with its new tables and chairs!), we all went up again to the Great Hall for a concert in the bay window, looking out over the lake. It is the seventh year that the Fitzwilliam String Quartet, a top-flight group of professional musicians, have played in Caux.



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'From conflict to community in the global home' is the overall theme of the conference program, and as I read it again, I am struck by how we have been lead, through the planning last year, to themes that are of growing relevance, despite unforeseen events in the world. The current conference is on the theme 'Partnerships in Service, Responsibility and Leadership'. It has been prepared and organized mainly by young professionals from the countries of Eastern and Central Europe, and largely by e-mail. What an excellent group of people they are! I must be getting on in years, since so many seem so young! But they're not high-school students, most have recently graduated, are becoming lawyers, have studied international relations, speak excellent foreign languages, and they make me think of that other generation who started the work of Caux in 1946. There have been presentations and exchanges between NGOs promoting democratic values and social cohesion in East and West. Several participants, on top of an already full programme, are stealing further hours every day for a 'Young Politicians Forum' for the second consecutive year.

This first conference has been marked by two additional large groups of young people. For the second year, a former Swiss politician who has set up an NGO for youth training *Youth Exchanges for Peace*, and for the second year running brought a group of 30 from Afghanistan, Iraq, Bosnia, Croatia, Serbia, USA. After a presentation of the film made for last year's 100 years of the Caux-Palace, and questions and answers on the house and its spirit, I talked long and deeply with two young people from a crisis region who wanted to know how can you forgive those you hate. And a professor from Monterrey in Mexico likewise brought a group of 30 students on a European study trip. Both groups really lived in to the spirit of the conference, and participated. Our breakfast team has found it hard to recover from their departure! Some of them, when they discovered they were expected to help in the life of the house, had wanted to leave. The professor said they all come from privileged families, and the idea of working was a real shock, but there had been a miracle, and they all stayed, and enjoyed it.

Then there's a rather amazing network linking Canadians, at the initiative of a Zimbabwean, now living in Canada and working as a civil servant, with the Russian Association of Indigenous Peoples. We had a high-tech presentation, with pictures, music, maps and highly coloured traditional costumes that transported us into the problems of these 200,000 people scattered across thousands of miles. Nineteen of their tribal groups have fewer than 2,000 people. One of them said of the way that Mountain House is run, 'I like this very much. This kind of community is how our societies work – we share responsibility.'

Another of the many improvements has been the first public 'performance' of the new 'Power Point' presentation of IC, product of intense international teamwork over many months. This is available for each incoming group and the start of conferences, to clearly present the core ideas of the house and *Initiatives of Change*.

For those who like the weather reports, we've enjoyed – if that's the right word – the hottest and driest month of June on record, with the lake hotter than the sea in Thailand. I can never recall seeing all the fields round our home near Geneva harvested before the end of the month. In Caux, the fabulous roses and other flowers are about a month ahead of their usual development – allowing for even more than usually splendid flower arrangements. Then just before our start on Wednesday of last week, we had the longed-for rain, and temperatures dropped. Now it's just perfect – cool and sunny, but getting hotter by the day again, and many eating outside on the terrace.

This year's 'open day' is planned for August, and it has been announced again in the local paper, along with the list of Caux Lectures and three concerts. The sheet has also gone to every home in the area. The latest issue of the monthly paper produced by the Protestant Church in the Canton of Vaud, and which goes to every home, also carried news of Caux for the second time this year (in the Spring, they carried a cover photo of Mr. Sommaruga, and an interview).

The first press release went up last night on the new-look Caux Web site, and I want to encourage all of you who can to develop the reflexes of finding for yourselves the latest news through these media and the splendid new international Web site.

Sunny greetings from this amazing place, as we start the 57th series of summer conferences – I've been saying 'over fifty years' for some time, and I now realize that we're closer to the 60 mark!

Andrew Stallybrass