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## **RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

Let me first express my sincere gratitude to the International Press Institute for having given me this opportunity of explaining what the InterAction is, why it is suggesting the adoption by UN of a Universal Declaration of Human Responsibilities, what kind of effects such declaration is hoped to have and how, particularly, it would strengthen the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We understand fully that the support but also critical remarks and suggestions from the international press will be vital for the success of our undertaking.

The InterAction Council was founded 15 years ago at the initiative of former prime minister Takeo Fukuda of Japan and former bundeskanzler Helmut Schmidt of Germany. It is composed of some 30 former heads of government or state from all continents and from different political orientations from conservatives to former communists, Mikhail Gorbachev being the Russian member. But party politics does not play any role at all in our deliberations because these leaders do not any more represent any political organisation nor are they any more under the pressure of publicity. They are all steadfast believers in democracy and in human rights and their countries typically have a good human rights record.

The Council has devoted a great deal of time to economic and social issues, above all to globalisation and to problems of population and of the environment. This is partly due to the fact that the Japanese government has asked the Council always to meet shortly before the G7, now G8, meetings in order to provide a commentary on recent developments for the benefit of the G8 participants.

The most important task of the Council began in 1987 when a group of its members, including our present chairman, Malcolm Fraser of Australia, met with significant people from the world's major religions - Buddhists, Muslims, Methodists, Roman Catholics, Protestants, Hindus and the Jewish faith were all represented.

This Rome meeting showed eager interest from all sides to codify a universal

ethic declaration acceptable to everybody. In an era of globalisation such common code of ethics would diminish the risk of wars and conflicts between different cultures and ease the relations between people of differing cultural background who in today's open world are called to co-operate and to live together intermingled more closely than ever before. But we are equally persuaded that to have a code of responsibilities alongside the Human Rights' Declaration would lead to more harmonious national communities and be supportive to the Human Rights' Declaration itself.

After ten years of tenacious work under the leadership of Helmut Schmidt this group of former politicians, religious leaders, moral philosophers and journalists finally produced a 19 clause draft declaration which the InterAction Council, for its part, adopted last year. Our aim now is to have the proposed Universal Declaration of Human Responsibilities introduced into the United Nations for debate and in the light of that debate to further elaboration by an appropriate UN body.

It should be remembered that IAC is far from being the only organisation active in pursuit of a global code of ethics. On the contrary, it would seem that after the end of the cold war and the beginning of the era of globalisation, large numbers of people are in search of a new starting line for their communal life and think that it should be built on moral grounds.

In fact, I come to your meeting more or less directly from the Academy of Values, organized by the Church of Finland where representatives of politics, religion, science, administration, justice and arts discussed the new role of ethics in our time. I learned there, among many other things, that the Finnish parliamentarians had formed a multi-party discussion group for global ethics. A similar awakening in matters of morality is taking place in many countries on a popular level. There is much talk about responsibility towards your neighbours, towards your local community and towards your nation. A feeling that rights and freedoms cannot be a one way road but must be balanced by self-responsibility and responsibility towards your own community is expanding at an astounding pace.

Maybe the most significant sign of this was the adoption in 1993 in Chicago by the Parliament of the World's Religions of a Declaration Towards a Global Ethic. But mention should be made also of the Trieste Declaration of the Nobel prize winning scientists where the universal code of ethics is interpreted into the area of scientific research and education. Our Global Neighbourhood by the Independent Commission on

Global Governance as well as the report, Our Creative Diversity by the World Commission on Culture and Development should also be mentioned. Personally I was especially delighted to find out that an organizations of the youth, such as the AIESEC, the international body of the students in economics and business administration, are organising important conferences on the theme.

Finding a fast moral ground for a liberated and globalised world would seem to me the theme of the years to come. It is extremely important to foster vivid dialogue on the theme now and also to understand that such universal code would not compete with but complement and strengthen the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

"You should not ask what your country can give to you but also what you can give to your country" expressed in an unforgettable way the healthy interaction between the individual and the communities to which she belongs, between the rights and the responsibilities, indeed.

After having adopted the draft Declaration on Human Responsibilities last September, IAC has been satisfied to receive a wealth of comments. The declaration has received strong support from a wide ranging group of prominent individuals, organizations and several governments. But some reservations have been expressed that the document may undermine the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, or encourage controls on the freedom of the press.

Let me therefore give our views on these criticisms.

It is important to note, firstly, that the InterAction Council is prepared further to elaborate the proposed text where the present wording leads to misunderstandings. The country which sponsors the draft declaration to the UN debate will naturally also have a right to edit it, if it deems it necessary. Finally, it is up to the United Nations to formulate the final text. There will be therefore plenty of occasions to influence the ultimate UN declaration.

As to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it is important to understand that it addresses itself to the inalienable rights of humanity and to the protection of all people against abusive power by governments or institutions of government. The aim is to guarantee to the citizen certain rights, freedoms and services from the government.

The Universal Declaration of Human Responsibilities addresses itself mainly to the individual citizen and his responsibilities toward his family, neighbourhood and larger communities to which he belongs. But the declaration also addresses pleas on ethical behaviour to the governmental power.

But there is a bridge between the two declarations which relates the proposed one to the existing. While most of the articles in the Human Rights' Declaration concern civil and political rights, article 29 states: "Everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his personality is possible." This opens a window toward the responsibilities of the individual to the community. What the proposed new declaration attempts to do, is more concretely to enumerate the responsibilities mentioned in the Human Rights' Declaration. This makes the proposed declaration subordinate to the Human Rights' document.

In the InterAction Council, we actually believe that the constant demand for rights alone, without better recognition of duties mentioned in article 29, would not achieve the purpose of the original authors, which certainly was a harmonious national society and a peaceful, co-operative world.

Other than western cultures and religions do place more reliance on responsibilities than we do but surely, in our own societies, we are seeing problems, grave and serious deficiencies, where people demand rights without the acceptance of a responsibility to family, to community or to country. There is a clearly felt and timely need for the international community to give an authoritative expression to these responsibilities.

Finally, I wish once more to emphasize that in the InterAction Council we are opposed to an attempt to change the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and believe that our proposed declaration would not only provide a balance but would also mean that the Human Rights' Declaration would remain inviolate and intact. We also believe that, if responsibilities come to be recognized, greater progress will be made in advancing human rights themselves where there are still serious deficiencies. Rights and responsibilities must go hand-in-hand. We follow with admiration the activity of the High Commissioner and offer to support it where need be.

As to the freedom of the press, the Council strongly believes that no outside

authority should control the media who must be self-regulating.

The freedom of the press or of a journalist is guaranteed in a modern constitutional state. There is the right to report freely. The state must support this right and, if necessary, act to enforce it. The state and the citizen have the responsibility to respect that right. However, the right to report freely does not impinge on the responsibility of being truthful and fair of the journalist or of the media.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I remember when I, in my youth, learnt through the newspapers about the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It made such an impression that I learnt it by heart of my own and it was certainly one of the most important signposts of my youth and later in political life.

The grand old lady of journalism, Flora Lewis, has given all through the long preparation process her active contribution to the editing work of the Universal Declaration of Human Responsibilities, joined at later stages of the work by other prominent representatives of the profession.

She feels, which we all share, that the era opening under our eyes will need the same kind of idealism and faith that the world received from its leaders 50 years ago when the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was created.

The best we could get from you in furthering our new declaration would be to disseminate information on it, to comment it on your editorial columns and to give space for people's comments. This is an issue which warrants widespread public debate and dialogue, especially within civil society.

Mrs./Mr. Chairperson,

Thank you for your attention.