

# ONE COUNTRY

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*"The earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens"—Bahá'u'lláh*

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## Preparing for the next evolutionary leap

Fourth International Dialogue on the Transition to a Global Society, meeting outside of Washington, D.C., considers how to smooth the path to a peaceful future

COLLEGE PARK, Maryland, USA — Over the last five years, small groups of scholars, scientists, religious leaders and policy-makers have gathered periodically to discuss the following question: will the rapidly emerging global civilization come to embody humanity's darkest fears or its most cherished hopes?

Held under the rubric of the International Dialogue on the Transition to a Global Society, these gatherings are founded on the premise that the advent of a global society is inevitable, and will soon be upon us. Trends pointing to the wholesale integration of the world's economies, the blending of its social and cultural systems, and the proliferation of new technologies are taken as *prima facie* evidence of this new reality.

The question before humanity now, say organizers of the meetings, is how to manage the transition to a global society such that humanity's long-sought vision for an era of peace and prosperity is realized — rather than the nightmare of a planet gone to chaos because humanity failed to make the next step in social evolution.

The first of these gatherings took place in 1990, under the auspices of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organizations (UNESCO), at the Landegg Academy in Switzerland, which was also the venue for the second and third Dialogues.

*(Continued on page 11)*



Kevin Locke performs the Lakota hoop dance during an evening arts presentation at the Fourth International Dialogue on the Transition to a Global Society.



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# Science, religion and the strategy for global development

*Editor's Note: The following Perspective is excerpted from a longer statement, entitled "The Prosperity of Humankind," which was issued earlier this year by the Bahá'í International Community in conjunction with the World Summit for Social Development.*

The tasks entailed in the development of a global society call for levels of capacity far beyond anything the human race has so far been able to muster. Reaching these levels will require an enormous expansion in access to knowledge, on the part of individuals and social organizations alike.

Universal education will be an indispensable contributor to this process of capacity building, but the effort will succeed

## Perspective

only as human affairs are so reorganized as to enable both individuals and groups in every sector of society to acquire knowledge and apply it to the shaping of human affairs.

Throughout history, human consciousness has depended upon two basic knowledge systems through which its potentialities have progressively been expressed: science and religion. Through these two agencies, the race's experience has been organized, its environment interpreted, its latent powers explored, and its moral and intellectual life disciplined. They have acted as the real progenitors of civilization.

Given the almost universal respect in which science is currently held, its credentials need no elaboration. In the context of a strategy of social and economic development, the issue rather is how scientific and technological activity is to be organized.

If the work involved is viewed chiefly as the preserve of established elites living in a small number of nations, it is obvious that the enormous gap which such an arrangement has already created between the world's rich and poor

will only continue to widen, with disastrous consequences for the world's economy. Indeed, if most of humankind continue to be regarded mainly as users of products of science and technology created elsewhere, then programs ostensibly designed to serve their needs cannot properly be termed "development."

A central challenge, therefore — and an enormous one — is the expansion of scientific and technological activity. Instruments of social and economic change so powerful must cease to be the patrimony of advantaged segments of society, and must be so organized as to permit people everywhere to participate in such activity on the basis of capacity.

Apart from the creation of programs that make the required education available to all who are able to benefit from it, such reorganization will require the establishment of viable centers of learning throughout the world, institutions that will enhance the capability of the world's peoples to participate in the generation and application of knowledge.

Development strategy, while acknowledging the wide differences of individual capacity, must take as a major goal the task of making it possible for all of the earth's inhabitants to approach on an equal basis the processes of science and technology which are their common birthright.

The challenges facing humanity in its religious life, if different in character, are equally daunting. For the vast majority of the world's population, the idea that human nature has a spiritual dimension — indeed that its fundamental identity is spiritual — is a truth requiring no demonstration.

It is a perception of reality that can be discovered in the earliest records of civilization and that has been cultivated for several millennia by every one of the great religious traditions of humanity's past. Its enduring achievements in law, the fine arts, and the civilizing of human intercourse are what give substance and meaning to history. In one form or another its promptings are a daily influence in the lives of most people on



earth and, as events around the world today dramatically show, the longings it awakens are both inextinguishable and incalculably potent.

It would seem obvious, therefore, that efforts of any kind to promote human progress must seek to tap capacities so universal and so immensely creative. Why, then, have spiritual issues facing humanity not been central to the development discourse? Why have most of the priorities — indeed most of the underlying assumptions — of the international development agenda been determined so far by materialistic world views to which only small minorities of the earth's population subscribe?

It may be argued that, since spiritual and moral issues have historically been bound up with contending theological doctrines which are not susceptible of objective proof, these issues lie outside the framework of the international community's development concerns. And that to accord them any significant role would be to open the door to precisely those dogmatic influences that have nurtured social conflict and blocked human progress.

There is doubtless a measure of truth in such an argument. Exponents of the world's various theological systems bear a heavy responsibility not only for the disrepute into which faith itself has fallen among many progressive thinkers, but for the inhibitions and distortions produced in humanity's continuing discourse on spiritual meaning.

To conclude, however, that the answer lies in discouraging the investigation of spiritual reality and ignoring the deepest roots of human motivation is a self-evident delusion. The sole effect, to the degree that such censorship has been achieved in recent history, has been to deliver the shaping of humanity's future into the hands of a new orthodoxy, one which argues that truth is amoral and facts are independent of values.

So far as earthly existence is concerned, many of the greatest achievements of religion have been moral in character. Through its teachings and through the examples of human lives illumined by these teachings, masses of people in all ages and lands have developed the capacity to love. They have



learned to discipline the animal side of their natures, to make great sacrifices for the common good, to practice forgiveness, generosity, and trust, to use wealth and other resources in ways that serve the advancement of civilization.

Institutional systems have been devised to translate these moral advances into the norms of social life on a vast scale. However obscured by dogmatic accretions and diverted by sectarian conflict, the spiritual impulses set in motion by such transcendent figures as Krishna, Moses, Buddha, Zoroaster, Jesus, and Muhammad have been the chief influence in the civilizing of human character.

Since the challenge before humanity today is the empowerment of humankind through a vast increase in access to knowledge, the strategy that can make this possible must be constructed around an ongoing and intensifying dialogue between science and religion.

It is — or by now should be — a truism that, in every sphere of human activity and at every level, the insights and skills that represent scientific accomplishment must look to the force of spiritual commitment and moral principle to ensure their appropriate application. ☉

In Bucharest on 12 December, more than 200 people gathered for an observance of International Human Rights Day at the Diplomat Club. Sponsored by the Bahá'í community of Romania, the event was attended by numerous ambassadors and embassy representatives, as well as some 20 members of the Romanian Chamber of Deputies and some 40 Senators. The keynote speech was delivered by Mr. Pierre den Baas, the UN Resident Coordinator in Romania, who is shown in the above photograph standing behind the microphone. Mrs. Irina Zlatescu, executive director of the Romanian National Institute for Human Rights, (shown at left) and Mr. Tiberiu Vajda, representing the Bahá'í International Community (center), also delivered addresses.

In the altiplano community of Kullpaña, residents have built a small tree nursery, capable of propagating 1,000 seedlings. The trees will be planted behind small rock dams, once they begin to catch enough soil, to help hold scarce rainfall and control erosion. The effort is part of an outreach project of the Dorothy Baker Environmental Studies Center.



## Reforesting a mountain desert on Bolivia's altiplano

COCHABAMBA, Bolivia — In the Andes mountains just to the west of this central Bolivian city is the altiplano: a high, rugged plateau on which only the hardiest of peoples can survive.

In isolated valleys, small communities of Aymara and Quechua people eke out a subsistence living, growing potatoes during the wet season and grazing sheep on the marginal pasture lands that cling to the slopes. They are among the poorest of the poor here, in this poorest of Latin American nations.

Among their problems is a scarcity of water. The wet season is only about three months long, and, even then, dry spells sometimes cause the potato crop to fail. Any trees which would have helped to hold the rain were cut for fuel or building materials long ago.

"It's really a mountainous desert here," said William Baker, director of the Dorothy Baker Environmental Studies Center, a Bahá'í-sponsored initiative which is devoted to exploring how appropriate technologies and education for sustainable development can be applied to improve the social, economic and environmental con-

ditions in the Bolivian altiplano.

In its early years, the Center focused on helping families in the region build inexpensive solar-heated greenhouses, enabling them to grow vegetables and fruits inexpensively at high altitudes and during the off-season. *[Editor's note: In early 1991, One Country reported on this innovative project. See Vol. 3, issue 1.]*

More recently, the Center has sought to encourage altiplano communities with a simple yet potentially far-reaching project to build small check dams which can catch and hold the scarce rainfall. The promise — which is starting to be fulfilled in some areas — is that periodic dry spells will no longer mean disaster for potato crops, that the pasture lands themselves will become more verdant, that the slopes can be to some extent reforested, and that, ultimately, year-round supplies of water will be established.

"In reality, the soil in the region has a lot of fertility, but because of erosion and the fact that it dries out, many of the plant species that used to thrive no longer survive," said Dr. Baker during a recent inter-

**The Dorothy Baker Environmental Studies Center helps to empower altiplano communities for reforestation and erosion control, an investment for well-being**



view. "But with water conservation, there is the possibility of changing the whole ecology of the area back toward what it once was, and to use this for an environmentally sound base for other projects in agriculture and animal husbandry."

The foundation for the Center's efforts come from a program of environmental study classes for adults and preschool classes for children. These classes have been important in helping communities adopt new technologies. The accent is on showing a community how to help itself. Classes at the Center underscore the inherent dignity and worth of all human beings, for example, as well as emphasizing the essential unity and equality of all peoples — teachings that help tap into the underlying aspirations that all humans share, empowering them to become increasingly responsible for their own development.

"In our classes, we advocate an idea of 'investment for well-being,'" said Dr. Baker. "The idea is based on basic principles of conservation and respect for nature. It also emphasizes the idea that we live in one world and that we really don't have the right to destroy it, since that affects the rights of other people, too."

Empowered by the knowledge that they gained in classes sponsored by the Center, graduates from four communi-

ties in Tapacari Province organized their friends and neighbors to help build more than 2,000 small check dams during 1994 and 1995. In all, more than 300 people have participated in the project in these communities, which lie about 120 kilometers west of Cochabamba.

The simple rock and fill dams, which take three or four people a few hours to build, are designed to help slow the rainfall runoff, so that the water filters into the ground and leaves precious soil in catch basins behind the dam. The effort also seeks to control the heavy erosion that has washed away much prime pasture land in recent years.

Small tree nurseries have also been started in these communities, to supply seedlings that can be used to reforest areas behind the dams once they fill in.

Although the project is less than two years old, it is already beginning to show results, said Dr. Baker. "In one community, we have quite demonstrable new wetlands, while in another we have increased the area of wetlands," he said. "In all, we probably have 500 or more dams that are now filling in with soil and starting to filter water. We have planted many with new trees."

"Now several other communities are asking to enter the program because they see the results," Dr. Baker added. ☉

**"The soil in the region has a lot of fertility, but because of erosion and the fact that it dries out, many of the plant species that used to thrive no longer survive. But with water conservation, there is the possibility of changing the whole ecology of the area back toward what it once was."**

**— Dr. William Baker**



Although rainfall is scant on the altiplano, it often arrives with a vengeance when it does come, washing away precious pasture land. Here, in the community of Yawri Totorá, erosion threatens the village school and church.



# New York seminar focuses on the role of an international force

**Sponsored by the United Nations Office of the Bahá'í International Community, the seminar focused on two issues: peacekeeping and the need for an international auxiliary language.**

NEW YORK — At a special one-day seminar on restructuring the United Nations, representatives from select government missions, NGOs and UN agencies generally agreed that the upgrading of UN peacekeeping operations into a genuine international force will be required if the UN is to become more effective at containing war.

Participants also said that the long-term vision for the organization must be based on efforts to eradicate the underlying sources of conflict — whether poverty, human rights violations or misunderstanding — if lasting world peace is to be established.

Bringing together some two dozen individuals from government missions, United Nations agencies, academia, and non-governmental organizations, the 18 October seminar was entitled "Turning Point for All Nations" and was held in connection with the 50th anniversary of the UN.

Sponsored by the United Nations Office of the Bahá'í International Community, the seminar touched generally on the need for reform of the UN but focused on two basic issues: peacekeeping and the need for an international auxiliary language.

In the end, participants agreed that to accomplish such visionary changes in the international order it will require a strong partnership between governments and non-governmental organizations. For only in such a partnership will people at the grassroots be reached. And only with their support can such dramatic changes be made.

"We can't restructure the United Nations without a vision of where we are going," said Ruth Engo, a senior liaison officer for Africa and the Least Devel-

oped Countries for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), who chaired the afternoon session.

## A New Era for the UN

The tone of the seminar was set in a keynote address by President Amata Kabua of the Marshall Islands, whose talk combined a sense of pragmatism and moral principle as he made a vigorous plea for



understanding that the United Nations has entered a new era.

"The immutable law of change and decay necessitates the need for the United Nations to dispassionately examine its performance, revise its aims, and reassess its structures in a genuine search for practical and long lasting solutions," said President Kabua. "There is no choice. The current political landscape is vastly different from that of fifty years ago. There is now more than a threefold increase in the number of nations with membership in the United Nations. The rapidly increasing desire on the part of civil society and corporations to become more fully engaged in the change process itself has added a prominent dimension to the nature of active agencies in the field."

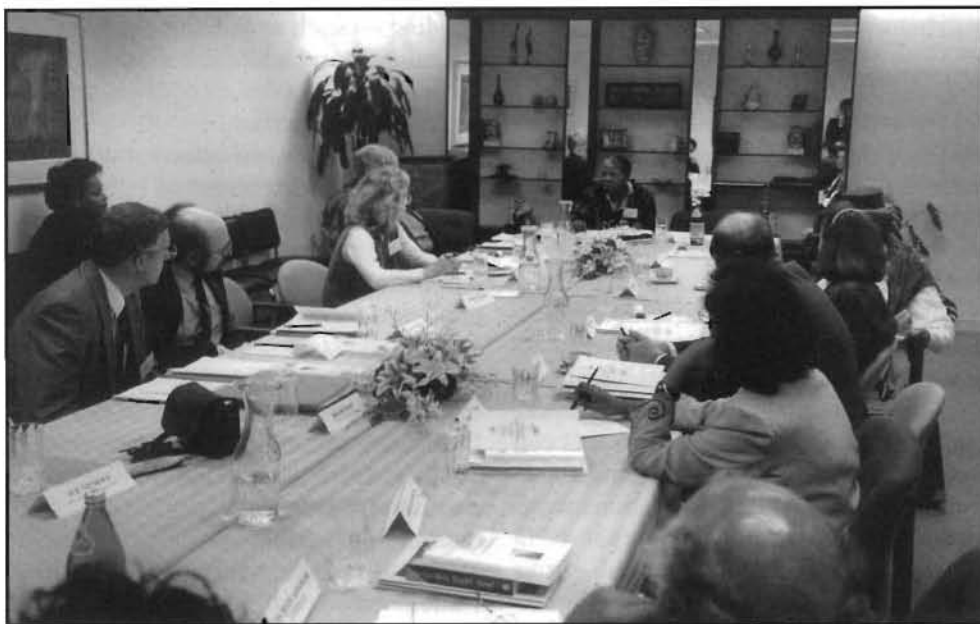
Also delivering an opening statement was UN Under-Secretary General Gillian Sorenson, who oversaw the United Nations' fiftieth anniversary commemorations this year. She said that the UN welcomes ideas for reform, saying that new ideas represent an "opportunity and not a threat" to the organization.

The morning session was chaired by John Biggar, first secretary of the Permanent Mission of Ireland to the UN. Following President Kabua and Ms. Sorenson were three presentations. First, Virginia Strauss, executive director of the Boston Research Center for the 21st Century, gave an overview of current proposals for United Nations restructuring. Her talk focused on

President Amata Kabua of the Marshall Islands delivered the seminar's keynote address.







In the afternoon, the seminar was chaired by Ruth Engo, a senior liaison officer for Africa and the Least Developed Countries for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). She is shown in the center of the photograph, sitting at the head of the table.

the response to the recent book, *Our Global Neighborhood*, the report of the Commission on Global Governance.

Next, Brian Lepard, an assistant professor of law at the University of Nebraska, presented a paper entitled "The Prospects for a Permanent United Nations Military Force." Reviewing the great successes — and also the failures — of UN peacekeeping operations over the last 50 years, Prof. Lepard said that the main trends of increasing world interdependence will inevitably lead to a wider recognition of the need for some sort of UN force that can respond quickly and impartially to global crises. Such measures, he added, will require the widespread acceptance of our sense of interdependence.

"No United Nations force can succeed unless world public opinion is behind it," said Prof. Lepard. "This is the main challenge. What is required is a transformation of attitudes: the understanding that the world is one neighborhood, spiritually as well as physically."

And, finally, Jeffery S. Gruber, a professor of linguistics at the University of Québec, explored how a universal auxiliary language, promoted under UN auspices, could go far to address the underlying sources of conflict, poverty and miscommunication that so challenge the international community today.

"The benefits of a universal auxiliary language amount to a necessity today," said Prof. Gruber, who explained that the

concept entails an effort not to supplant the diverse native languages of the peoples of the world but rather to offer a secondary common language which can be taught in schools everywhere.

Prof. Gruber pointed out that the "right to communicate" can be considered a basic human right. "In the international context," said Prof. Gruber, "all the peoples of the world have the right to partake of and contribute to the emergent world society and its affairs. Implicit in this is the necessity for interchange at the grassroots level. An international auxiliary language would provide the means for all human beings to exercise their right to communicate in the world community."

#### Concerns of Women

In the discussion that followed these presentations, some new themes emerged.

First, several women participants indicated that they had some fundamental concerns about an international military force — and that if one were to be developed, it would have to be used only with careful deliberation and as a last resort.

"In all the conflicts in the world today, it is men who made the decision in the conflicts and women who are the sufferers," said Misrak Elias, senior advisor, women's development program, United Nations Fund for Children (UNICEF). "What would make the force effective and useful is the degree to which women are decision-makers."

Ms. Elias and others urged that any

**"All the peoples of the world have the right to partake of and contribute to the emergent world society and its affairs. An international auxiliary language would provide the means for all human beings to exercise their right to communicate in the world community."**

**— Prof. Jeffery S. Gruber**



**"If there's a criminal act taking place, Chapter 7 is there for countries to work together against that one country. Diplomacy without threat doesn't work."**

**— Willard Haas, UN Information Officer**

restructuring of the United Nations also take into account the need to address underlying issues of conflict.

"When I look at issues of peace and violence," Ms. Elias continued, "it is clear to me that conflict among nations has to be closely related to conflict in the country and conflict in the family." The real solution, she said, has to come at both international and local levels, in the form of education, development and other efforts to address poverty and fundamental inequities.

Other participants stressed the practical importance of having a force that can step in when efforts to prevent conflict fail.

"The reality is that some nations, especially young nations, use military force to solve their problems," said Lt. Col. Birger Hoff, a military planner in the UN's Department of Peacekeeping Operations. "And when those nations have done that and they don't want to do it anymore, then this organization needs some kind of muscle, to help them live up to their agreements."

Critical to making such a force more effective, he said, is the development of a force which would be sent out much more quickly to respond to crises. "Presently, it takes six to nine months to put together a peacekeeping force in the traditional way," said Lt. Col. Hoff, adding that a standing force of some sort would be in position to respond much more quickly.

Lt. Col. Hoff also pointed out that, increasingly, UN peacekeeping operations have taken on jobs associated with nation-

building — such as holding elections and educating the populace about human rights — that likewise seek to address underlying sources of conflict.

Willard Haas, an information officer with the UN Department of Public Information, said that the UN Charter reserves the use of force only as a "last resort." Nevertheless, he said, that leaves just two choices: do nothing or use force. "If there's a criminal act taking place," he said, "Chapter 7 [of the Charter] is there for countries to work together against that one country. Diplomacy without threat doesn't work."

Diane Ala'i, a Bahá'í International Community representative to the United Nations in Geneva, suggested that most of the issues surrounding reform of the United Nations concern the fundamental debate over the degree to which national sovereignty must be weighed against international principles.

"There are extremely important cases of human rights violations that are brushed under the carpet because countries say that they are an internal matter," said Ms. Ala'i.

Ethan Taubes, program director for the International League for Human Rights, said that the idea of an international auxiliary language could aid in helping to overcome the sense of nationalism that reinforces the wall of sovereignty. "It creates the building block for an international cosmopolitan culture that transcends parochial interests," Mr. Taubes said.

Rebequa Getahoun, a representative to the UN from the Bahá'í Community of the United States, urged those from NGOs to continue to press forward with idealistic principles and a new vision for humanity.

"Our responsibility is to create a vision that the governments can follow," said Ms. Getahoun, "not to follow the visions that the governments have created. As NGOs, we are supranational. National sovereignty doesn't matter for us. And together we can create the kind of movement that can transform the face of the earth."

Techeste Ahderom, principal representative of the Bahá'í International Community's UN Office, said the event was the first in a series of seminars designed to provide a forum for discussions on the key issues facing humanity at the end of the 20th century. ☉

UN Under-Secretary General Gillian Sorenson speaks at an 18 October seminar on United Nations restructuring held in the New York offices of the Bahá'í International Community.





## In Berlin, NGOs consider the possibilities for global governance

BERLIN — Representatives from European non-governmental organizations (NGOs) called for a variety of measures to reform and restructure the United Nations and the international order at a special one-day forum on global governance, held here on 20 September 1995.

Such measures should include greater efforts to encourage democracy worldwide, they said, as well as the development of new educational institutions and curricula that can promote the concept of world citizenship and structural changes to the United Nations that will make it more representative of the world's peoples.

More than 200 people turned out for the event, at which some 40 NGO statements were delivered. Held in Berlin's historic Haus der Demokratie (House of Democracy), the event was organized by Landegg Academy, a Bahá'í-affiliated institution of higher education based in Wienacht, Switzerland. The forum was held in conjunction with the 50th anniversary of the United Nations.

"In the past few decades, humanity has been hit again and again by shock waves, becoming conscious of an increasing number of man-made global dangers, from the threat of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons to the overexploitation of the world's resources to the verge of climatic catastrophe," said Peter Spiegel

of Landegg in his introductory remarks. "It is apparent that there is an ever widening gap between the requirement for action on a global level on the one hand and the ability to undertake such global action on the other."

The forum began with keynote statements by representatives of five NGOs who have been particularly active in promoting the discussion on global governance in German-speaking Europe: Burkhard Koenitzer, managing director of the Bonn-based, nonpartisan Foundation for Development and Peace (SEF); Yehezkel Dror, member of the Club of Rome; Stefan Mögle-Stadel of the One World Network "Terra"; Fritz Vilmar of the World Federalist Movement; and Saba Khabirpour of the Bahá'í Community of Germany.

The proposals which emerged ranged from the concrete and specific to a call for broad and general change.

"We have had a *de facto* world state for a long time now, although, *de jure*, we haven't yet got a world state," said Mr. Mögle-Stadel. The consequence of this "legitimacy gap," he said, is that the structures of global governance existing in actual fact today exhibit traits that are so undemocratic and arbitrary that no civilized society would tolerate them in its government.



On the right, speaking into the microphone, is a representative from one of some 40 NGOs who delivered statements at a forum on global governance last September in the historic Haus der Demokratie. At the left is Dr. Burkhard Koenitzer, managing director of the Bonn-based, nonpartisan Foundation for Development and Peace (SEF). In the center is Prof. Fritz Vilmar of the World Federalist Movement.



Yehezkel Dror, a member of the Club of Rome and a professor at the University of Jerusalem, addresses the forum on global governance held in Berlin in September.



"The international world 'disorder' must therefore speedily become a federal, mutually supportive and democratically legitimized global world order, so that world society can attain the sovereignty necessary for the regulation of the world's problems," Mr. Mögle-Stadel said.

Dr. Koenitzer said UN reform depended on recognition of a global system of values, emphasizing human rights and democratic government, which all member states of the UN would adhere to. He also called for the introduction of a world tax to make UN organs more independent of member states. He added, how-

ever, that such reforms must be presented to world powers as a "win-win" situation, because "UN reform carried out without the support of the world powers has no hope of succeeding."

Prof. Dror, author of a recent report entitled "The Capacity to Govern," outlined three possible paths to a new system of global governance: 1) a "global state of emergency, triggered by one or several global catastrophes"; 2) a "great advance in global ethics," as perhaps through the introduction of a new religion, which he said is currently due according to "historical experience"; and, 3) a general movement at the national political level towards more global mindedness. Change, he said, may well come from all three directions.

Prof. Dror also urged greater efforts to make the European Union successful, calling it history's most ambitious experiment in international economic, social and political integration. Should Europe be successful, he said, it would offer a model for the rest of the world.

Ms. Khabirpour called the promotion of the consciousness of world citizenship "the indispensable foundation for all globally responsible action." She also urged the strengthening of civil society in all countries, particularly through the greater involvement of NGOs and women in decision-making at all levels.

In the afternoon, statements from some 40 NGOs on the topic of global governance were presented. They echoed many of the same themes. ☉

## United Nations General Assembly again expresses concern over human rights in Iran

UNITED NATIONS — Citing reports of high numbers of executions, the absence of due legal process, and the discriminatory treatment of religious minorities, the United Nations General Assembly has once again passed a resolution expressing concern over the human rights situation in Iran.

The resolution, which passed by a vote of 78 to 27 on 22 December 1995, was the tenth such resolution in eleven years. Like previous resolutions, the measure made specific mention of the situation of Iran's

Bahá'í community, which has been systematically oppressed in Iran since 1979. With more than 300,000 members, the Bahá'ís of Iran represent the largest religious minority in that country.

The resolution urged the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, as a state party to international human rights agreements, to abide by its obligations and "to ensure that all individuals within its territory and subject to its jurisdiction, including religious groups, enjoy the rights recognized in these instruments." ☉





One of the plenary sessions at the Fourth International Dialogue on the Transition to a Global Society was a "Dialogue on Politics." The panel included, left to right: Ambassador Tahseen Basheer, director of Egypt's National Center for Middle East Studies; Dr. Edy Kaufman, Center for International Development and Conflict Management (CIDCM), University of Maryland; Ms. Lily Boeykens, Belgian Commissioner on the UN Commission on the Status of Women; Ambassador Paul-Marc Henry of France; Dr. Ernest Wilson, CIDCM; and H.E. Amine Gemayel, former president of Lebanon.

## Fourth International Dialogue

*(Continued from page one)*

In October, the Fourth International Dialogue was held at the University of Maryland, at its Center for International Development and Conflict Management, just a few miles from Washington, D.C. It was organized by the University's Bahá'í Chair for World Peace and the Department of History.

Like previous Dialogues, it brought together a stellar collection of scholars, policy-makers and leaders of thought. Indeed, there were numerous signs here that the Dialogues are now reaching a new level of exchange and recognition, taking on ever greater significance in the worldwide discussion on the effects of globalization.

For the first time, for example, the Dialogue attracted a head of state and a former head of state. President Amata Kabua of the Marshall Islands delivered a major address, as did former President Amine Gemayel of Lebanon. U.S. Vice President Albert Gore Jr., although not present, was said to have "enthusiastically endorsed" the meeting, according to University of Maryland President William Kirwan.

The event also drew several major religious figures, including Dr. Karan Singh of India, a distinguished Hindu scholar and spiritual leader, and Madame Mary Rabbání, leading dignitary of the Bahá'í Faith.

Given the great diversity of the participants, who came from more than 22 countries, the ensuing dialogue was remarkable in that there was a high degree of agreement that the key factor in easing humanity's transition to a global society rests with the issue of moral values and, more specifically, in the promotion of a new universal ethic.

"The overwhelming implication of the phenomenon of a 'shrinking' world behooves us to act as global neighbors," said President Gemayel. "And this neighborliness extends to all the citizens of this globe irrespective of whether they are 'next door' or thousands of miles distant."

"Success in any endeavor in this context will be possible and pursued if we were to be guided by true values, by a universal ethic that informs our actions and permeates the spirit and manner in which we are governed," President Gemayel continued. "The values of which I speak are timeless ones: that is, they have been advocated for centuries by the great religions and by the finest political thinkers from Aristotle and Plato onwards. They include: respect for life, freedom and justice."

This theme, that our collective values will determine how successful humanity will be in making the transition to a global society, was echoed numerous times during the three-day meeting, which ran from October 15-17.

Bertrand Schneider, Secretary General of the Club of Rome, spoke about the global challenges posed by the informa-



Madame Mary Rabbání, leading dignitary of the Bahá'í Faith, chats with Dr. Bertrand Schneider, secretary general of the Club of Rome, between sessions at the Fourth International Dialogue.



**"This is a period of transition, and as with all great transitions, it has a logic of its own... But the change is not predetermined. In any great evolutionary leap, success is possible and failure is possible."**

**— Prof. Ervin Laszlo**

tion revolution. "Even in the most sophisticated and tolerant societies, the new technologies are raising questions about cultural values that are not easily resolved," said Dr. Schneider. "The technologies may be in themselves neutral: the difficulties arise from the way they are used. If satellite TV and the Internet were used only for educational purposes, there would be no problems. But what do we do when they are used to disseminate pornography, especially involving children, which even the most broad-minded find abhorrent?"

The answer, Dr. Schneider hinted, lies in new values of cooperation. "As we move towards a global society," Dr. Schneider continued, "we have extraordinary opportunities to pool our intellectual and economic resources to tackle common problems, instead of either duplicating our efforts or, worse, using them against one another. Everyone recognizes that it makes more sense for Russian, American and European scientists to collaborate, as they are now doing, rather than compete in space. We need similar cooperation and solidarity here on Earth: if we put all our heads together, we stand a better chance of solving the problems we now find baffling. For that to happen, we need not just knowledge, but wisdom."

Dr. Ervin Laszlo, an internationally renowned specialist in evolution and systems theory, said that manag-

ing the transition is a matter of humanity's collective choice.

"This is a period of transition, and as with all great transitions, it has a logic of its own," said Prof. Laszlo. "It's not the past telling us what the future will be, nor is it a random event. It is deterministic chaos. A great deal of freedom is possible. What is not possible is to stay the same or evade it. Change is therefore a necessity. But the change is not predetermined. In any great evolutionary leap, success is possible and failure is possible."

The key to success, Prof. Laszlo said, pointing to his head, "is written up here, in our minds, and in the values we hold."

Religious leaders at the Dialogue likewise emphasized the importance of values, suggesting that any search for a universal ethic capable of guiding humanity's transition should begin with an examination of the moral values which underlie all of the world's great religions.

Dr. Karan Singh said that Hinduism, like virtually all of the world's great religions, teaches the "all-pervasiveness of the Divine" and that the "spark of the Divine resides in all human beings." From these two understandings, he said, we come to see that "if we all encapsulate the Divine spark, then humanity is an extended family. That has to be the keynote of the global society."

"Religion," Dr. Singh added, "can provide the basis for the unity of the human race. It is the only thing that can provide



this basis."

Madame Rabbáni suggested that the so-called "Golden Rule," found in all religions, also provides the basis for such a universal ethic, the only thing capable of promoting understanding and tolerance. She called on world leaders to move beyond narrow nationalistic perspectives.

"Present political philosophy and many of its proponents are far too often governed by fanatical and opportunistic doctrines, ignorant prejudices, and purely personal ambitions," said Madame Rabbáni. "I prefer a concept of power that is different, broad, more altruistic."

"Power ought to be defined as a sacred obligation towards the greatest good for the greatest number," she continued. "In the present context, this means the whole world, and those in power, acting as the trustees of the Creator Himself, must be accountable to Him for their acts. They are therefore obliged to regard themselves not as the representatives of small local constituencies but as the representatives of all that dwell on earth, and they should judge between men with justice, recognizing that the decisions they take in this spirit will surely promote their national interests while protecting the welfare of the whole — in other words, mankind. I believe these two principles — of global and spiritual

responsibility — will characterize the governmental institutions that will evolve in our future global society."

The call for a reexamination of religious values in the search for political guidance was echoed by some of the secular leaders present at the Dialogue.

President Kabua said a new global society will be successful only "through a creative interaction of scientific and religious systems of knowledge such that they can recast a fundamental reorientation in our habits and attitudes."

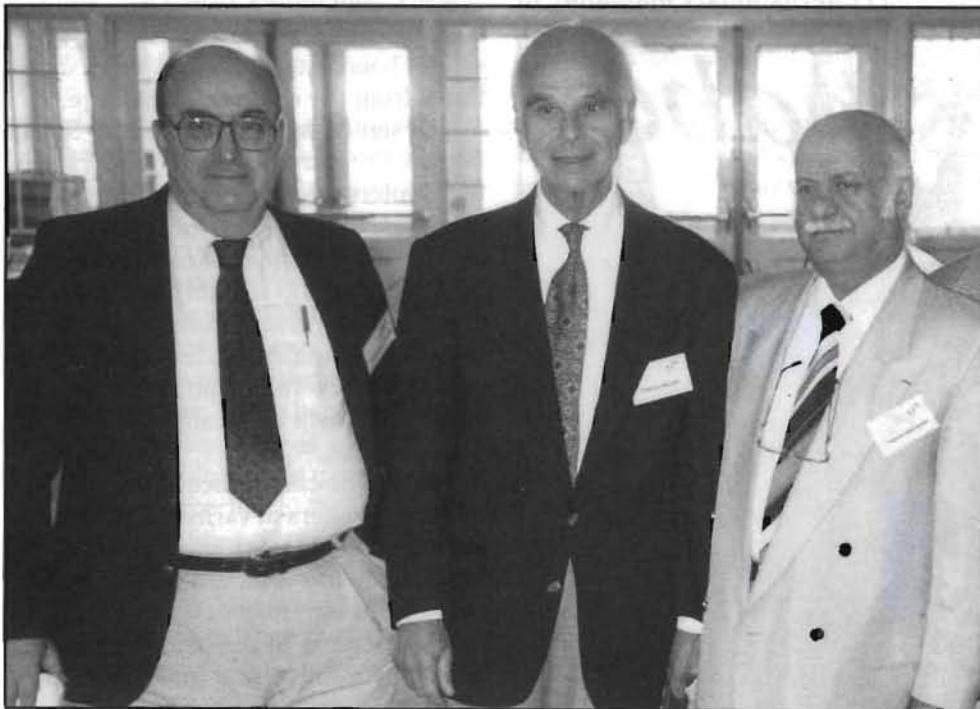
Both science and religions have, in the past, been responsible for great advances and great horrors, President Kabua said. Science has promoted "great inventions and colossal enterprises" and also "perfected the ability of humanity to kill hundreds of thousands of people."

Likewise, he said, "despite the influence religion has had in establishing world civilization, history — past and recent — provides ample evidence of the barbaric acts perpetrated in the name of religion."

Only through the concept of human brotherhood and oneness, said President Kabua, can science and religion combine to yield their fairest fruits. In this context, he said, "religion whose purpose is to unify humanity will be a powerful force in harmonizing our spiritual and material needs and progress." ☉

**"Power ought to be defined as a sacred obligation towards the greatest good for the greatest number. This means the whole world, and those in power, acting as the trustees of the Creator Himself, must be accountable to Him for their acts."**

**— Madame Mary Rabbáni**



Dr. Miles Bradbury, left, and Dr. Suheil Bushrui, right, were the principal organizers of this year's International Dialogue. Standing in the center is Dr. Ervin Laszlo, one of the founders of the Dialogue and a speaker this year. Dr. Bradbury is chairman of the History Department at the University of Maryland; Dr. Bushrui holds the Bahá'í Chair for World Peace at the University; and Dr. Laszlo is president of the Club of Budapest.



## In San Francisco, the Association for Bahá'í Studies considers the prospects for "Uniting the Nations"

SAN FRANCISCO — More than 800 people attended the 19th Annual Conference of the Association for Bahá'í Studies, held here in October in commemoration of the signing of the United Nations Charter in this Pacific coast city some 50 years ago.

Taking the theme "Anarchy into Order: Uniting the Nations," the meeting explored a wide range of topics related to the scholarly study of the Bahá'í Faith as a religious movement and how it is addressing the wider world of women's issues, human rights, economic development and world order.

"We had a range of papers in this meeting," said Christine Zerbinis, secretary of the Association. "Their topics went from practical subjects, such as a presentation on the education of girls in Guatemala and various papers on human rights, to relatively abstract subjects, such as on the topic of materialism and spirituality."

In keeping with the Conference's theme, the keynote address focused on the United Nations. Techeste Ahderom, principal representative of the Bahá'í International Community to

the UN, spoke about the need to reflect, on the 50th anniversary of the United Nations, on how humanity might collectively face its future.

Dr. Juan Ricardo Cole, a professor of history at the University of Michigan, presented a paper entitled "The Equal Rights of All: Human Rights and the Bahá'í Faith." He said that the ethical principles laid out in the Bahá'í teachings more than a century ago can be seen as a harbinger for the introduction of similar principles in the post-World War II human rights movement.

Dr. Susie Clay, a specialist in the education of girls and women for the U.S. Agency for International Development, presented a paper entitled "Infusing Spiritual Principles into the Development Process: The Case of the Girls Education Initiative in Guatemala." She told about a project begun in 1989 in Guatemala that focuses on the role that educated mothers play in the development of their families, communities and countries.

In attempt to specifically connect global issues with local concerns, a unique "Local Community Challenges" seminar hosted several mayors, chiefs of police, school board members and other dignitaries from the community at large.

Designed and moderated by Shiela Banani, the convenor and chairperson of the Conference, the seminar provided a forum for the discussion of local issues such as race unity, homelessness, violence reduction, drug and alcohol abuse, and the economic marginalization of people of color. The seminar also featured presentations on several urban and inner-city outreach efforts by locally based Bahá'í organizations.

In all, the conference featured more than 80 speakers at varied seminars and workshops, on topics such as moral development, the arts, alternative education, and the international economy. More than 40 percent of the papers were presented by women, said Ms. Banani. ☉

— reported by David Langness

In addition to the presentation of numerous academic-oriented papers, the 19th Annual Conference of the Association for Bahá'í Studies featured a number of artistic performances. Shown below are members of the San Francisco Bay Area Youth Workshop, a dance group.

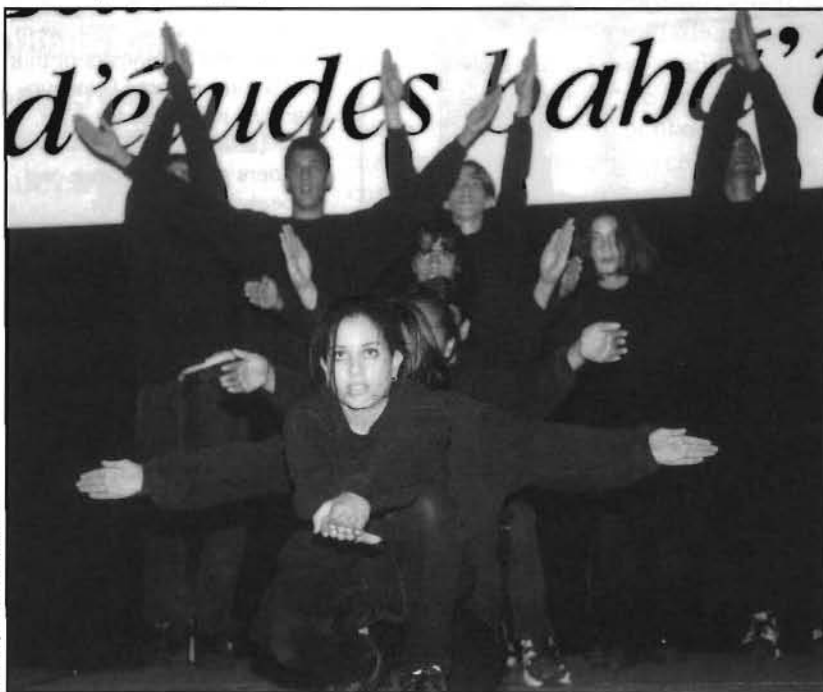


Photo by Couroush Mehanian



## Review: *The Universe Within*

(Continued from back page)

self-knowledge and can never achieve objectivity about introspection."

Similar problems arise, Dr. Khursheed says, for those who say that the mind is a sort of living computer and our thoughts are nothing more than complex algorithms. "Is self-knowledge the awareness of one's own computational processes as they are occurring?" asks Dr. Khursheed. "If so, which background algorithms are being executed to produce the awareness of these foreground computational processes?"

"Our self-knowledge is punctuated by desires, intentions and purposes for which no amount of background symbol-shuffling can seem to account," he adds.

And he says that those who argue that human nature is merely the sum total of a series of "survival" experiences, compounded by evolution through the eons, face similar problems: if we are merely animals whose reactions and thought processes have been programmed by evolution, where is the explanation for self-consciousness, Dr. Khursheed asks.

Such "scientific" explanations have been widely accepted by modern society as proofs that human nature has no spiritual side, Dr. Khursheed believes. Yet such a conclusion is wrong, he writes. Most of the great scientific discoveries have stemmed not from methodologies based on pure logic and rationalism but rather on processes of insight and intuition that are more akin to the mystical experiences that are described in all of the world's religions, he writes.

"The reduction of human nature to animal nature is not supported by the findings of any single scientific theory or set of scientific theories," he says.

In the book's second part, entitled "Personal Knowledge," Dr. Khursheed writes that scientific discovery is a process of insight and intuition that is quite similar to the religious experience. "Science relies on creative qualities of the mind, as opposed to any methodology based upon empirical observations and logical rules," he writes. He notes, for example, that insights gained from highly intuitive "thought experiments" led Albert Einstein to formu-

late the theory of relativity.

He goes on to suggest that successful scientific investigations also require a kind of "faith" — a faith in the principle of causality and in the unity of the universe — and that the really great discoveries, which almost invariably fly in the face of the conventional wisdom, require a genuine "leap of faith."

Dr. Khursheed cites Newton's formulation of the first law of motion, which states that a body in motion tends to remain in motion, unless acted on by outside forces. Since there are always forces acting on the motion of an object under observation, such as wind resistance, gravitational forces and so on, Dr. Khursheed writes, it "would have been an impossible feat for Newton to observe the motion of an object with no forces acting upon it. His first law of motion is a statement of faith, an abstraction of the mind."

In the book's final part, entitled "The Inner Vision," Dr. Khursheed brings his thesis full circle, arguing that for humanity to achieve the necessary sense of collective self-awareness required for our age, the essential unity of science and religion must become widely recognized and encouraged.

"All noble enterprises, science, religion, art and ethics, rely on the spiritual core of human nature prevailing over the influence of other superficial selves. While Descartes' search for indubitable truths in effect reached the conclusion that the spiritual self is more fundamental to human character than any other self, it was not new. All the world's spiritual traditions reach the same conclusion. All religions, for instance, are based upon a belief in the primacy of the spiritual over the material in human nature."

On the scientific side of the equation, he writes, the "success of science itself is one of the clearest demonstrations of the power of the mind over the material. The power of thought is still the experience upon which all our knowledge is founded."

In its totality, *The Universe Within* is a powerful book, offering a strong polemic against the materialistic orientation that resonates through much of modern culture. Its arguments are both subtle and clear; it deserves to be read not only by scientists and theologians but also by anyone concerned about the social, cultural and political choices which lie in our collective future. ☉

**"The reduction of human nature to animal nature is not supported by the findings of any single scientific theory or set of scientific theories."**

**— Anjam Khursheed,  
*The Universe Within***



# Does good science require a leap of faith?

## *The Universe Within: An Exploration of the Human Spirit*

By Anjam Khursheed

Oneworld Publications

Oxford

In his new book, *The Universe Within*, Anjam Khursheed opens a penetrating exploration of the inherent harmonies between science and religion with a deceptively simple question: what is this thing called self-awareness?

"At birth children are unable to differentiate themselves from the external world, and as they progress through infancy, childhood and adolescence their consciousness and will seem to grow steadily stronger," writes Dr. Khursheed, a physicist at the University of Singapore. "Consciousness of ourselves dawns upon us. And like the sun gradually rising in the morning, the light of consciousness and self-knowledge shines steadily stronger as our lives progress. Then, like the sun setting in the western skies, consciousness slips away."

Before the Copernican revolution, Dr. Khursheed writes, the mysterious phenomenon of consciousness was explained by religion. "Pre-modern human beings viewed themselves and nature in a way that can broadly be termed as spiritual. Pre-modern human beings linked their inner and outer universes by pointing to the divine connection between them."

But today the seemingly precise methodologies and astonishing discoveries of science appear to have left little room for a connection to the divine. In the gap, he argues, there has arisen a sense of collective moral confusion, a fragmentation of the human spirit that contributes to many of humanity's deepest troubles, from the displacement of traditional cultures by western materialism to the wholesale exploitation of our environment.

"The ecological crisis is now recognized to be a crisis not about our environment but about ourselves," he notes. "The characteristic feature of our age is that the singularly rapid expansion of scientific and technological power is accompanied by an equally momentous fragmentation of spiritual values."

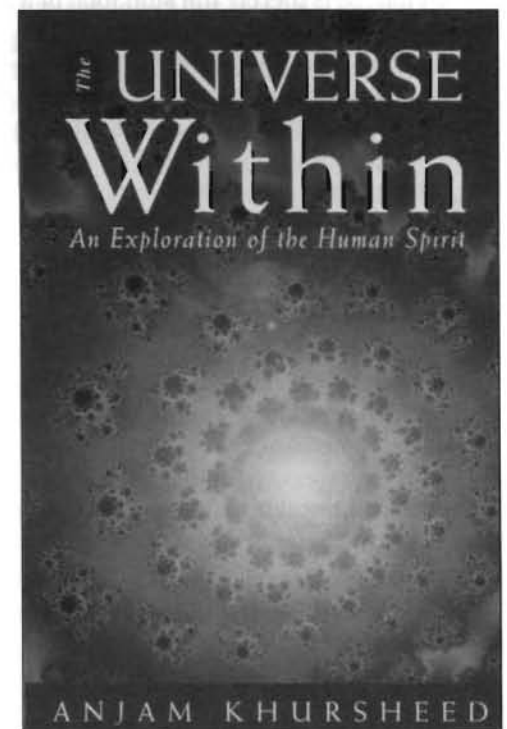
Yet, argues Dr. Khursheed, it need not be that way. And this is the main thesis of his book: although it has become widely accepted that science and religion are inherently antagonistic, the true nature of

both is such as to make them complementary means of exploring reality.

In the book's first part, entitled "Modern Myths," Dr. Khursheed develops this thesis by leading the reader on a discussion of how scientists and philosophers since Copernicus have sought to deal with the question about self-awareness.

The empiricists, led by David Hume, argued that only what could be seen, touched or heard could be counted as real, and that self-awareness was merely the interplay of sense perceptions in a kind of "theatre" of the mind, Dr. Khursheed writes. Yet Hume's explanation for self-knowledge, he says, "is defeated by an infinite chain of perceptions: a set of perceptions observes another set of perceptions, which themselves are being observed by yet another set... and so on. If there is no mind anchoring all these perceptions together, the self becomes an illusion."

## Review



He uses similar arguments to evince the failure of other modern "scientific" explanations for human consciousness. Behaviorism, he writes, sought to explain human nature as a set of responses to external stimuli. Yet, he writes, "behaviorism suffers from the same problems as Hume's empirical philosophy in that it cannot provide any plausible explanation of

(Continued on page 15)