From the President

Alongside my paediatric practice, I have a calling to build bridges of understanding across cultures, religious and social divides. I am proud of my heritage as an Egyptian, Arab, Muslim, British professional woman. But my life has been greatly enriched by encounters with people of other backgrounds and points of view.

Today, there is increasing recognition that civic, governmental and diplomatic processes need to be supplemented by individual peace-building efforts. This is independent work nowhere in society to be active participants: working more closely together to meet basic human needs, healing the wounds of the past to build lasting peace, encouraging ethical leadership and ensuring sustainable development. Can we move from parochial conversations that work together to create a better future?

The Arab Spring and other movements towards greater democracy around the world point to a second great need of our time: to build societies where moral values are embedded in the governing systems, so that they are based on lasting solid foundations that stand the test of time and the passage of generations.

As a diverse inter-generational movement of people, I believe that Initiatives of Change has a particular contribution to make towards both these important needs. In January this year, I attended Making Democracy Real – a dialogue, at Asia Plateau, the IofC conference centre in India. The conference explored the true foundations of democracy, what makes it sustainable, and offered inspiring grassroots examples of courageous leadership and reconciliation. The themes of good governance and ethical leadership continued to be discussed at the recent Pan African conference in Cameroon in May which I also took part.

My vision for IofC is a community of changemakers who work by]

I am convinced that nothing lasting can be built without moral foundations and a desire by people to exemplify the changes that they want to see in society. We need to think globally, act locally but found with ourselves modelling the changes we want to see in the world.

IofC International

Democracies – through ethical leadership, a values-based economic paradigm, constructive dialogue and trust-building initiatives.

My vision for IofC is a community of changemakers who work by

For online payments see: www.iofc.org/donate-online

Funding

Initiatives of Change International (IofC International) is a non-governmental organization (NGO) working for peace, reconciliation and secure societies worldwide. It has Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, and Participating Status as the Council of Europe in Strasbourg. It stresses the importance of personal responsibility, ethical leadership and building trust across the world’s divides.

Based in Caux, Switzerland, IofC International was founded in 2012 as an association bringing together the longstanding national bodies of the Initiatives of Change movement, which are active in 35 countries, many of them over several decades.

IofC International represents the aspirations and seeks to achieve the development and involves the leadership and the international organizations through its Geneva office. Its training department connects the training capacities of the worldwide movement with needs identified by the UN and other international agencies.

IofC International has operational responsibility for initiatives of Change’s global communications and facilitates collaboration between IofC national bodies. Certain transnational programmes of the Initiatives of Change movement also operate under its auspices.

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Initiatives of Change International – Liaison Office for UN and International Organizations
In the 50 plus years since Frank Buchholtz launched the movement that was to become IofC, the world has grown increasingly interdependent and complex. Buchholtz’s campaign for ‘moral and spiritual renewal’ on the eve of a cataclysmic war was spoken of in terms of ‘saving a crumbling civilization’. Today, in the face of financial crises, ever greater economic inequalities and the twin threats ofpline oil and climate change, we might say the same thing. From its begings, Buchholtz’s work has been in the business of inspiring, equipping and connecting changemakers at levels of society to live in truth and integrity and build the trust needed to address the world’s challenges. As he once said, ‘the simple idea that change always starts with changing oneself’. For example, in the Syrian diaspora in Europe, individuals from different clans were required to mediate after encountering IofC. Some of them strongly connected themselves to working towards a new and just Syria by promoting unity, reconciliation and forgiveness. Their activities include internal and external strategic consultations, meetings, and workshops supported by IofC. In time they formed an organization, Syrian Initiative for Dialogue and Democracy, in the UK, in collaboration with partners, on a programme of providing humanitarian assistance to refugees in Lebanon, campaigning for the extension of humanitarian aid, capacity building for civil society in the country, facilitating interdisciplinary dialogues, mental health support in diaspora communities, initiatives against female genital mutilation (FGM) and ongoing dialogues between clans. Recently, four Somali associations with IofC were invited by the Turkish government to attend the high-level conference, ‘Preparing Somalia’s Future: Goals for 2015’ in Istanbul, attended by UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and other leaders.

How it works

IofC has continued to support the work of Nigerian peacemakers from Adamu Adamu and Roster Waye, former members and leaders of rival militias. Their story of reconciliation is told in the biopic The Imam and the Pastor, an African Answer film, also by IofC.

Africa’s youth are the key to, and the heart of, several great strategic opportunities to offer youth leadership, create working governance structures and light convictions. This was the decision at IofC’s Africa conference in Yaoundé, Cameroon in May. More than 80 delegates, both young and old from 23 countries in Africa and abroad, gathered to explore the dynamics of youth benefiting from education and leadership to build a brighter future for generations to come. In March, IofC’s East Africa Youth Conference in Kampala, Uganda, was attended by over 50 young leaders from eight countries. From 19-20 November 2011, IofC’s Interpeace programme gave 16 young leaders an intensive training in ethical leadership and community building.

Asia Pacific Youth Conference

The 27th Asia Pacific Youth Conference organized by IofC took place near Wellington, Australia, 18-24 July 2011. Representing 17 countries, 126 young leaders participated. The theme, ‘Action for Global Change through Personal Transformation’, was informed by many examples illustrating how situations are transformed when people change.

Dialogue on Democracy

Responding to the wave of movements for democracy, a dialogue on Making Democracy Work took place at Asia Pacific’s IofC Training centre in Penang, Malaysia from 26-30 January. Participants came from 30 countries, ranging from Minster and MPs to Giggan Spirituality revolutionaries, from American academics to Indian social activists, from a Beninese peacebuilder to a Japanese worker. This dialogue opened with a video message from Aung San Suu Kyi, Burma’s leading democracy campaigner. Burton went on to voice a ‘breath of breakdown’, she said. But, we need to work, she added,‘that was the decision at IofC’s Africa conference in Yaoundé, Cameroon in May. More than 80 delegates, both young and old from 23 countries in Africa and abroad, gathered to explore the dynamics of youth benefiting from education and leadership to build a brighter future for generations to come. In March, IofC’s East Africa Youth Conference in Kampala, Uganda, was attended by over 50 young leaders from eight countries. From 19-20 November 2011, IofC’s Interpeace programme gave 16 young leaders an intensive training in ethical leadership and community building.

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Caux conferences

Caux, Switzerland in 2011. Four conferences at the IofC centre in Caux, Switzerland in 2011. Four conferences ran from 3 July to 8 August. The first focused on offering training to equip changemakers Learning to Live in a Multicultural World included a special programme for 60 young European Muslims learning to be peacemakers. Trust and Triggers in the Global Economy took place alongside the dedication of the unfolding economic crisis in Greece. The Fourth Caux Forum for Human Security brought together over 300 academics, scientists, representatives of non-governmental organizations and government officials to learn how to draw up a practical agenda. It was agreed that IofC’s CoP conferences have become active in over 20 countries. It engages women at every level of society, addressing the issues of conflict through the transforming dynamics of change at heart, starting with oneself.

The Trust Factor

From 10-15 October 2011 over 200 participated in a series of nine panels, dialogues and workshops exploring the need for trust in politics, trade, economics and religion in venues throughout Washington DC. IofC partnered with 10 organizations to run the workshops, with local, national and global outreach, including educational institutions, local and international NGOs, and the Diplomatic community.

A new generation of leaders for Africa

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