



## SUMMARY REPORT OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT, PEACE, AND THE DIALOGUE AMONG CIVILIZATIONS AND CULTURES: 9-10 MAY 2005

The International Conference on “Environment, Peace, and the Dialogue among Civilizations and Cultures” (Tehran Conference) convened at the Pardisan Eco Park and the Azadi Grand Hotel in Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran, from 9-10 May 2005. It was organized by the Iranian Department of Environment and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and co-sponsored by the United Nations University (UNU) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

Over 70 participants from more than 30 countries participated, including several ministers and other high-level representatives. The purpose of the Conference was to examine the interaction between environment, peace and security in the context of multilateral cultural dialogue among civilizations and discuss the need for multilateralism and meaningful dialogue. The Conference sought to underpin the imperative of multilateralism and meaningful dialogue among civilizations as a means for joint action against dehumanizing poverty, violence, increasing reliance on military might and continued erosion of the democratic practice, both at national and international levels.

The Conference included an introductory session on progress on environment and peace issues and an overview of the nexus between environment, peace and the dialogue among civilizations, cultures and peoples. A special high-level interactive ministerial roundtable was held during the afternoon of Monday, 9 May on the rationale for the Conference, and working sessions were held on Monday and Tuesday focusing on issues surrounding environment and conflict, environment and human security, and dialogue. An interactive discussion on conclusions from the Conference was held on Tuesday afternoon. The outcomes of the Conference, including the Tehran Communiqué, will be forwarded to the 5-Year Review of the outcome of the Millennium Summit, scheduled for 14-16 September 2005 in New York.

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE “DIALOGUE AMONG CIVILIZATIONS” AND MILLENNIUM REVIEW PROCESS

On 21 September 1998 at the 53<sup>rd</sup> session of the UN General Assembly, Iranian President Seyed Mohammad Khatami called for institutionalizing dialogue and “replacing hostility and confrontation with discourse and understanding.” In particular, Khatami invited the international community to broaden and encourage dialogue among civilizations on the environment, peace and security. The thrust of the initiative was an appeal to human understanding that genuine dialogue on a global scale, involving all stakeholders, offers the only practical way to ensure meaningful and effective international cooperation.

On 4 November 1998, the General Assembly adopted Resolution 53/22, proclaiming 2001 as the UN Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. It called on governments and the UN to plan and implement cultural, educational and social programmes to promote the concept of dialogue among civilizations, including through conferences and seminars and disseminating information. In the lead up to, and during, the UN Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, several international events and

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meetings were held, including the International Conference on Dialogue among Civilizations, held in Vilnius, Lithuania from 23-26 April 2001 and the International Conference on Dialogue of Civilizations, held in Tokyo and Kyoto, Japan from 31 July-3 August 2001.

An international seminar on Environment, Religion and Culture was held in Tehran from 18-20 June 2001. The seminar adopted the Tehran Declaration on Environment, Religion and Culture, committing participants, among other things, to promote education on the environmental content of religion and to promote environmentally responsible behavior.

The International Conference on the Dialogue among Civilizations, Cultures and Peoples convened at UNESCO headquarters in Paris on 5 April 2005. At this meeting, Khatami urged open dialogue among civilizations as a necessary condition to improve international relations and development and called for the establishment of a Global Forum for the Promotion of Dialogue among Civilizations and Cultures.

**MEETINGS AND REPORTS RELATING TO THE MILLENNIUM REVIEW:** The UN Millennium Summit convened from 6-8 September 2000 in New York. At the Summit, world leaders agreed on a far-reaching plan to support global development objectives for the new century, and reaffirmed their commitment to work toward a peaceful and secure world in which sustainable development and poverty eradication would have the highest priority. The Millennium Declaration, agreed to at the Summit, outlines responses to these challenges, and establishes measures for judging performance through a set of interrelated commitments, goals and targets on development, governance, peace, security and human rights. The Declaration addresses issues relating to: fundamental values and principles; peace, security and disarmament; development and poverty eradication; the protection of the environment; human rights, democracy and good governance; the needs of the most vulnerable; the special needs of Africa; and strengthening the UN. In the Declaration, governments also agreed to time-bound commitments to, among other things, reduce poverty, hunger, child mortality and the spread of HIV/AIDS, improve maternal health, and increase primary education. These commitments formed the basis of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) was held from 26 August to 4 September 2002 in Johannesburg, South Africa. The WSSD adopted two main documents: the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI). The JPOI notes that peace, security, stability and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to development, as well as respect for cultural diversity, are essential for achieving sustainable development. The JPOI contains time-bound targets for the implementation of sustainable development in the following areas: basic sanitation; chemicals; integrated water

resources management; oceans and fish stocks; alternatives to ozone-depleting substances; reduction in the current rate of loss of biological diversity; small island developing states; food security in Africa; and energy access in Africa.

On 1 December 2004, the UN Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change presented its report, entitled "A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility." The report contains 101 recommendations addressing a range of issues identified by the Panel as being the greatest threats to worldwide security in the twenty-first century: continued poverty and environmental degradation, terrorism, civil war, conflict between States, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and organized crime. The report also makes recommendations regarding UN reform.

Presented to the UN Secretary-General on 17 January 2005, the report of the UN Millennium Project entitled "Investing in Development: A Practical Plan to Achieving the Millennium Development Goals" underscores the importance of the MDGs, tracks their implementation, and considers various means of supporting their achievement, including through public investment, civil society participation, and private sector contribution. The report outlines ten main recommendations for scaling-up action to meet the MDGs and also identifies the special needs of Africa, highlights strategies for countries affected by conflict, and discusses the need to revamp development aid, calling for targeted investments to address various challenges.

On 21 March 2005, the UN Secretary-General released his report "In Larger Freedom," containing a package of recommendations for action in the areas of development, security, human rights and UN reform. Regarding development, the Secretary-General sets out proposals for developing countries to adopt national strategies to meet the MDGs and urges countries to increase official development assistance levels, redefine debt sustainability levels, make efforts to further liberalize international trade, and ensure environmental sustainability. Regarding security, he urges states to prevent terrorism, halt the proliferation of weapons and reduce nuclear arsenals, and to reduce the risk and prevalence of war, including through the creation of an intergovernmental Peacebuilding Commission. Regarding human rights, he urges strengthening the rule of law, improving the protection of human rights, and facilitating democracy building. On UN reform, the Secretary-General proposes rationalizing the UN General Assembly's work, making the Security Council more representative, having ECOSOC act as a high-level development cooperation forum and institutionalize its work in post-conflict management, create a Human Rights Council, strengthen the UN Secretariat, and improve the coherence of the UN system, including through a more integrated structure for environmental standard-setting, scientific discussion and monitoring treaty compliance.

## REPORT OF THE CONFERENCE

The International Conference on “Environment, Peace, and the Dialogue among Civilizations and Cultures” opened on Monday, 9 May 2005 at the Pardisan Eco Park in Tehran. The Chair of the Conference, Massoumeh Ebtekar, Iranian Vice-President and Head of the Department of the Environment, opened the meeting, emphasizing the need for dialogue, peace and understanding to achieve global peace and sustainable development. She stressed that the world is at a sensitive juncture, noting that political and environmental instability have led to many wars in the past few decades. She said dialogue opens new doors to international cooperation and decision-making, which is not dependent on diplomacy or military action.

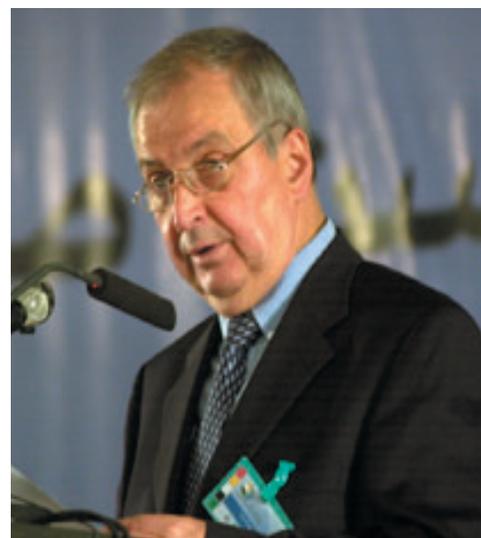
Klaus Töpfer, UNEP Executive Director, delivered a message from UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan welcoming the Conference’s work. In his message, Annan said people share a common humanity and a common dependence on the environment, and emphasized that people need a clean environment to build a world of peace, freedom and dignity. He stressed that efforts to promote security, development and human rights and to pursue sustainable development will be in vain if environmental degradation and natural resource depletion continues unabated. Referring to the March 2005 Millennium Ecosystem Assessment report, he stated that almost all ecosystems are in decline and that this presents enormous obstacles to achieving the MDGs. He emphasized that states must work together and that, although environmental degradation can produce flash points for conflict, it can also catalyze cooperation, reconciliation, mutual understanding and peace. He underlined the value of the Conference’s contribution to the Millennium review process.



Seyed Mohammad Khatami, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran

Töpfer also gave remarks on behalf of UNEP, stressing that dialogue and understanding are keys to tolerance. He stressed the need for common security through peace, environment, social justice and sustainable development and said sustainable development policy is akin to a peace policy for the future. He underlined the

urgency of taking action to achieve the MDGs. Töpfer also emphasized that the world needs cultural diversity to stabilize the effects of globalization. He said the topics for discussion at the Conference are difficult ones, but that answers must be found. He urged that conferences on these topics



Klaus Töpfer, UNEP Executive Director

continue and said the outcomes of the meeting must be forwarded to the UN high-level event in September at the commencement of the 60<sup>th</sup> session of the UN General Assembly.

Seyed Mohammad Khatami, President of Iran, stressed the potential for international environmental cooperation to increase peace, stability and friendship, and linked environmental degradation to the expansion of poverty, injustice and insecurity. Khatami noted that wars waged in Bosnia, Kosovo, Palestine, Afghanistan and Iraq have inflicted horrible damage to drinking water, health and the environment. He said that now, more than ever, humanity needs a mutual understanding based on intellectual reflection to create a culture of peace and cooperation and a healthy environment for future generations. He underlined that the dialogue of cultures and civilizations can lay the foundations for this and hoped the Conference would provide an opportunity to evaluate the environmental effects of conflict. Khatami emphasized the need for military and economic power to give way to dialogue on a level playing field. Khatami lamented the broken promises of poverty reduction and environmental protection and the “unilateral and willful actions of a number of powers,” which he said have made nations distrustful of international governance. He stressed that building trust would require a process of dialogue and understanding and that cooperation to ensure a good future for humanity is needed, but that it cannot be attained within existing frameworks. Khatami said a new UN structure should aim at peace, security, sustainable development and the realization of freedom and democracy and the protection of human dignity. He urged that restructuring should be based on international consensus and a democratic process taking into account the rights and views of developing countries.

Following these opening remarks, participants proceeded to convene in a roundtable and working sessions to discuss issues



surrounding environment and conflict, environment and human security, and dialogue. The following summary reviews the proceedings in chronological order.

### **INTRODUCTORY SESSION**

After a brief organizational session chaired by Conference Chair Ebtekar, Ambassador Wafik Kamil, Asian-African Legal



Massoumeh Ebtekar, Iranian Vice-President and Head of the Department of the Environment

Consultative Organization, chaired the introductory session of the Conference, which focused on the problematique of the issue of environment, peace and dialogue among civilizations and cultures. Oliver Brown, International Institute for

Sustainable Development (IISD), described progress on environment and peace issues since the 1972 Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment. He said three perspectives have been prominent in the analysis of the relationship between environment and security: conflicts arise over competition for scarce resources; environmental conflict is linked to a society's transition from a subsistence economy to a market economy; and violence in many developing countries occurs when different groups attempt to gain control of abundant resources. He noted the many complex connections between environmental change and human security and underlined that, by addressing environmental concerns, opportunities for dialogue and for strengthening mutual understanding are created.

Hans D'Orville, UNESCO, said dialogue lies at the core of the UN's mandate. He stated that in a complex, multifaceted global community, no single civilization can assume sole responsibility for humanity nor exclusively define how to be a human being. Given this diversity, he said a common understanding of universal values such as human rights and democratic practices has been a major achievement. He urged the international community to deepen understanding of shared values and concepts, to reduce divisiveness, and to help tackle prejudice, ignorance and intolerance. In particular, he emphasized the importance of interfaith dialogue. D'Orville also reported on regional and subregional efforts that have driven UNESCO's work, including a series of summits in the Balkans to promote peace through dialogue. He stressed the need for the participation of civil society and the importance of freedom of expression for genuine dialogue.

During the subsequent discussion, participants raised questions on the role of faith groups in the UN system, the perception of "civilizations" as those that leave a permanent environmental impact, the role of athletes in peace and dialogue, the definition of conflict and security, the root causes of conflicts, the environmental and health effects of depleted uranium in Iraq, and funding for UNESCO.

### **SPECIAL HIGH-LEVEL INTERACTIVE MINISTERIAL ROUNDTABLE: "WHY THE TEHRAN CONFERENCE: THE WAY FORWARD"**

Philippe Roch, State Secretary of Switzerland's Agency for the Environment, Forests and Landscape, chaired this session on Monday afternoon. He said the environment is the basis for all cultures, and said the principles of dialogue, respect and harmony should be fundamental aspects of globalization.

Conference Chair Ebtekar noted Iran's long history of dialogue between cultures, and respect for diversity and the environment. She suggested that existing mechanisms to govern conflict should be revisited and strengthened to include environmental protection. She stressed the advantages of a "dialogue mentality" over an adversarial "diplomatic mentality" and said this should be integrated into a new environmental institutional order.

Töpfer said bringing people of different faiths together was an end in itself, and had been achieved with this Conference. He said spiritual and cultural values should inform the choice of national indicators and questioned the universal utility of GDP as an overarching national goal, referring to China's "green GNP" and Bhutan's "gross national happiness" as alternatives.

Participants then engaged in an extended high-level discussion on these issues. Several participants stressed the complexity of the links between the environment and peace, and said assessments and solutions should be holistic and address social, cultural, economic and political dimensions. Some participants said this should inform plans for restructuring international institutions. One participant noted the weakness of many central governments' domestic positions and their consequent inability to implement the commitments that they make internationally, suggesting that institutional reform should take this into account by including the voices of civil society and regional or local governments.



Left to right: Vice-President and Conference Chair Massoumeh Ebtekar, Adnan Amin, UNEP, Panel Chair Phillippe Roch, State Secretary, Swiss Agency for the Environment, Forests and Landscapes, and Klaus Töpfer, UNEP Executive Director



Emma Nicholson, Member of the European Parliament and Mohiaddin Mesbahi, Florida International University

Many speakers stressed the need to integrate spiritual beliefs and values into international dialogue and to emphasize shared values. Others urged a stronger ethical commitment to environmental protection during war. One participant said there is a need to form one “planetary civilization,” while another suggested that the use of the term “civilization” implies a hierarchy of cultural development.

Other participants noted the limited utility of legal instruments, asked what might be an ethical level of consumption, and stressed that the by-products of war, such as depleted uranium, mean today’s conflicts affect future generations. Some participants lamented the loss of momentum since the 1992 Earth Summit and the domination of security issues on the global agenda.

### **WORKING SESSIONS**

Over the course of the two-day meeting, participants met in seven parallel working sessions, focusing on: environment and conflict, the impact of the Second Persian Gulf War (1990-1991) on the marine environment, protection of the environment and international law, environment and human security, dialogue among civilizations, peace and conflict prevention, and the meaning and implications of dialogue.

**ENVIRONMENT AND CONFLICT:** Anthony Hill, The Policy Advisory Group, chaired this session on Monday afternoon. Emma Nicholson, Member of the European Parliament, described the impacts of armed conflict on the Marsh people of southern Iraq, emphasizing that opportunities for dialogue were not taken to prevent the forced destruction of the Mesopotamian Marshlands ecosystem and the livelihoods of local peoples. She said such actions demand a response beyond the borders of the nations where they take place, noting that in the case of the Mesopotamian Marshlands, information upon which action could have been taken was available. Nicholson stressed that a forum for international dialogue, as proposed by President Khatami at a recent UNESCO meeting, could promote international stability.

Mohiaddin Mesbahi, Florida International University, emphasized that unless an issue gets into a state’s establishment

and becomes a threat to national security, nothing will usually be done to address it. Mesbahi stressed that civilizations must determine their own positions before dialogue between civilizations begins. To prioritize environmental issues, he said science needs to be depoliticized and normative positions on the environment need to be developed. He underlined that the environment must be seen as an active agent rather than an end for human activity.

Nils Petter Gleditsch, International Peace Research Institute Oslo, discussed the linkages between resources, the environment and conflict. He described the neo-Malthusian view of resource scarcity, which states that population pressure and high resource consumption lead to resource depletion, scarcity, competition and armed conflicts. He then outlined methodological, economic, political, and demographic-related objections to this view, based on the idea that there is no inherent scarcity of resources and also the idea that conflict arises from resource abundance rather than resource scarcity. He concluded that policy measures must be developed democratically.

Participants raised questions regarding the impacts of upstream water uses in Turkey, the role of democracy in reducing international conflict, the role of the UN in avoiding war and/or maintaining peace, public engagement on environment issues, and human innovation to address environmental threats.

### **IMPACT OF SECOND PERSIAN GULF WAR**

**(1990-91) ON THE MARINE ENVIRONMENT:** This session was chaired by Mohammad Saeid-Hosseini, Iranian Department of the Environment, on Monday afternoon. Parvin Farschi, Iranian Department of Environment, outlined the claim for environmental damages sought by Iran from Iraq through the UN Compensation Commission (UNCC) following the 1990-1991 Persian Gulf conflict. She said that, because of ongoing instability in Iraq, the claim has still not been settled and therefore rehabilitation has not occurred. Farschi said that after the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq, millions of barrels of oil were spilled in the Gulf, although she also noted that even during times of peace, the sensitive coastal habitats of the Persian Gulf suffer from oil spills from tankers, ballast water dumping and harmful offshore activities.

Farschi explained that the oil spills and soot fallout have destroyed coral reefs, waterfowl habitat and food sources. She highlighted the difficulties involved with measuring environmental damage associated with the conflict, including a lack of pre-war data, the time that has elapsed, and the lack of access to the majority of the potentially impacted coast areas.



Parvin Farschi, Iranian Department of Environment



Afshin Daneh-kar, Iranian Department of the Environment, outlined the importance of mangroves within the Gulf's ecosystems and the dramatic losses in Iranian mangroves from 1990-2001, as shown by studies using remote sensing and sediment sampling. He said a significant amount of these losses could be attributed to the Gulf conflict of 1990-1991, when oil, smoke and soot were released and war conditions prevented rehabilitation.

Hayder Mohammed Abdul-Hameed, University of Baghdad, outlined the environmental and health effects of weapons used during the 2003 Iraq conflict. He stressed that dust carrying depleted uranium has had extensive impacts across the region, and linked depleted uranium to the Iraqi population's dramatic rise in infertility, miscarriages and unusual diseases such as leukemia, skin cancers and respiratory diseases. He said tanks used during the war removed the desert's top cluster layer of sand, causing sand storms even in Baghdad, and said warships in the Persian Gulf changed the temperature and pH-level of the water, forcing fish to migrate. He also highlighted issues regarding soil and waterway contamination.

Omid Sedighi, Iranian Department of the Environment, stated that coral reef coverage in the Persian Gulf decreased from 1990 to 2001. He attributed the losses to oil pollution, including during wartime, rural and urban effluent, industrial waste, pesticides, tourism and over-fishing.

During the session, participants discussed: giving the environment the status of a "protected person" and making injury a war crime; the reliability of statistics; the ability of the Iraqi Government to confront the West about damages to its environment; and political constraints on research into the effects of depleted uranium.

**PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND INTERNATIONAL LAW:** This session was chaired on Monday afternoon by Geoffrey Dabelko, Woodrow Wilson International



Barbara Janusz, German Institute for International and Security Affairs

Center for Scholars. Focusing on the Caspian Sea, Barbara Janusz, German Institute for International and Security Affairs, discussed progress in dialogue on environmental issues as a means of cooperating and preventing regional conflicts. She said recent work in the Caspian region has strengthened local and regional cooperation and improved civil society inputs into

government decision-making. She suggested that dialogue might improve the adoption of international legal standards in the region and strengthen the rule of law. Janusz stressed that current legal principles are no longer sufficient to deal with new environmental, political and economic problems and that more regional legal instruments are needed.

Pekka Haavisto, UNEP, discussed his organization's work on conflict, environmental destruction and post-conflict situations. He outlined direct and indirect wartime causes of environmental degradation and reviewed the UNEP Post-Conflict Unit's work preparing assessments in the Balkans, Afghanistan, Palestine, Iraq and Liberia. He described how each assessment is unique and stressed the frequent need to take a transboundary approach to the assessments. Haavisto underscored that environmental diplomacy can be used for confidence and peace building, and that environmental work can prevent future conflict.

Said Mahmoudi, Stockholm University, discussed international law relating to environmental protection during armed conflict, questioning whether laws can prevent damage to the environment during war and whether there are enough international rules to regulate the conduct of war so that no damage to the environment will happen. He reviewed examples of damage to the environment during wars and noted competing views on war and the environment, one underlining that existing laws are enough but need implementation, and the other stating that a new convention on war and environment is needed. He noted that there may be opportunities for the growth of environmental law in this area.

Antonio Marquina, Complutense University, discussed environmental challenges to state security, including climate change, ozone depletion, natural disasters and scarcity of water and food. He said these can jeopardize state survival and stressed the need to find means to reduce state and human vulnerabilities through global commitments and by developing analytical tools that integrate knowledge about vulnerability.

During the discussion, participants raised questions regarding the status of environmental treaties after their parties go to war, the applicability of international law to non-international armed conflicts, the applicability of discussions on war-related issues in sustainable development processes, and UNEP's possible role in assessing liability for damages.

**ENVIRONMENT AND HUMAN SECURITY:** Juan Mayr Maldonado, former Colombian Minister of the Environment,



Antonio Marquina, Complutense University



From left to right: Hans van Ginkel, United Nations University, and Kevin Clements, Australian Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, Queensland University

chaired this session on Tuesday morning. Hans Van Ginkel, UNU, underlined that environment and human security problems are complex and that solutions to these problems must also be complex, noting that actions to address one problem often create new ones, and that proposed solutions must pay attention to specific circumstances. He noted that the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment focuses on specific problems in specific areas and avoids using “doom and gloom” approaches to the issues. He added that many so-called natural events, such as floods and landslides, are actually triggered by human behavior. Van Ginkel stressed that human security issues must focus on the individual, not the state, and that there is a need for a more balanced approach to environment and human security issues. He said dialogue is the key to understanding environment and human security issues and for mobilizing action. He said binding legal approaches will rarely compel states to agree to take actions.

Kevin Clements, University of Queensland, addressed the need for more conflict-sensitive development policies and programmes, underlining the need to think and act holistically in development, security and human rights debates. He said security should be seen as a relationship between individuals and underlined the need to prioritize community needs and values. Clements said there is a need to ensure that development policies are conflict sensitive, to analyze development in terms of its capacity for peace building or strengthening the chances for peace, and to provide local peoples the powers to find solutions and “own” their development. He emphasized that development and security initiatives must be sustainable and generate peace rather than divisions.

Hossein Fadaei, UNEP, outlined his organization’s Environment and Security (ENVSEC) initiative in Central Asia, which promotes peace and security through cooperation. He said the aims of ENVSEC are to: identify and address environmental stresses that carry security risks; identify where and how to foster environmental cooperation; integrate environmental considerations into foreign and security thinking; and focus

on building capacity to address areas and issues prone to tensions. Providing examples from work in the field, Hossein said ENVSEC’s activities focus on: vulnerability assessment and monitoring; policy development and implementation; and capacity building and institutional development.

Participants raised questions regarding the value of “doom and gloom” scenarios to inspire urgent action, the limits to legal approaches, the relationship between state and civil society regarding conflict-sensitive development policies, how to take these policies forward, the role of women, whether security concerns should be prioritized over development concerns, and the use of genetically modified crops in Africa.

#### **SPECIAL PANEL ON DIALOGUE AMONG**

**CIVILIZATIONS:** Lalit Mansingh, former Indian Foreign Secretary and former Ambassador to the United States, chaired this session on Tuesday afternoon. He said participants should reflect on how the philosophies and lessons of ancient civilizations can help with contemporary problems and highlighted the basic unity of the world’s religions.

Lawrence Troster, Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life, described his personal experience with the spirituality of the environment, and noted that sacred texts are filled with environmental references. He said people today are often in situations that traditions do not address, and that through dialogue science and religion can complement one another. Noting that environmental crises are universal and make no religious distinctions, he said the environmentalist worldview also transcends politics and religion and people need the wisdom of all religions to shed light on contemporary crises.

John Grim, Forum on Religion and Ecology, outlined the Forum’s work in generating dialogue. He said religious concepts of “eco-justice,” such as the sacredness of the commons, should be retrieved and evaluated, and he noted that traditions are often viewed as being continuous and timeless, but that they are in fact internally diverse and constantly reconstructed.

Reza Shabani, Shahid Beheshti University, drew on Iran’s long history at the crossroads of civilizations to underscore the relevance of Khatami’s desire for dialogue among nations, showing that the initiative is deeply rooted in the Iranian culture and psyche.

Richard Jordan,  
International



Lawrence Troster, Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life



Information and Communications Technology Bridge for Caring Communities, echoed the role of spiritual inspiration from nature and the importance of moving from dialogue to action, particularly in implementing the environmental commitments in the Millennium Declaration.

During the subsequent discussion, participants raised questions on the role of dialogue within civilizations, the possibility of redefining rationality, educating world leaders about the environment, integrating the environment into religious sermons, and moving from textual evaluation and dialogue to action.

**PEACE AND CONFLICT PREVENTION:** Simon Dalby, Carleton University, chaired this session. Bagher Asadi, Special Representative of the Head of the Department of Environment for the Tehran International Conference, presented a paper prepared by Richard Falk, Professor Emeritus, Princeton University, on conflict prevention and dialogue as a strategic imperative, stressing the need for the emergence of a non-violent geopolitics. He stressed that the deepening and widening of dialogue between and within civilizations is a precondition for the emergence of an alternative paradigm and suggested the creation of a voluntary association of people, governments and international institutions, which work out common solutions to common problems.

Paul Claval, Université de Paris – Sorbonne, outlined how changes in the availability of energy supplies, advances in communications, and changes in cultures have affected the environment and people's perspectives on it. He underlined the need to acknowledge: that the traditional values on which the world order was built have changed; the key role of non-governmental organizations in negotiations; and that the definition of sustainable development needs to be continually updated with changing circumstances.

Dabelko described the need to exploit "environmental pathways to peace" by building on environment, conflict and security linkages. He said dialogue on environmental issues could be used for conflict prevention, tension reduction, achieving peace and post-conflict confidence building. He noted challenges, including moving the focus from conflict impact assessment



From left to right: Geoffrey David Dabelko, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Bahman Baktiari, Department of Political Science, University of Maine, US

to conflict prevention and peace-making and ensuring that parties, including donors, commit to long-term support.

Bahman Baktiari, University of Maine, said there is a need for greater dialogue among social scientists, scientists and policymakers. He stressed that many

multilateral environmental agreements are not effective because they do not address scientific issues properly. He emphasized that agreements are shaped by scientific knowledge and social factors, scientific consensus is not enough to create an environmental regime, and scientific advice must be politically feasible. Jean Fried, University of Maine, then provided an EU project to increase the dialogue between scientists and policy makers. He described the project's four stages: a survey of needs; multidisciplinary regional training workshops; an analysis of the workshops' outcomes and development of a policy document and action plan for high-level decision makers; and ministerial conferences. He said the project showed that when experts have worked together, negotiators will use the scientific content in negotiations.

During the discussion, questions were asked regarding the role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in peace-building through environment dialogue, whether the idea of common problems and common solutions is appropriate, how sustainable development is defined, and water conflicts in Palestine.

#### **DIALOGUE – WHAT IT MEANS; WHAT IT ENTAILS:**

This session was chaired by Nay Htun, University for Peace. He noted that words have evolved with different meanings in different cultures, and proposed that communication be conceived broadly to incorporate art, music, dance and theatre.

Hisae Nakanishi, University of Nagoya, discussed the difficulties associated with implementing "universal" values such as gender equality in different cultures, drawing on her experience in Afghanistan and Japan where traditional groups opposed a universalist interpretation of women's rights. She concluded that just as there are many democracies, there should be many forms of gender equality. Nakanishi warned against using shortcuts to achieve the MDGs quickly, saying local people need time to digest concepts of gender equality and apply them to their own cultures.

Mary Evelyn Tucker, Harvard Forum on Religion and Ecology, pointed out that the only truly shared human value is the continuation of life on Earth. She said we should move beyond individualism and domination of the environment to emphasize participation and kinship with all life systems. Tucker advocated that "species identity" should take precedence over religious, national and other identities and called for more consciousness of humankind's evolutionary responsibilities to safeguard shared resources for future generations. She said dialogue was of singular importance in building a planetary civilization with a global vision.

Hans Koechler, Leopold-Franzens University, questioned the value of dialogue in a world of extreme power imbalance, saying rational debate cannot succeed where one party is able to exploit its economic or military dominance. He called for the Western world to be more self-critical, and for a balanced international



From left to right: Noel Brown, Friends of the UN, US, Hisae Nakanishi, Nagoya University, Japan, Nay Htun, University of Peace, US, Mary Evelyn Tucker, Harvard Forum on Religion and Ecology, US, Hans Kochler, Leopold Franzens University, Innsbruck, Austria, and Ali Paya, National Research Institute of Science Policy of Iran.

order as a fundamental prerequisite of genuine dialogue. He warned that attempts at dialogue will otherwise lack credibility and could generate further conflict.

Ali Paya, National Research Institute of Science Policy of Iran, drew on concepts from science to illustrate the preeminent position of dialogue and its relationship to cooperation and rationality.

Noel Brown, Friends of the United Nations, responded to the panel presentations. He summarized the discussion, stressing the need to develop strategies for dialogue in a hegemonic world. He said the generation that first saw images from space began to perceive the interests of the world as a whole, and that this still needs to be translated into social and political action.

Participants discussed: dialogue with the private sector, the false universalization of Western values, communicating the principles of the conference to world leaders, whether ethical arguments can influence business, reconciling communitarianism and capitalism, and concerns that dialogue might erode cultural heritage or facilitate the imposition of some cultures upon others.

### **INTERACTIVE DISCUSSION ON CONCLUSIONS**

This session took place on Tuesday afternoon and was chaired by Van Ginkel. He reviewed the discussions at the Conference and grouped the topics discussed into three major lines of thinking: environment and conflict, environment and human security, and dialogue. The Chair of each session then provided an overview of the discussions in their sessions.

Van Ginkel said a non-negotiated communiqué from the Conference would be forwarded by the Islamic Republic of Iran to the September high-level event at the commencement of the 60<sup>th</sup> session of the UN General Assembly. Clements led the subsequent discussion on the issues to be included in the communiqué, suggesting as a starting point: the complexity of environmental problems and solutions; links between the environment and security, development and human rights; the need to celebrate unity in diversity of civilizations; the need for justice, compassion and truth to accompany peace; moving from “national security” to “human security”; the world’s complicity in Middle Eastern conflicts; state and societal failure; the inadequacy of the current legal framework; green indicators; the

need for “reality-based optimism”; the special role of women and indigenous peoples; and political and cultural diversity as an evolutionary strategy.

Participants then made suggestions for the communiqué, including: proposing that regions declare themselves free of weapons of mass destruction; directing the communiqué to skeptical audiences rather than the converted; supporting proposals for a UN Peacebuilding Commission; strengthening international environmental law, especially regarding conflicts; and calling for civil society to be allowed to participate at the September high-level event at the commencement of the 60<sup>th</sup> session of the UN General Assembly.

The meeting was adjourned for one hour while the Secretariat prepared the communiqué to be adopted during the closing plenary.

### **CLOSING PLENARY**

The closing plenary convened late in the afternoon on Tuesday, 10 May and was chaired by Conference Chair Ebtekar. She thanked all participants and introduced the outcome document, the Tehran Communiqué, which was then distributed. Van Ginkel summarized the proceedings of the Conference and the three streams of working sessions (environment and conflict, environment and human security, dialogue). Conference Chair Ebtekar noted that reports from the Chair of each session will be fed into the final report of the Conference. She then opened the floor for amendments or comments on the text of the Tehran Communiqué and, there being none, declared it adopted.

Reflecting on discussions at the Conference, Wolfgang Burhenne, International Council of Environmental Law, said that: policymakers must engage in more general dialogues; there must be greater respect given to culture, religion, and history in dialogue; a culture of dialogue must be developed; issues concerning shared resources must be addressed; the Security Council should designate safe havens in times of war for vital natural areas; and world leaders should use dialogue to strengthen solidarity, respect and tolerance.

Alexandre Kiss, European Council for Environmental Law, said care for the environment is essential due to the growing complexity of problems. He underlined the need for a preventive and holistic approach, long-term perspectives on environmental issues, and a sense of responsibility starting with individuals.



Alexandre Kiss, European Council for Environmental Law



He also recommended the use of a human rights approach and said access to justice and public participation issues must be addressed.

Kamal Kharrazi, Iranian Minister of Foreign Affairs, said the Conference signifies that the interaction between environment, peace and security is increasingly appreciated everywhere. He stressed that people have come to realize that the environment is critical to people's lives and that it is in real jeopardy. He said the promotion of a global forum is another positive development and that dialogue must be inclusive.

Adnan Amin, UNEP, on behalf of Töpfer, thanked the Iranian Government for its vision, leadership and hospitality, and emphasized that the process should be continued and strengthened in the future, possibly through a global forum at UNESCO. He also noted the potential of a future UN Peacebuilding Commission to address these issues.

Conference Chair Ebtekar then closed the meeting, expressing hope that this would be only "the end of the beginning" and inviting participants to conduct inner dialogue and to search for peace within themselves. She closed the meeting at 6:48 pm.

### **THE TEHRAN COMMUNIQUÉ**

Participants adopted the Tehran Communiqué during the closing plenary on the afternoon of Tuesday, 10 May. The Communiqué provides a brief introduction to the structure and aims of the Conference, summarizes the main issues discussed, and provides nine recommendations and conclusions arising from the Conference.

The Communiqué states that participants at the Conference underscored their "conviction of the common brotherhood of all peoples and a vision of a global civilization enriched by the peaceful interaction among individuals, cultures, religions and perspectives." It notes the currently fragmented nature of global discourse leading to increasing global tensions and insecurity and urges the creation of a new model of dialogue among civilizations and cultures based on mutual respect and recognition.

The Communiqué emphasizes that the environment provides an important aspect of holistic dialogue that can contribute to understanding by, among other things, supporting a revitalized framework for effective multilateralism, confidence building and strategies for conflict avoidance, and effective decision-making. It states that an inclusive approach based on dialogue can be a catalyst for cooperation to ensure that problems of shared resources can produce effective shared solutions. It adds that there is a need for the reconstitution of ethical and spiritual messages that are common to all faiths concerning the protection of the environment and the central message of peace, tolerance and harmony.

The Communiqué calls for vibrant, inclusive and democratic multilateralism based on respect, tolerance, accountable



From left to right: Adnan Amin, UNEP, Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi, and Chair Massoumeh Ebtekar

governance, human rights and inclusiveness. It emphasizes that UN reform should reinforce the objectives of promoting peace, security, freedom, democracy, respect for human dignity and respect for creation and must be democratic and accommodate all views and respect the rights of all peoples and nations. The Communiqué also states that intersectoral coordination within the UN must be made more effective through dialogue.

The Communiqué includes conclusions and recommendations stating, among other things: that there is a need for a new shared vision of a common destiny to create a culture of universal peace and solidarity and thus an environment free from poverty, war, fear, violence and insecurity; that there is a need to deepen and broaden the process of dialogue among civilizations and cultures; that UNEP should continue its initiative on environment, peace and dialogue and consider holding annual international meetings; that efforts should be made to develop better understanding of the issues of security and environment and link them to broader discussions on security; that greater efforts should be made to include broader constituencies, including mayors and civil society, in this process; that the proposed UN Peacebuilding Commission should contribute to the objectives of the Conference; that consideration should be given to the development of fora for preventive dialogue and confidence building, conflict resolution and post-conflict restitution; and that cultural, ethical and spiritual values must be fully integrated into strategies of dialogue for peace, security and development.

The Communiqué is to be formally submitted by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the UN Secretary-General as a message to the UN high-level event in September at the commencement of the 60<sup>th</sup> session of the UN General Assembly.

### **UPCOMING MEETINGS**

**SECOND MEETING OF PARTIES TO THE AARHUS CONVENTION:** This meeting of Parties to the UNECE Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention) will convene from 25-27 May 2005, in Almaty, Kazakhstan. The meeting will review progress to date, make future plans and discuss developments at global and



regional levels regarding Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development. For more information, contact: Ella Behlyarova, Environmental Affairs Officer, ECE; tel: +41-22-917-2376; fax: +41-22-917-0107; e-mail:

[Ella.Behlyarova@unece.org](mailto:Ella.Behlyarova@unece.org); Internet: <http://www.unece.org/env/pp/mop2.htm>

**WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY:** Mayors from 60 cities will attend the signing of the Urban Environmental Accords in San Francisco, California, US, on 5 June 2005 to mark World Environment Day. Official celebrations will include a walk entitled “Peace and the Environment at Muir Woods – the UN at 60” plus over 200 community activities in the San Francisco Bay area. For more information, contact: World Environment Day Secretariat; tel: +1-415-355-9905; fax: +1-415-353-9933; e-mail: [info@wed2005.org](mailto:info@wed2005.org); Internet: <http://www.wed2005.org>

#### MEETING THE HEALTH MILLENNIUM

**DEVELOPMENT GOALS IN FRAGILE STATES:** This conference will be held on 23-24 June 2005 at The London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, in London, UK. The conference will address the challenges to meeting the Millennium Development Goals in “Fragile States,” including states affected by conflict. For further details, contact Marlene Julien; tel: +44-0-207-065-0800; fax: +44-0-207-065-0801; e-mail:

[marlene.julien@merlin.org.uk](mailto:marlene.julien@merlin.org.uk); Internet: <http://www.lshtm.ac.uk/hpu/conflict>

**2005 ECOSOC HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT AND SUBSTANTIVE SESSION:** The ECOSOC High-level Segment will convene from 29 June to 1 July 2005 at UN headquarters in New York to address the theme “Achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration as well as implementing the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits: progress made, challenges and opportunities.” The substantive session will also involve the following sessions: Coordination Segment (5-7 July); Operational Activities Segment (8-12 July); Humanitarian Affairs (13-18 July); General Segment (18-25 July); and conclusion (26-27 July). For more information, contact: Sarbuland Khan, ECOSOC; tel: +1-212-963-4628; fax: +1-212-963-1712; e-mail: [khan2@un.org](mailto:khan2@un.org); Internet:

<http://www.un.org/docs/ecosoc/meetings/meetings2005.html>

**G8 2005 SUMMIT:** The 2005 G8 Summit will convene from 6-8 July 2005, at the Gleneagles Hotel in Perthshire, Scotland. Under the UK Presidency, the G8’s deliberations will focus on Africa and climate change among other topics. For more information, contact: British Prime Minister’s Office; fax: +44-20-7925-0918; e-mail:

<http://www.number-10.gov.uk/output/Page821.asp>; Internet: <http://www.g8.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&c=Page&cid=1078995902703>

**THIRD WORLD YOUTH CONGRESS:** This Congress will meet from 30 July to 8 August 2005, in Stirling, Scotland. Convening under the theme of “Young People working together for a sustainable world community,” delegates will seek to highlight how much youth do and are doing to support the achievement of the MDGs. For more information, contact: Ray Bugg, Media and Communications Manager; tel: +44-131-244-7425; fax: +44-795-726-1178; e-mail:

[ray.bugg@scotland.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:ray.bugg@scotland.gsi.gov.uk); Internet: <http://www.scotland2005.org>

**INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON ENGAGING COMMUNITIES:** Organized by DESA and the State Government of Queensland, Australia, this conference will meet from 14-17 August 2005, in Brisbane, Australia, and will seek to promote understanding of the concept of engagement and participative practices and their role in good governance. For more information, contact: OzAccom Conference Services; tel: +61-7-3854-1611; fax: +61-7-3854-1507; e-mail:

[info@engagingcommunities2005.org](mailto:info@engagingcommunities2005.org); Internet: <http://www.engagingcommunities2005.org>

**HELSINKI CONFERENCE 2005 – MOBILIZING POLITICAL WILL:** Convening from 7-9 September 2005, in Helsinki, Finland, this conference represents the culmination of the Helsinki Process on Globalization and Democracy. For more information, contact: Pieni Roobertinkatu, Helsinki Conference Secretariat; tel: +358-9-698-7024; fax: +358-9-612-7759; e-mail: [secretariat@helsinki.fi](mailto:secretariat@helsinki.fi); Internet: <http://www.helsinkiconference.fi>

**HIGH-LEVEL PLENARY MEETING OF THE 60TH SESSION OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON THE FOLLOW-UP TO THE OUTCOME OF THE MILLENNIUM SUMMIT:** This High-level Plenary Meeting will take place from 14-16 September 2005 at UN headquarters in New York. The meeting is expected to undertake a comprehensive progress review of the commitments in the UN Millennium Declaration. For more information, contact: Office of the President of the General Assembly; tel: +1-212-963-2486; fax: +1-212-963-3301; e-mail: [presidentga57@un.org](mailto:presidentga57@un.org); Internet: [http://www.un.org/ga/59/hl60\\_plenarymeeting.html](http://www.un.org/ga/59/hl60_plenarymeeting.html)



Musicians playing traditional Iranian music at the Inaugural Session