

## First Caux Forum for Human Security: Towards an integrated approach

**Caux, 23 July 2008. 400 peace-makers from 52 countries have been meeting for a first Caux Forum for Human Security in Caux, Switzerland. They stressed the need for long-term commitment and the broad involvement of civil society to tackle the array of global threats in an innovative way.**

Influential personalities from politics, civil society, the media and the world of thought met to search for a deeper diagnosis of the world's ills, to find greater trust, and to think of human security in fresh, innovative ways, drawing on Caux's 60 years of experience in working for reconciliation. Six areas of human insecurity were examined: social and economic conditions; armed conflicts; environmental factors; good governance and the rule of law; wounded memories; religious and cultural dimensions. Some fifty people took part in 10 round table discussions on these broad themes; experts, academics, diplomats, grass roots activists from many fields and all continents agreed on the need to break out of a purely sectoral approach. Case studies were presented of conflict resolution from Australia, Burundi, France, Kenya, New Caledonia, Nigeria, Northern Ireland and Sierra Leone.

**Mohamed Sahnoun**, President of *Initiatives of Change (IofC) International*, thanked all the participants in the 'conversation'. Next year's conference, he hoped would build on this year's and on an urgent intensification of activities in the field of many actors. It should include more personalities from the worlds of politics, business and economic life and the media, and would focus more on the Middle East. A clash of civilizations is not inevitable, Sahnoun insisted, 'diversity is a wealth'.

**Clare Short**, British Member of Parliament, and the former Minister of International Development, speaking at the closing meeting, attacked 'the politics of fear and the desire for domination'. 'There is a better model', she said. 'You cannot have lasting peace without justice, and the peace-makers need to understand that,' she continued. 'We are all implicated. There is a threat to human existence, to human civilization. We need to move into a new phase of history, where the whole world becomes part of our human family. We have the knowledge, the capacity, the communications to make the world more just, more equitable – and if we don't get it right, we'll be in desperate trouble.' Short stressed that 'We in the West are part of the problem. There's enormous beauty in the scary job ahead. We either control and dominate, or we find a wiser, more generous response, and share fairly.' The reconciliation work that Caux is doing, she suggested needed to be set in a bigger frame, 'drawing people together into a shared agenda, and then a world-wide movement'.

For **Geoffrey Lean**, an award-winning pioneer of environmental journalism, the specificity of the Caux approach may lie in trying to deal preventively with emerging conflicts; encouraging the people already engaged in grappling with the issues and 'dealing with the problems sitting round the table as well as those placed on the table'. He had seen conferences breakdown over personal antipathies, and others succeed when sometimes a few people had set out to build trust.

**Rajmohan Gandhi**, author of a major biography of his grandfather, the Mahatma, and a university professor and former Senator, said at the opening session: 'Caux is not a place for speeches and debates, but for conversations that influence. It is a place of reflection on what has been heard.' Technological progress, he suggested, might make our time 'the age of the citizen'. 'In this age of the citizen, innocence will have power, the weak will gather strength. Cruelty, oppression and indifference shall not prevail.'

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*Initiatives of Change International* is an NGO with participatory status at the Council of Europe and Special Consultative Status at the Social and Economic Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations in Geneva.

*CAUX-Initiatives of Change* is an officially recognized independent foundation, and is a founder member of IofC International.

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