

Opening Address by Piero Bassetti, President Globus et Locus

I would like to welcome and thank all our distinguished participants who have rallied to this invitation from all over the world. My thanks to the Compagnia di San Paolo who helped most concretely to organize the occasion, as well as providing this splendid setting.

May I go over the thinking behind this workshop and our invitation to it? You will have received the introductory folder which describes two broad reasons for the venture taking off today.

The first is the presence here of three in different ways significant institutions of training and learning: the United Nation System Staff College (UNSSC), the training centre for higher echelon of UN system staff, formerly as a project under the auspices of the ILO, since 2001 established as a permanent institution of the System by the General Assembly of the UN; the Training Center of the ILO, present on the campus we shall visit tomorrow since the early Sixties; UNICRI, formerly in Rome, with the task of research and, more recently, training in the field of international criminology. These institutions have, in various ways, been supported by various local bodies: our hosts again, the Compagnia di San Paolo, other foundations, Globus et Locus - the association of which I am President - with a specific project concerning the UNSSC, local authorities and functional associations, as well as the Italian and other governments.

The spirit driving us, I hasten to add has been not only in strengthening the local Turin reality in the international context, but above all a sensitivity to global themes, the need for a new global governance and, precisely in *that* connection, the issue and process of reforming the United Nations.

Something of that sensitivity is due to the local cultural matrix: northern Italy and Turin where we are today. Turin began as capital of its own little state, then became capital of a unified Italy, and eventually, on losing the role of capital, turned into a large manufacturing town. Each time it has learnt to transform and transcend the experience of the moment. I can't help feeling that is precisely what nation states should be capable of doing today as regards the new global institutions on which the world's brighter future depends.

The second reason for today's nascent adventure is the awareness that globalization has irremediably shaken the international system as we knew it, and that the only effective response to such a crisis lies in the prospect of multilateral, global governance centring on the United Nations.

That is the background to our specific interest in the process of reforming the United Nations and, in particular, its training system. For these two reasons we have seen fit, from outside the UN system, to try and generate some wide-ranging group discussion on the themes of global governance and UN reform.

As far as possible, such thinking should foster a shared UN value system - in Italian we would say a "*cultura di riferimento*" - and common corporate culture,

Kofi Annan's basic aspiration for the Staff College and for the System as a whole.

To promote such a culture we felt it imperative to tap not only the local human and intellectual resources of Turin and northern Italy, but also a broader global network of scholars and leading authorities. Given the complexity of the issues, such a network should be **interdisciplinary** above all – with experts from a range of different backgrounds: top-ranking officials from international institutions, politicians, diplomats, historians, economists, jurists, political commentators, and so on. Secondly we judged it should be **multicultural**, representing diverse major cultural contexts, and so to some extent speaking for the complex viewpoints and sensibilities of world civilization.

Such a thought process has brought us together at this first meeting, day one of our two-day workshop.

What are the goals of the workshop?

- Above all, to get concrete feedback from this first nucleus of eminent names as to whether a common shared perception of the problems exists: I mean in particular, relations within globalization (*glocalization*, we have come to call it), processes of world governance, and reforming the United Nations System.
- Second, to thrash out some tentative pathways and methods for future work by the network. This could lead to other potential interlocutors being named (scholars, research centres, etc.) for inclusion in a growing network.
- Lastly, to exchange and develop ideas on the first “contents”: world governance and reforming the UN system. This will naturally include points on training the system's top-ranking staff.

From this general statement of aims, we thought it best to lead off with thoughts on the relationship existing between the institutional framework we are now in – ineffectual, inadequate world governance – and the main collective issues currently facing the world.

Issues like: transnational terrorism, civil war and inter-state war, economic, monetary and financial chaos (the Euron and Parmalat scandals are cases in point), famine and underdevelopment, humanitarian catastrophes, environmental disasters, epidemics like AIDS and SARS. Such issues, of course, are publicly lamented at all multilateral meetings. Often the problems lead to a statement of goals to be attained: take the Millenium Declaration, unanimously supported by a summit of 189 heads of state and government at the United Nations in September 2000. All too often though, we find the statement of goals has not been accompanied by any real awareness that failure to solve problems is essentially bound up with the institutional and political framework they are placed in, in this case meaning the lack of any effective system of global governance. Failing this – and whatever the efforts of international organizations, civil society and States themselves – the goals are not achieved or feebly so.

In point of fact, the world community seems growing more and more impotent to deal with the new problems facing it, that know no frontiers. The traditional protagonists on the world scene these last few centuries have been nation-states. They are now increasingly unable – alone or in coalition – to tackle

problems like terrorism, migration or environmental catastrophe. Such problems straddle frontiers beyond anyone's proper field of intervention or competence. The result is that states get weakened on the home front as well. Within their own confines they seem less and less able to ensure citizens get the basic collective goods – security, health, jobs and so on – yet that has always been their source of authority and legitimation.

Signs of such weakening, mind you, are visible even in the mightiest states, including the last great “empire” to survive the Cold War, America. In the face of major dramas, even they fail to govern or cope: war and chaos (as in Iraq of late, or the hoary Israel-Palestine conundrum); transnational terrorism (in the wake of “9/11”); the great migrations that no wall or curtain can stop; disasters to the environment, past or forecast (from Chernobyl to desertification in Africa, or the next decade's planet-wide catastrophe scenarios leaked by the international press from a Pentagon confidential report). The international institutions (the UN first and foremost) often have their hands tied by weakness in decision-taking or shortage of resources (money, men, logistics). National states are anyway reluctant to hand over greater resources and powers of decision to the international organizations. They fear they will be weakened and lose any independent “say”. For all its extraordinary theoretical potential, our current globalized hypertechnological world is showing signs of increasing inability to decide or act over the great collective issues.

The long and short of it is: nation states are no longer properly *able* to decide or act; the international organizations haven't become empowered *yet*.

And so the time is ripe, we felt, to launch a different intellectual process, not confined to the role of states or state agencies in the traditional internationalistic view of things. In short, an attempt at *lateral thinking*.

On the general topic of world governance we would thus propose some new viewpoints for analysis and discussion in today's meeting. Needless to say, we have no monopoly on good ideas in a debate which is very much alive in various parts of the UN and outside. On the contrary, we need to know how other parts of the world are thinking, in set-ups similar to ours.

The viewpoints or approaches we offer for debate are as follows:

1. A **glocal** approach, involving the relations between *globe* and *loci*, analyzed together. In a globalized world, every *locus* (in a physico-territorial, but also virtual sense) stands as a local node in a global network. The world is bound by a thick web of transnational connections. In its various *loci* the great unsolved problems stare us dramatically in the face: hunger, war, disease, violation of human rights, and so forth. It is in its *loci*, and via its many functional agencies and other organizations, that a global system like the United Nations meets the challenge of these problems, working day by day to find a solution.
2. A **bottom up** approach, which follows necessarily on the glocal. The issues of global governance and UN reform, in our particular case, should be seen not only and not so much from the *top down* (i.e. from the tip of the

institutional pyramid, starting with reform of the Security Council) but also and above all from the *bottom up*, which is to say from the angle of civil society and the world's far-flung *loci*: the place where the problems crop up and need a concrete response.

3. A **functional** approach, interconnecting with the *glocal* and *bottom up* viewpoints. The functional approach within a globalized world spotlights the decisive new role being played by functional actors and institutions, who take their identity not from territory (which pertains to states) but from the function performed. The transnational agencies range from universities and research centres, to multinational companies, business organizations, the new figures and movements in global civil society, the *ngo*'s and so on. Secondly, - and more to do with our topic of UN reform - this approach focuses directly on the many different functions performed by the UN throughout the world: ensuring order and security, economic and more generally "human" development, championing people's rights, fighting famine and hunger, safeguarding health and the environment, and much more. Such functions tackle man's major problems and strive to ensure the great blessings of mankind - peace, development, health, etc. - that no single nation now seems able to guarantee across our planet. Our belief - which we wish to discuss with you now - is that by performing just such tasks in many corners of the world with growing intensity and effectiveness, the UN stands to gain legitimation in the eyes of civil nations and nascent global society, together with acknowledgment as the central hub in a multilateral system of world governance.

So let us first discuss, and hear from you, if this multiple approach - *glocal*, *bottom up*, *functional* - is something we can share and usefully practise in future. By it I do feel we are positively connected to the general framework of research and brainstorming advocated in recent years by Secretary General Kofi Annan and the network of UN organizations and agencies, to probe the themes of multilateral global governance and UN reform.

Some outstanding examples here might be: the *Global Compact* scheme launched in July 2000 appealing to the giant business world. Then the High-level Panel set up by Kofi Annan in February 2003 with Brazilian ex-president Fernando Henrique Cardoso in the chair - a think tank on relations between the UN and civil society. And then again, the *World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization* set up by the ILO (International Labour Organization) in February 2002, whose concluding Report came out a week or so back. And lastly, the Secretary General's creation last November of a High-level Panel chaired by Thailand's ex-premier Anand Panyarachun, to explore topics of international security (in the broadest sense: including social and economic issues affecting peace and people's safety) and to come up with proposals.

This range of UN projects, inspired by the Millenium Declaration, is something we can whole-heartedly flank and support, confident that our own approach will supplement the UN work in progress.

We all know that the Millenium Declaration stated eight great targets that the international community is united in pursuing: from defeating hunger and dire

poverty, to tackling the great epidemics and ensuring a sustainable environment. Eight universal planet-wide values which the United Nations pledges itself to implement in the name of the signatory states, by concrete daily effort throughout the globe.

To sum up: we propose today to get straight down to debating certain fundamental issues, following on from these remarks of mine. The questions are:

1. Is there any realistic, generally acceptable prospect of contributing to the reform the UN towards better world governance beginning **from the bottom, from concrete problems**, from the functions and roles performed by the UN system's many organizations and agencies?
2. Can the United Nations legitimate and strengthen itself in this way? Legitimation and carving a role via functions, therefore, and by an ever more active share in achieving the collective goals (of security, development, health etc.) that States traditionally attend to but are now floundering to ensure on their own. Can this mechanism work?
3. Will accomplishing these tasks – some of them handed over to the UN by member states, others gained “in the field” by various functional agencies – involve a change in the power system, towards a new planet-wide governance?
4. Lastly, can we devise a pathway by which to integrate such a “bottom up” approach to UN reforms into the training model of the Organization?

I propose that we debate these issues and then, if you agree, work out together how to proceed. One first step is surely to gather the essential points and conclusions from the discussion on these two days and circulate them to participants.

This will form a common basis for the international network of intellectual *loci* that we are seeking to install. It must be an **open** network, finding future opportunities to meet again and compare cultures. Its task – with your approval – will be producing and exchanging ideas and “materials” to add to the debate on global governance, the reform process already in progress in the UN, and the training of its top echelons.

We shall need to use a large number of instruments, and the Web will certainly be an essential one. You know that we have already taken steps in this direction, placing the website of *Globus et Locus* at the workshop's disposal. The site may also prove useful to us in future.

And now let's get down to workshop business. Thank you.