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At the 1994 World Forestry Charter Gathering in London, Prince Philip and others call for a global Forestry Convention



Photo: Desmond O'Neill

HRH The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, seated at center, and Madame Mary Rabbání, leading dignitary in the Bahá'í Faith, right, were featured speakers at the Gathering. They listened while Ian Lang, the Scottish Secretary of State, standing at left, read a message from British Prime Minister John Major.

LONDON—The historic Palace of St. James, a landmark in the heart of urban London, might seem an odd place for a meeting on global forestry.

Yet the Palace, which remains the statutory seat of royal sovereignty (ambassadors to Great Britain are still accredited to its court), stands at the middle of the diplomatic circle in London, a city which itself is a world center of business, financial, religious and intellectual enterprise.

And inasmuch as man and his activities today pose the greatest menace to the world's forests, it is to those circles that appeals for forest preservation must be made.

That was the thinking behind the 1994 World Forestry Charter Gathering, which sought not only to stimulate governments and decision-makers to go beyond the Forest Principles adopted at the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, but also to help in supplying a sense of moral and spiritual urgency to the task of preserving and protecting the world's forests.

Held on 28 July at St. James's Palace, the Gathering featured a major address on forestry by HRH The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, who is president of the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), and a talk by Madame Mary Rabbání, a leading dignitary in the Bahá'í Faith who has also

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ONE COUNTRY

is published quarterly by the Office of Public Information of the Bahá'í International Community, an international non-governmental organization which encompasses and represents the worldwide membership of the Bahá'í Faith.

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International Community

ISSN 1018-9300

Printed on recycled paper 

The global vision of Richard St. Barbe Baker

Perhaps the most visionary of the early environmentalists, Richard St. Barbe Baker travelled the globe from the late 1920s to the early 1980s, warning of the dangers of rainforest destruction, forest clear-cutting, and the greedy consumption of natural resources.

A widely respected forester, conservationist and author, his vision of the planet as a living organism anticipated the present-day Gaia theory, and his practice of involving people at the grassroots in protecting the environment foreshadowed current thinking in sustainable development.

In Kenya during the early 1920s, for example, Dr. Baker inspired thousands of Kikuyu

tribesmen to help protect the local environment by planting trees. Their organization became known as the "Men of the Trees." His success was based, in part, on his understanding of how their own traditions and beliefs supported such a cause.

Among his legacies is the establishment of the World Forestry Charter Gathering, which was among the first international meetings to take a global view of the earth's ecosystem.

The first Gathering was held in 1945, and the meetings continued regularly through the 1950s and 1960s. As they grew in prestige and renown, the Gatherings stimulated several early instances of global cooperation, including an international proclamation of a Green Front Against the Deserts and support for the First Sahara University Expedition.

By the 1970s, it was felt that the Gatherings had been superseded by the establishment of other, more formalized international meetings and conferences on the environment, and the Gatherings were discontinued.

Nevertheless, as world events have shown, the world has not yet adequately risen to embrace Dr. Baker's call to protect and preserve our forests, which he called the "skin of the earth." In 1989, in com-

memoration of the 100th anniversary of the birth of Dr. Baker, the Bahá'í International Community revived the Gathering. And the 1994 Gathering likewise seems as relevant as ever.

Dr. Baker saw in trees and forestry a vital international resource. He believed that efforts to protect and re-plant them provided a tremendous means for social advancement and economic development.

"World afforestation is necessary because it is the most constructive and peaceable enterprise in which the nations could co-operate," Dr. Baker wrote in 1949, speaking of the need for the Gatherings. "It would check, stop, and reverse the advance of the deserts upon the good lands of the globe, and thus relieve the shortage of foods."

Dr. Baker's views about the important role that spiritual beliefs must play in giving an underlying motivation to conservation efforts were also ground-breaking. As a member of the Bahá'í Faith, he drew extensively on the Faith's teachings about the oneness of humanity and, accordingly, brought a distinctive global-mindedness and

Perspective

As environmentalists ponder how best to create a sustainable human civilization, the work of Richard St. Barbe Baker — and especially his understanding of how religious belief can provide a vital motivation for environmental conservation — is certain to be increasingly recognized.

unifying spirit to virtually every project he undertook.

The theme of this year's Gathering was the Forest Principles, which were adopted,

together with the forest management plan of Agenda 21, by the governments of the world at the historic 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. Many of the ideas that Dr. Baker tirelessly promoted during his lifetime, through his writings, lectures and annual World Forestry Charter Gatherings, can be found in these Principles.

The Forest Principles recognize the need to protect the world's forests so as "to meet the social, economic, ecological, cultural and spiritual human needs of present and future generations..."

They also speak of the importance of grassroots participation "in the development, implementation and planning of national forest policies."

And they recognize that "all types of forests embody complex and unique ecological processes which are the basis for their present and potential capacity to provide resources to satisfy human needs as well as environmental values...."

Yet many were rightly disappointed when the world community was unable to produce a more far-reaching Convention on Forestry — and speakers at this year's Gathering have sought to address that. HRH The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, in particular, uttered a resounding call for the adoption of such a convention.

The aim of the 1994 World Forestry Charter Gathering was also to provide an underlying sense of moral and spiritual urgency as nations go about implementing the Forest Principles and the Forest Man-

agement Plan of Agenda 21 — and move toward a Convention and beyond.

Some forty years ago, when Richard St. Barbe Baker began the World Forestry Charter Gatherings, he asked diplomats to St. James's Palace not only to report on the state of their nations' forests, but also to suggest how they might cooperate, as citizens of the world, to preserve, re-establish and manage this common heritage. At the time, this concept was novel.

Today, in our increasingly interdependent world, sustainable stewardship of the earth's forests is coming to be understood as inseparable from a range of other global issues — including the establishment of social and economic justice within and between the nations of the world, equality of the sexes, democratic global governance and the rule of law.

If integrated into international policies and action plans for sustainable development, this concept of global responsibility and world citizenship identified so long ago by Bahá'u'lláh, and later applied to the issue of forests by Dr. Baker, offers a distinctive new global ethic.

As environmentalists ponder how best to motivate the changes in attitudes and activities that will be necessary to create a sustainable human civilization, the work of Richard St. Barbe Baker — and especially his understanding of how religious belief can provide a vital motivation for environmental conservation — is certain to be increasingly recognized.☉



Dr. Richard St. Barbe Baker, standing at right, at a reunion in the 1950s in Kenya with original members of the Men of the Trees. Dr. Baker founded the Men of the Trees in 1922. It was one of the first environmental non-governmental organizations to be supported from the grassroots and to base its activities on spiritual principles.

The family of the future: it will be violence-free

Sponsored by UNICEF, UNIFEM and the Bahá'í International Community, a symposium seeks new strategies for stopping family violence worldwide

The Symposium on "Strategies for Creating a Violence-Free Family" was held at the New York headquarters of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). Some 30 representatives from NGOs and intergovernmental agencies from 17 countries participated.

UNITED NATIONS—On virtually every international issue, from peacemaking to sustainable development, policy-makers here have come to understand that narrow, sectorial approaches to problems cannot succeed in an interdependent world.

Instead, the trend is toward integrated, multi-disciplinary innovation which aims at cutting across the mental canyons that too often inhibit effective solutions to modern problems.

This approach was brought to bear on the international problem of family violence at a ground-breaking two-day symposium held last May at UNICEF House, the agency's headquarters.

Entitled "Strategies for Creating a Violence-Free Family," the symposium sought to bring together a group of some 40 experts from all over the world — and from a diversity of professional disciplines — to develop guidelines for an action plan that could help to provide concrete and global strategies for addressing family violence.

The result, according to participants and organizers, was a series of collective insights about the relationship of family violence to our global society as a whole — insights that, it is hoped, will help stimulate a new degree of networking and cooperation among the various organizations and

agencies that deal with the issue.

"This seminar has succeeded in bringing together a diverse group of professionals, activists and practitioners, all working together to help create healthy families," said Marjorie Thorpe, deputy director of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), which co-sponsored the symposium along with United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Bahá'í International Community.

"The tools that you have identified for analyzing the manifestations of violence in the family, and for mobilizing constituencies around this agenda, these will help inform UNIFEM's own work in this area and, obviously, more generally will contribute to other attempts, globally and locally, to eradicate violence in the family and in society at large."

"Succeeding in eradicating violence in the family is not a matter of choice or chivalry or grace or good nature," Ms. Thorpe added. "It is in fact an obligation and a responsibility that has been imposed upon us by our humanity and by our interdependence."

Participants included representatives from more than 30 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) — among them women's associations, children's advocates, and human rights and religious groups — along



with officials, consultants and specialists from UNICEF and UNIFEM. They came from some 17 countries.

Among the conclusions that were reached:

- Family violence can no longer be considered a private matter. In part because of the effect of violence on developing children, who in turn become future citizens, the effects of family violence have a deep impact on society at large.

- Violence in society at large and family violence are interrelated. Wars, terrorism and even images of violence have a deep impact on the family, often stimulating violence; on the other hand, family violence encourages and makes possible a greater level of violence in society at large by producing succeeding generations who are ever more capable of violence.

- Family violence has deep roots in gender bias, a bias that is often encouraged by cultural and religious factors. Understanding such causes of family violence is an essential first step to change.

Keynote on Unity

The tone and theoretical groundwork for the conference was in many ways set by the keynote address, which was given by H.B. Danesh, a Canadian psychiatrist who offered to participants a new paradigm for family wellness: the concept of the unity-based family.

In his talk, and in a paper presented to the symposium, Dr. Danesh observed that the family "has always been and continues to be the most suitable milieu in which the next generations of children grow and form their views about themselves, the world, and the purpose and meaning of life."

In the past, most families could be defined as "power-based" families, said Dr. Danesh, who recently moved to Switzerland to take a position as director of the Institute for International Education and Development in Wienacht. "The power model demands conformity and obedience," he said, saying that traditionally the father has been the source of that authority.

More recently, and especially in the West, he continued, a rebellion against this model has led to the indulgence-based family, where there is no authority and all is permissible. "In this family type, the individual comes to believe that the most im-



portant thing in life is to get what you desire," he said. "This leads to promiscuity of thought and emotions."

In today's interdependent world, these family types are failing, both as successful family units themselves and as crucibles for the creation of the next generation, he said. The alternative is a new type of family.

"The family of the future is a unity-based family," said Dr. Danesh, who is a Bahá'í, explaining that such a family is based on equality between men and women, and conditions of justice for all its members. Such families would be marked by cooperation, maturity and unselfish love. "And a unity-based family by its very nature is violence-free."

Following Dr. Danesh were presentations by Dr. Nahid Toubia, a Sudanese specialist on population and women's reproductive health, who spoke about "Cultural Determinants of Family Violence;" Ms. Alda Facio, director of the Women, Gender and Justice program at the Latin American Crime Prevention Institute in Costa Rica, who talked about "Socio-economic Determinants of Family Violence;" and Ms. Hlengiwe Mkhize, director of the Children and Violence Project at the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa, who addressed "The Impact of Civil and Political Strife on Family Violence."

Answering questions is Dr. H.B. Danesh, who gave the keynote address to the Symposium. At center is Marsha Sfeir, the coordinator of public education and training for Education Wife Assault—Canada, who acted as the Symposium's facilitator. On the right is Dr. Nahid Toubia, a Sudanese specialist on population and women's reproductive health, who also addressed the group.

"The family of the future is a unity-based family. And a unity-based family by its very nature is violence-free."

— Dr. H.B. Danesh

“Here the conclusions emerged from different disciplines and perspectives. And in this there is a new way to look at the phenomenon — an integrated and interdisciplinary way.”

— Ms. Hlengiwe Mkhize, Children and Violence Project, South Africa

Much of the Symposium's work took place in small groups, where participants were challenged to consider and integrate various aspects of family violence and to come up with recommendations.

In further categorizing the types and nature of family violence, these addresses sought to ready participants for small-group strategy session where they could begin to consider solutions. From those groups arose the key conclusions, as identified above.

For many, that process itself was of critical importance.

“What clearly emerged was the importance of looking at the topic not just in a sectorial manner,” said Ms. Mkhize of South Africa. “Usually, psychologists will just talk about trauma, lawyers will talk about human rights, and so forth. But here the conclusions emerged from different disciplines and perspectives. And in this there is a new way to look at the phenomenon — an integrated and interdisciplinary way.”

Although some of the conclusions have been put forward previously by various specialists or organizations, participants said they could not recall a gathering where such a broad consensus on these ideas, emanating from such a diverse group, had been reached.

“It's not necessarily new that family violence should not be considered just a private affair, but what is new is the idea that there is such a strong relationship between violence in society and violence in the families — and that therefore it is not just a concern for people concerned about family, but that it should be a concern of the entire society,” said Janet Nelson, chief of the NGO liaison section at UNICEF.

Marsha Sfeir, the coordinator of public

education and training for Education Wife Assault—Canada, also saw significance in the many interdisciplinary links forged at the symposium.

“In terms of institutional violence, the violence that is political and economic and cultural and religious, and that people addressed all of these forms of violence in relation to personal and family violence, frequently in these kinds of events that doesn't happen,” said Sfeir, who also acted as facilitator for the Symposium.

“Another thing that doesn't always get addressed is that family violence has deep roots in cultural and religious gender bias. But that kept coming up over and over at this conference,” Sfeir said.

Action Plan

Conference organizers plan to disseminate widely the conclusions, along with specific recommendations for actions, hoping to stimulate governments and civil society to take a more integrated view of family violence and, accordingly, to take broad steps to address it.

Among the specific recommendations were: to provide additional support and training for front-line child-care givers aimed at treating and preventing family violence; to sensitize, train and mobilize UN agencies and government and law enforcement officials to give greater consideration to the mental health, economic and social consequences of family violence; to stimulate the development of educational materials, texts and even toys that emphasize gender equality; and to work on passing legislation that criminalizes all forms of domestic violence and provides for monitoring and enforcement mechanisms.

Already bearing fruit is the aim to stimulate international networking among NGOs.

Teresa Rodriguez, coordinator of the Violence Against Women Networking Program at Isis International in Santiago, Chile, said the Symposium opened the door to contacts with NGOs in other regions who have new and interesting approaches.

“For example, we are talking now with people in South Africa, where they are just beginning a new government, and our hope is we can exchange ideas and we can help the work there,” said Ms. Rodriguez after she had returned to Chile. “So you can say that the conference is already helping to stimulate networking across the world.” ☉





Brasilia has some 85 different foreign embassies, and the School of the Nations has developed a special reputation as a school where children from all cultures and countries can come together comfortably. Shown at left are a group of elementary students, eager to have their photograph taken.

Educating the next generation of world leaders

BRASILIA, Brazil — During the 1991 Gulf War, the staff at the School of the Nations here faced a touchy diplomatic problem.

Numerous among the school's students in this modern South American capital are the sons and daughters of the various international diplomats posted here.

That year, the son of the Iraqi ambassador was in attendance — along with many children from the United States and other countries in the United Nations-sponsored coalition that intervened to end Iraq's occupation of Kuwait.

At one point a few of the students made aggressive remarks to the Iraqi, "about how 'you guys' are going to get 'smashed' and so forth," said James M. Sacco, the school's director.

"But fortunately, most of the other students rallied around the Iraqi boy, saying things like 'Here at the school we are all friends,' and 'Here at the school, nationality doesn't make a difference,'" said Dr. Sacco.

That incident — among others — exemplifies the success of the school at fulfilling its own distinctive sense of mission: to raise up a new generation of leaders instilled with the ideal of world citizenship.

There are some 85 different foreign

embassies in Brasilia and since the school's establishment in 1980 by a group of Bahá'í educators from the United States and Brazil, it has quietly flourished by delivering on that promise.

Serving some 230 full-time students from 25 different national backgrounds in grades kindergarten through eight, the school offers a distinctive curriculum that blends an emphasis on cross-cultural experiences with moral and religious education in a bilingual setting.

Half of the classes are taught in Portuguese and half in English. In this way, the program not only meets all of the Brazilian government's curriculum requirements but also satisfies the concerns of diplomats and others who want their children to be intellectually fluent in a multi-cultural and interdependent world.

"We were very sympathetic to this kind of philosophy, and it is one of the main reasons we send our kids to this school," said Clemens Birrer, the counsellor of the Swiss Embassy here, who has two daughters at the school. "My wife and I are convinced that human relationships have to be built up outside of any context of color or race or nationality.

"We also feel that human relationships have to be built up with religious

Serving some 230 full-time students from 25 different national backgrounds in grades kindergarten through eight, the school offers a distinctive curriculum that blends an emphasis on cross-cultural experiences with moral and religious education in a bilingual setting.

"It is important for children to learn about other citizens and other cultures. My daughter now has friends from Africa, the United States and from Russia and it is very nice. She also takes her own culture to the others."

— Mrs. Emel Eryilmaz

Students at the School of the Nations in Brasilia study aspects of many cultures. In the photo below, some upper class students work through a routine of dances from India with teacher LaRae Johnson Davis.



belief, because moral belief influences human relationships."

For this reason, said Counsellor Birrer, he and his wife very much appreciate the school's attempt to teach about all of the world's major religions in its curriculum, even though they are themselves active Catholics.

"How can you build a world citizen if you don't know anything about Islam, for example?" asked Counsellor Birrer. "Because Islam is established very much on moral principles. So we agree to the general education on religion to sensitize the children to the fact that there is a God and that you can pray."

Indeed, although the school is run by Bahá'ís and incorporates religion as an element of its curriculum, the administration and teachers take great pains to teach respect for all of the world's great religions.

When the school dedicated a new building in 1987, for example, the ceremonies featured not only Bahá'í prayers, but also Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist, and Hindu prayers, all reflecting the various religious backgrounds of the student body. "In fact, it was the Iraqi boy who read from the Koran," said Dr. Sacco.

"We have a complete sequence on comparative religions running from the 5th through the 8th grade," Dr. Sacco continued. "It starts with a study of the Bible in a historical context in the 5th grade, then with the New Testament in the 6th grade, and then Islam in the 7th

grade. In the 8th grade, they study the Bahá'í Faith and other philosophical and religious movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries."

Because of this inclusive approach, many Muslim diplomats have chosen to send their children to the school, choosing it even over such excellent alternatives as the American School, the French School or the local Brazilian schools.

Bil Eryilmaz, a retired Turkish diplomat, and his wife, Emel, who currently works as the administrative attache at the Turkish Embassy here, have sent three of their children to the school and very much appreciate its philosophy of promoting world citizenship.

"It is important for children to learn about other citizens and other cultures," said Mr. Eryilmaz. "My daughter now has friends from Africa, the United States and from Russia and it is very nice. She also takes her own culture to the others."

The Eryilmaz's also appreciate the school's emphasis on religious toleration. "The children learn how to pray to God and they learn who is God," said Mr. Eryilmaz.

They are also pleased with the school's academic success. They said their oldest daughter recently graduated from the school and returned to Turkey. And despite long years outside of Turkey, they said, she nevertheless did extremely well in the comprehensive examinations at her new high school there.

While Dr. Sacco confirmed that students at the school have gone on to demonstrate a high level of academic achievement, he said the administration and staff were perhaps the most proud of their success at instilling a philosophy compatible with today's interdependent world.

"What sets the School of the Nations apart is really this aspect of peace education, of education for world citizenship," Dr. Sacco said.

"Outsiders have told us that the children from the school are more outgoing and more willing to make friends and go on to new experiences.

"We not only teach kids to appreciate diversity, but to seek it out. Not to be afraid of it," he said. "But of course that is something that is very hard to measure. You can't score it. But we feel it is perhaps the most important thing we have to offer." ☺



At the entrance to the Village of Hope, an exhibition and display area constructed by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to the United Nations Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, two giant puppets, named "Hope" and "Horror," greeted conference participants. Hope, at right, was made of sailcloth and natural materials, symbolizing nature and the human spirit, while Horror, at left, was made of discarded auto parts, a broken television and other refuse as a representation of greed, suspicion and selfishness.

In Barbados, small islands take on big dimensions

BRIDGETOWN, Barbados — Hope and Horror, two twenty-foot tall puppets, stood discussing conservation at the entrance to the Village of Hope, an exhibition and display area constructed as part of the contribution of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to the United Nations Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, held here from 25 April to 6 May 1994.

Hope, made mostly of gracefully flowing sailcloth and natural materials found on the beach, represented the best of nature and the human spirit. She was patiently educating Horror, who was largely constructed of discarded auto parts, a broken television and other refuse as a representation of greed, suspicion and selfishness.

"Haven't you heard of reduce, recycle, reuse?" Hope asked. "You could cut back now on the water you use, on the number of car trips every week, and maybe repair something so as not to throw it out and buy new."

"I would, but my neighbor won't, so I can't," Horror answered. "He'll just use what I tried to save. I'm better off to get it first."

Though simplistic, this dramatized conversation about how to balance envi-

ronmental concerns with market competition reflected well the kind of difficult issues confronting the participants of this Conference, which was organized to examine the unique vulnerabilities of small island developing states and low-lying coastal areas, review current trends in their social and economic development, and recommend a program of action for long-term sustainable development.

Among the specific results of the Conference were:

- The adoption of the Barbados Declaration, a two-part document that affirms the condition and problems of small island developing states; acknowledges their vulnerabilities to natural and environmental disasters, pollution, and the effects of climate change; and recommends the promotion of human resource development programs, technical assistance, mechanisms for information sharing, and greater assistance from the international community.

- The creation of a Program of Action that defines some fourteen issues faced by small islands and low-lying coastal areas, and makes specific recommendations for action at the national, regional, and international levels.

- The strengthening of the Alliance

Like canaries in a coal mine, small islands are sensitive indicators of global environmental change — and key proving grounds for new techniques of sustainable development.

“Small islands have some environmental problems that are clearly not caused by small islands, such as climate change and ocean level rise. They’re bearing the cost for something they didn’t cause. This was a test of how the international community functions.”

**— Marina Lent,
United Nations Non-
Governmental Liaison
Service**

The plenary sessions of the United Nations Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States drew representatives of some 111 governments, nearly 90 NGOs, and numerous officials from various United Nations agencies, intergovernmental organizations and the media.

of Small Island States (AOSIS), a group of 36 members and 5 observers, which now seems likely to become a viable negotiating coalition in the United Nations system.

- A relatively new and high degree of cooperation between governments and NGOs. NGOs were credited with keeping the human aspect of sustainable development in the forefront of the Conference, and language to that effect is evident in the Declaration.

Mandated by Agenda 21

Representatives of 111 governments, more than 90 NGOs, and numerous officials from various United Nations agencies, intergovernmental organizations and the media attended the Conference, which was mandated by Agenda 21, the action plan adopted at the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

“It’s generally thought to be the first specific effort at implementation of Agenda 21 that the UN has undertaken,” said Marina Lent, program officer for the United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service. “It’s the instance where they brought sustainable development to a further level of detail, taking a specific case — small island developing states — and putting more definition on what is needed.”

As is commonly the case at such international conferences, the question of finance was one of the more difficult issues. Yet the final wording of the Program of Action states that implementa-

tion will require “adequate, predictable, new and additional financial resources in accordance with Chapter 33 of Agenda 21,” and recommends more efficient use of existing resources.

“If you take into account the recession worldwide, there was general reluctance on the part of donor countries to generate any more money,” said Lelei Lelaulu, outreach coordinator for the conference. “But in Barbados, there was notable success. These countries all agreed to commit to new, additional, and regular sources of finance. A lot of critics were expecting that very little would come out of this conference, but the fact that they were able to make this commitment is significant.”

The Program of Action acknowledges the specific consequences to small island developing states of such problems as climate change and sea level rise, natural and environmental disasters, and toxic and hazardous wastes. Recommendations include training, capacity-building, and development of appropriate technology. The Program also aims at safeguarding natural resources, encouraging renewable sources of energy, planning sustainable tourism, and emphasizing the importance of biodiversity.

An unexpected, but highly significant outcome of the conference was the strengthening of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), said participants. Initially formed to spotlight a single is-



sue of urgent concern to all small islands — the consequences of climate change and sea level rise — the Alliance has matured during the nine month process preceding the conference into a viable coalition capable of negotiating within the UN system for the interests of small island developing states from far-flung regions.

"They've all agreed that their development should be sustainable," said Mr. Lelaulu. "That's what the Earth Summit was seeking for all areas of the planet. By taking a small step, it insures overall success in the long run."

The problems confronted by small island states and low-lying coastal regions, such as rising water levels, natural disasters, the destruction of coral reefs and rainforests, and the management of toxic wastes carried by passing ships, were indeed highlighted by the Conference. But more to the point, said participants, these issues also came to be viewed in the larger context, as intertwined environmental and economic challenges that are a microcosm of the global picture. And many noted that the solutions developed at this level could contribute to solutions on a worldwide scale.

"Small islands have some environmental problems that are clearly not caused by small islands, such as climate change and ocean level rise," said Ms. Lent of the NGLS. "It would be extremely costly for them to resolve these problems on their own. They're bearing the cost for something they didn't cause. This was a test of how the international community functions. It's one thing to agree on a program of action, another thing to implement it. It remains to be seen how well and how thoroughly it gets implemented."

Key Role for NGOs

While some participants expressed similar reservations, others were heartened by the process itself, and the role played by NGOs. "For the first time on an international level, the issues and problems of small islands were described through a process that reflects the concerns not only of governments, but also of the non-governmental community," said Dr. Waldaba Stewart of the Pan African Movement, who chaired the southern diaspora delegation and participated



in the writing of the action plan. "In many instances, governments and NGOs tend not to work together. They seem to think, 'this is my turf, that is your turf.' The Barbados conference showed that NGO participation could be meaningful and constructive."

Non-governmental organizations also created two exhibition areas, SusTech '94 and the Village of Hope, which displayed appropriate technologies and artistic presentations. A parallel conference, the NGO Islands Forum '94, consisted of daily plenary sessions for NGOs, briefings with government and UN agency representatives, and workshops on such topics as colonialism, militarism, natural resource management, and the cultural, religious and spiritual aspects of sustainable development. The Hope and Horror puppets were a contribution of the Bahá'í community of Barbados.

Joseph Dolphin, a representative of the Bahá'í International Community to the government segment of the Conference, said one key success of the meeting was that it brought together people from islands all over the world — ranging from the Seychelles to Japan — and allowed them to see that their problems were not all that different.

"Sharing this common experience of concern was one of the benefits of this conference," Mr. Dolphin said, "the idea that superseding cultural diversity is the commonality of all problems." ☸

A close-up of the puppet "Hope," which was designed by Winnie and Oscar Merritt, members of the Bahá'í community of Barbados.

A plea for trees at the 1994 World Forestry Charter Gathering

Ms. Guilda Walker, left, looks on as HRH The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, welcomes Madame Mary Rabbáni, right, to St. James's Palace. Standing next to Madame Rabbáni is Mrs. Violette Nakhjavani. Ms. Walker organized the 1994 World Forestry Charter Gathering on behalf of the Bahá'í International Community's Office of the Environment.

Photo: Desmond O'Neill



“As with so many of the environmental challenges we face, there are no borders when it comes to the protection and sustainable management of the earth’s forests.”

— U.S. President William Clinton.

(Continued from page one)

long been an ardent environmentalist.

In his speech, the Duke of Edinburgh called for the adoption of a legally binding Global Forestry Convention. He said such a Convention must set fair and common rules for international trade and competition in timber products so that the unrestrained exploitation of the world's forests can be limited.

“The basis for such a convention must be that the rules for international trade and competition in timber and timber-products must be the same for all,” said the Duke of Edinburgh. “Governments must come to accept that any variation of national rules in order to make their forestry industry more competitive in the international market is completely unacceptable. It is up to the international community to decide how best to regulate the market so as to ensure that it is fair to all producers.”

Madame Rabbáni urged greater efforts to teach children and youth about the need to protect and revere the earth. “What we really need is greater love for the planet,” she said. “I hope all of us can find ways to help the planet, to help preserve our priceless mother earth for future generations.”

A Historic Tradition

Patterned after the historic World Forestry Charter Gatherings convened in the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s by the late Richard

St. Barbe Baker, the 1994 Gathering was organized by the Bahá'í International Community, with support from the International Tree Foundation, the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

In attendance this year were some 160 ambassadors, businesspeople and representatives from non-governmental organizations from more than 30 countries. The format was that of a diplomatic luncheon, opening with a reception, then speeches, and finally a private dinner with the Duke of Edinburgh.

Some seventeen governments sent official messages to the Gathering. Among them, eight heads of state or government themselves sent statements: Argentine President Carlos Menem; Brazilian President Itamar Franco; Israeli President Ezer Weizmann; Kenyan President Daniel Arap Moi; Romanian President Ion Iliescu; United Kingdom Prime Minister John Major; United States President Bill Clinton; and Venezuelan President Rafael Caldera.

Many of the messages stressed the essential interdependence of the world's ecological system and the need for a common effort to protect forests.

“As with so many of the environmental challenges we face, there are no borders when it comes to the protection and sustainable management of the earth's for-

ests," said President Clinton. "We will only succeed if governments, private organizations and individuals cooperate intensively."

Russian Ambassador Boris Pankin, who attended the luncheon, wrote that Russia views "the rational use and preservation of the forest resources" as "not only a national, but, first and foremost, a global problem."

Focus on Forest Principles

Many environmentalists were disappointed when the governments of the world were unable to negotiate a legally binding convention on forests at the 1992 Earth Summit and settled instead with the adoption of a non-binding set of Forest Principles.

Organizers hoped that the coming together of representatives from government, business, environmental and religious sectors would help to lay the groundwork for moving to such a Convention — and to contribute to the discussions of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development, which will take up the issue of forests in 1995.

"The purpose of the Gathering was really to pick up from Rio and to try and give further stimulus to the question of a legally binding agreement on forestry for all countries," said Guilda Walker, who organized the event on behalf of the Bahá'í International Community's Office of the Environment.

"We were especially hoping to address the issue of forestry in a global context, to further the idea that the world's forests must be considered the common heritage of all of humanity if they are to be effectively preserved and sustainably managed," said Ms. Walker. "And that is part of the reason this particular event was cast in the form of a diplomatic luncheon."

Success on this point came not only in the Duke of Edinburgh's call, but also in some of the commitments made by governments to support this issue.

President Arap Moi wrote that "the role of forests for the common good of mankind embraces a wide and comprehensive scope beyond the environs of supply of raw materials...."

"I am confident that this event will help produce a convention on forestry with the aim of preserving and re-establishing our common heritage — world forests," President Arap Moi said.

Sir Alexander Stirling, the chairman of

SOS Sahel, an association of voluntary agencies working to promote sustainable development in the Sahel and Horn regions of Africa, said he believed that obtaining such commitments from world leaders was an especially important role for the Gathering.

"What I do hope is we can refer back to what these leaders have said and that they will be prepared to give practical help to such things as a forestry convention," said Sir Alexander, who attended the 1994 Gathering.

Five years ago, the Gatherings were revived by the Bahá'í International Community in commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the birth of Richard St. Barbe Baker, acting in collaboration with Dr. Baker's literary executor, Hugh Locke. That Gathering also brought together top London diplomats, forestry specialists and NGO representatives; its focus was on the Tropical Forestry Action Plan.

For the 1994 event, the support of the Duke of Edinburgh was enlisted last November, said Ms. Walker. "He was very excited about the concept of moving beyond the Forest Principles."

The International Tree Foundation, as successor to the "Men of the Trees" organization, which was founded by Dr. Baker, also lent its support early on.

"In bringing together people of influence, such events provide an ideal opportunity for further environmental awareness, and for building upon the pioneering work of our founder, Richard St. Barbe Baker," said John Caunce, director of the Foundation.

A Coming Together of Interests

G.N. Cimarra, a director of Oilinvest (Netherlands) B.V., the holding company of TAMOIL, also addressed the Gathering. TAMOIL provided financial sponsorship for the Gathering. Mr. Cimarra's remarks were quite dramatic for an oil company executive.

"Humanity must recognize that the manner in which it lives today and the means by which it does so are not sustainable in their present form," said Mr. Cimarra. "If we wish to save ourselves the embarrassment of being found guilty of the irreparable damage our acts and/or negligence are causing to nature in general and to the forests in particular, we should take immediate action to change for the better

(Continued next page)



Symbol for the 1994 World Forestry Charter Gathering

"I am confident that this event will help produce a convention on forestry with the aim of preserving and re-establishing our common heritage — world forests."

— Kenyan President Daniel Arap Moi

Forestry Gathering...

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the current course of events."

Kerry Brown, the religious advisor to the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) International, saw the Gathering as especially significant for the way in which it brought together diverse personalities representing aristocratic, business, environmental and religious sectors of society.

"As has been said time and again, the environmental crisis is really a human crisis," said Ms. Brown, who attended the Gathering. "And that means it is one primarily of spiritual and ethical values.

"So we have to find a way of coming together as people," said Ms. Brown. "There has to be a dialog such as occurs at events like this, where you've got businesspeople, environmentalists and religious groups all coming together. That is really a great achievement." ☉

U.N. human rights panel condemns signs of increasing religious intolerance in Iran

GENEVA — Using unusually strong language, the United Nations Sub-Commission on the Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities approved a resolution condemning the continued "flagrant violations of human rights" in Iran, taking special note of religious discrimination against Bahá'ís and others there.

The resolution, which was adopted by a vote of 15 to 6, on 25 August 1994, said the Sub-Commission was "shocked by the systematic repression of the Bahá'í community and at the situation of the Iranian Kurds and the Arab minority in Iran, and at the increasing intolerance towards Christians, including recent murders of Christian religious ministers."

The Sub-Commission said that "human rights are universal and indivisible and that the violation of internationally recognized human rights standards cannot be justified by cultural or religious considerations." It called for continued international monitoring of the situation in Iran. ☉

Eleven nations deposit soil into Rio Peace Monument

RIO DE JANEIRO — Soil from 13 nations — including samples taken from the source of the Nile River — were deposited into the Bahá'í-sponsored "Peace Monument" here on World Environment Day in commemoration of the second anniversary of the Earth Summit.

The monument was created as a lasting symbol of the new spirit of global cooperation which characterized the Earth Summit. On the Summit's final day in 1992, the soil from some 40 nations was deposited

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into the five-meter, hourglass-shaped concrete and ceramic monument, which was sponsored by the Bahá'í International Community in collaboration with the Brazilian Bahá'í Community. In 1993, the Monument received soil from 15 nations.

On 5 June this year, the thirteen countries donating samples are Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Kiribati, Liberia, Mauritius, Mexico, Norway, Poland, Spain, Suriname, and Uganda.

As with the deposits made in 1992 during the Summit and again for World Environment Day in 1993, many of the samples donated this year come from historically significant sites.

The soil from Uganda comes from the village of Jinja, which is at the headwaters of the Nile River. The soil from Liberia was taken from the grounds of the Centennial Memorial Pavilion in Monrovia, an important historic site where all of the country's presidents take their oath of office.

The contribution from Denmark was collected from the Grenen (the Branch), the tongue land of Skagen. This is where the Baltic Sea meets with the waters of the North Sea and continuously forms the continent with perpetually moving sand.

The Danish Office of Forests and Wildlife, which forwarded a sample of sand from Grenen, said the site was chosen because "[t]he sand incessantly moves, symbolizing an image of human society. Individuals from near and far united together possess the power and capacity to preserve our planet." ☉

Review

(Continued from back page)

more information, treated in some depth, about Bahá'í activities.

The articles provide information and detail that will certainly be of interest to even the most knowledgeable of Bahá'ís, but they are quite obviously written and edited with an eye toward the general reader.

For example, an article on "The Spiritual Foundations for an Ecologically Sustainable Society" by Robert White not only plunges deeply into the complex theological answers offered by Bahá'í teachings in response to and in connection with the so-called "Deep Ecology" movement, but it does so in a way that explains in clear terms those new and distinctive theological concepts that the Bahá'í teachings bring to the discussion.

Likewise, an article on "The Case of the Bahá'í Minority in Iran," which chronicles the persecution of the Bahá'ís in that country since the establishment of an Islamic Republic there in 1979 reveals not simply the details of the 15-year persecution there but examines it in the context of how Bahá'ís around the world have sought to protect their co-religionists using the human rights machinery of the United Nations and other international institutions. Accordingly, the article stands not only as an informative piece on the persecutions themselves, but also as a definitive case study for anyone interested in human rights and the protection of minorities.

Other articles focus on Bahá'í social

and economic development, the release of Bahá'u'lláh's Book of Laws in English translation, Bahá'í involvement in the '92 Earth Summit. As well, in honor of the 1992 Bahá'í Holy Year, which commemorated the 100th anniversary of the death of Bahá'u'lláh, the Faith's Founder, the editors have reprinted a comprehensive statement about His life.

Also included is a "Chronology" section that offers short summaries of events that have occurred throughout the Bahá'í world, several pages of brief obituaries, and a selected bibliography providing capsule reviews of some 12 noteworthy books and brief notations on some 35 other selected publications.

In keeping with the mission to provide general information about the progress and activities of the Faith, the new volume also contains straightforward accounts of the Faith's history and basic teachings. It also supplies four pages of statistical information at the end, offering to the scholar a critical source of demographic information about the worldwide scope of Bahá'í activity.

Published in both hardcover and paperback, and distributed by World Centre Publications, this first volume will be the template for future annual volumes in the series. The new series is being published in both hardcover and paperback formats, thus offering to a wider public the costs savings offered by the latter format.

The new plan for *The Bahá'í World* — as based on this first volume in the new series — promises to be an important step in helping to provide in-depth but accessible information about the worldwide movement known as the Bahá'í Faith. ☉

The new volume also contains straightforward accounts of the Faith's history and basic teachings. It supplies four pages of statistical information, offering to the scholar a critical source of demographic information about the worldwide scope of Bahá'í activity.



In Samoa recently, Bahá'u'lláh's *Most Holy Book* — which was recently issued in an authorized English translation — was presented to His Highness King Malietoa Tanumafili II by Sohrab and Soheyla Bolorui. Upon receiving the book, the King placed it on his head as a gesture of respect. The new *Bahá'í World* volume reports on the issuance of the new translation, among other things.

Snapshot of a rapidly growing world community

*The Bahá'í
World —
1992-93*

World Centre
Publications

Haifa

As the youngest of the world's independent religions, the Bahá'í Faith is distinctive in many ways. Alone among the major faiths, for example, its sacred scriptures quite clearly uphold the equality of women and men. And its administrative structure is distinctly modern: eschewing clergy, the Faith relies instead on democratically elected bodies of laymen to make all of its decisions.

Another aspect of its relative youth is the degree to which the 150-year history of the Faith has been recorded. Founded in 1844, well after the development of movable type and just as electronic communications were beginning to shrink the globe and change forever humanity's consciousness of itself, the Faith has seen its progress documented voluminously by innumerable observers and scholars both within and outside of the movement. The result is a unique record of the birth and early years of a religion and its rapidly growing community.

One measure of this record can be found in the series known as *The Bahá'í World*, which is the Faith's official international record of its own activities and accomplishments. First published as the *Bahá'í Year Book* in 1926, the series has since carefully chronicled the rise of the Faith from a small and obscure group whose largest centers were confined primarily to the Middle East and North America to a global religion of some five million followers with significant communities in virtually every country in the world.

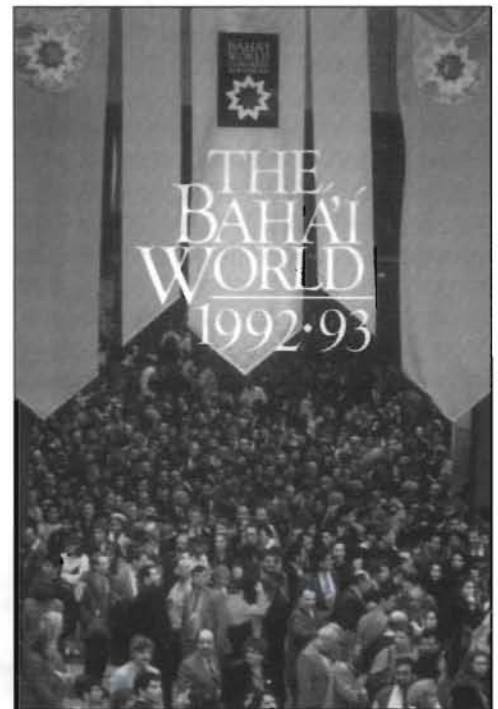
The original *Bahá'í World* series, which covered the period up to April 1993, documented Bahá'í history not only through first-hand reports from Bahá'í conferences and scholarly articles on issues of theological concern, but also by publishing wholesale various documents, issued by governments and others, that itemized the Faith's impact on all levels of society as it expanded, country by country, around the world. It also included "In Memoriam" articles on community members and even excerpts of Bahá'í literature translated into lesser known languages.

While such voluminous detail has captivated Bahá'í audiences for years, and will

certainly be of interest to future scholars of the Bahá'í Faith, the editors of *The Bahá'í World* have recently seen fit to alter the format so as to provide interested members of the public with a ready reference on Bahá'í activity.

The growth of the Bahá'í community, its emergence from obscurity, and its evolving needs have made the time propitious for such change, and the occasion of the second Bahá'í Holy Year was chosen as the time to inaugurate the new annual series.

The 1992-93 volume of *The Bahá'í World* has been issued in an entirely new format and design, slimmer than the heavy tomes produced in the past — volumes that also cover up to seven years of activities. It is also more compact, along the lines of university-format texts, with larger type and wider margins.



The result is a design that is appealing to the eye, pleasant to read, and highly legible. Photographs, some in color, and statistical charts add to the volume's attractiveness and usefulness.

Perhaps more importantly, the new edition's editorial tone and style is far more accessible and useful for the public, especially to those scholars, journalists and educated readers who may be relatively unfamiliar with the Faith but wish to have
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