

Greencoat Forum on: UN's untold successes

Opening remarks by Don de Silva, Head of Programmes, IofC-UK

Your Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen.

I wish you a warm welcome to 24 Greencoat Place – the centre of Initiatives of Change UK. This forum is part of “Greencoat Forums”, monthly events held around a specific important theme.

We are delighted to have with us this evening, Sir Richard Jolly. But before we get down to the business of this evening, I see there are many new faces. For their benefit, with your permission, I like to make a few general remarks about IofC.

The work of the United Nations is of particularly of importance to Initiatives of Change. Formerly called Moral Re-Armament, Initiatives of Change has played and continues to play a major role in building trust across divisions and conflict around the world.

Initiatives of Change came into action the world stage around the time of the first United Nations Conference was held in San Francisco in 1945. In his book, *Faith in Diplomacy*, distinguished British diplomat Archie Mackenzie, writes about how IofC helped to solve a contentious issue concerning the establishment of the Trusteeship Council of the UN.

Briefly, what is Initiatives of Change? I would like to take you to an instance when the founder of IofC, Frank Buchman, visited Sri Lanka in 1952.

In Sri Lanka, Frank Buchman was invited to a paddy or rice planting ceremony. Over a thousand women farmers were present. Buchman was invited to inaugurate the ceremony. Always dressed in sartorial splendour, Buchman took off his shoes and socks, rolled up his trousers, went knee deep into the mud and planted the first shoot. Later he said this to the farmers: “There is enough rice in the world for everybody's need, not for everyone's greed if we share enough and care enough we will have enough.

He went on: “Empty stomachs will be filled with food, empty hands will be filled with work, and empty hearts with an idea that really satisfies.”

An idea that really satisfies. There is a central theme in all the books, associated with Sir Richard Jolly: people and ideas matter. Sir Richard has written about UN ideas that have changed the world.

lofC is an idea that has legs, that is powerful and has momentum. Working in over 38 nations across the world, lofC is based on the principle that people, from whatever background, can make a difference in society. In order to do so, it challenges a person to realise that change in society has to start with oneself. It challenges a person to begin by putting right what is wrong in one's life, dealing with hatreds, hurts, bitterness, exploitation or corruption through measuring one's life according to four absolute moral standards of honesty, purity, unselfishness and love.

At the heart of this idea is the daily quiet time, listening and seeking direction from that inner voice, the conscience or the voice of God within oneself . And then to act. This process, in time, becomes explosive and empowers a person to move mountains.

The four absolute moral standards – honesty, purity, unselfishness and love -- provide a platform for action and cooperation between people from all walks of life of different faiths or no faith. lofC challenges a person to realise that changing oneself alone is not good enough. It challenges a person to take action to action to change society. We can remake the world through remaking people.

lofC highlights the moral and spiritual dimension in all activities.

All action programmes to deal with injustice in society are based on people and their degree of commitment. The constant renewal of the spirit within us is the key to sustainable social justice, sustainable peace, sustainable reconciliation and sustainable development. Peace treaties and negotiations often fail when peace is not created within the hearts of individuals. Sustainable change is the engine of sustainable development.

Working in tandem with the UN, lofC has been at the forefront of peace-building across the world. The reconciliation between France and Germany and the reconciliation between Japan and the rest of the world. In the UK and across the world, lofC is active in environmental issues, governance, empowerment, particularly of disadvantaged communities, education, and trust building.

It is within this context, we are delighted to welcome, Sir Richard Jolly to speak on the UN's untold success stories.

Sir Richard Jolly is Honorary Professor and Research Associate of the Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex. He is the co-director of the UN Intellectual History Project. He has overseen the 17-volume history of the UN's contributions to economic and social development since 1945. Three of the

volumes of which he has been a co-author have been recognized as outstanding academic books. Details of the project are on the website: www.unhistory.org.

As a recipient of a Carnegie Scholarship in 2000, Sir Richard has also been much pre-occupied with trends in global inequality and what can be done to narrow global gaps over the next 50 years. Sir Richard was a Trustee of OXFAM and Chairman of the UN Association of the United Kingdom.

Before returning to England in 2000, Sir Richard was an Assistant Secretary General of the United Nations, holding senior positions in UNICEF and at the United Nations Development Programme for nearly 20 years.

From 1996 to 2000, he was Special Adviser to the Administrator of UNDP, and architect of the widely-acclaimed Human Development Report. Before this, he was Deputy Executive Director in UNICEF for over 14 years, with responsibilities for UNICEF's programmes in over 130 countries, including UNICEF's strategy for support to countries in reducing child mortality. He is the co-author of the book *Adjustment with a Human Face*, focussing attention on the needs of children and women in economic adjustment policies.

It is a personal pleasure and privilege for me to welcome Sir Richard Jolly. During my time at the United Nations, he was the role model, many of us look up to. We drew strength from his courage and commitment, against the background of diplomatic compromise and appeasement, to remain true to the highest values of the UN charter.