

Oslo 27.01.15

The Norwegian Nobel Committee,  
Henrik Ibsens gt. 51  
NO-0255 Oslo

Dear members of the Nobel Committee,

## **25 years of efforts for the culture of peace.**

I would hereby, as co-president of the International Peace Bureau (IPB), like to nominate **the culture of peace initiative** for the Nobel Peace Prize.

The Culture of Peace initiative would naturally be represented by **UNESCO**, the UN Organization for Education, Science and Culture, and its former Director General, **Federico Mayor**, for piloting the project, representing all those who tirelessly have been working - and continue to work - for human dignity, for equality, for conciliation, for disarmament, for democracy and for the transition from a culture of imposition and war to a culture of dialogue, alliance and peace.

The vision and the birth of culture of peace program came out of the UNESCO International Congress on Peace in 1989 in Yamoussoukro, Côte d'Ivoire. The UNESCO culture of peace program involved a huge number of partners such as governments, parliamentarians, intellectuals, educators, artists, civil society groups and led e.g. to the International Year for a Culture of Peace, the Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World and a Plan of Action to facilitate implementation. Please see the historic background of the culture of peace initiative in link (<http://www.fund-culturadepaz.org/doc/HistoryCultureofPeace.pdf> ).

The 11. September 2001 events and the ensuing war on terror, unfortunately undermined the hoped effects of the initiative, the hope of finally moving from force to words, from confrontation to dialogue. The culture of peace initiative has for some years mostly been honored and cherished by civil society, notably the peace organizations and the women's organizations. But in September 2014, a UN High Level Forum took stock of achievements and stumbling blocks and made plans for future work related to the culture of peace, so desperately needed in this period of harsh and scary confrontations. A Nobel Peace Prize for the culture of peace would be an enormous boost to the initiative and the many people, institutions and organizations engaged.

The African continent has with UNESCO taken the lead in revitalizing the culture of peace initiative on a governmental level e.g. by organizing a conference ([Pan-African Forum "Africa: Sources and resources for a culture of peace"](#)) in Angola in March 2013 and a meeting entitled *Peace in the mind of men and women*, in Yamoussoukro in September 2014 to mark the 25 years of the concept of a culture of peace and to launch the activities of the network of foundations and research institutions for the promotion of a culture of peace in Africa. [http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/TRAINING/pdf/Concept\\_Note\\_Yamoussoukro-FINALIZED\\_01.pdf](http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/TRAINING/pdf/Concept_Note_Yamoussoukro-FINALIZED_01.pdf)

**UNESCO**, the UN institution to “build peace in the mind of men” in order to “save the succeeding generations from the scourge of war”, will celebrate its 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary 16<sup>th</sup> of November this year. It deserves, with all its virtues and defects, successes and failures, a recognition for peace building worldwide. It is actually quite difficult to understand how UNESCO with its mandate and high level of activity in favor of peace has gone under the radar of the Norwegian Nobel Committee for so long.

UNESCO’s as the intellectual and ethical body of the UN has deserved to get the Nobel Peace Prize on many occasions, for its work on international understanding, for its facilitation of an extensive cooperation between scientists, teachers, artists, cultural workers and journalists, for its focus on peace education in its broadest sense, for the safeguarding of different forms of our cultural heritage, for inspiring art and creativity, for its normative work in favor of humanistic ideals, and most of all for its extensive initiative for the culture of peace involving millions of people around the world. Other UN organizations, some perhaps with a more short-term humanitarian focus than a long-term humanistic one such as that of UNESCO, have received the Nobel Peace Prize. To-day, the UN is undermined in its function by lack of resources whilst global military expenditure continue to rise and bodies of the more affluent, such as the G6, G7, G20, the IMF and the World Bank, even NATO, dictate much of the world agenda. National security takes the lead over world peace and ideologies of short-term gains undermines the living conditions of both humanity and the planet. It is time to strengthen the global mandate of the UN, and especially honor UNESCO for its efforts in favor of “the people” and their needs and aspirations.

**Federico Mayor** managed in an unprecedented way during his period as Director General of UNESCO from 1987 to 1999 to make a platform for the involvement of Governments, a large number of professional groups and civil society movements in reflection and action on the then new concept of a culture of peace. Since 2000, his devotion to the ideals of a culture of peace and his many initiatives have been expressed through different channels, not least the Foundation for a Culture of Peace based in Madrid.

The **culture of peace** concept was first brought to the international community at a UNESCO peace conference in Yamoussoukro, the Ivory Coast, in 1989, and it was further defined and refined through a series of UNESCO meetings and conference involving thousands of scientists, teachers, cultural workers, artists, peace activists and personalities, both governmental and non-governmental. The governing bodies of UNESCO established a project and a program at UNESCO, with a large number of partners, and encouraged the UN to make the year 2000 the International Year for a Culture of Peace to be followed by the Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World (2001-2010). A Recommendation and a Plan of Action were developed to guide and inspire the work both at a governmental and civil society level. UNESCO developed with some Nobel Peace Prize Laureates a Manifesto for a Culture of Peace that was signed by more than 70 million people and presented to the Secretary General of the UN. The culture of peace vision appealed not

least to women and young people who, also through new communication means, contributed strongly to develop the initiative into a broad movement. Many individuals, organizations and institutions find an added value to their own efforts for gender equality, human rights, disarmament or sustainable development in the more comprehensive culture of peace platform.

Federico Mayor was heading the UNESCO secretariat through the whole period when top priority was given to the culture of peace (1987 - 99). His tireless work and wisdom, his scientific mind and artistic ways of expressing himself, his enthusiasm and charisma made him an extraordinary “pilot”. For him, and for those of us who had the chance to work with him, the culture of peace initiative was a revitalization of the normative instruments both of UNESCO as such, and of the UN. He was critical of how the UN became more and more known for peace-keeping whilst peace building and peace-making was much more important to him. He was also very critical to high military costs at the expense of social expenditure. He was convinced that most people wherever they are in the world want peace and wanted to encourage people to express themselves more clearly on these issues vis-à-vis their governments. He wanted the culture of peace initiative to help clarify and strengthen the conditions for peace, and actively confront the culture of war and violence and its root-causes: poverty, deprivation, inequality, injustice and ignorance. He was firmly convinced that quality education, the learning to live together, is an indispensable tool for a culture of peace, fully in line with the preamble to UNESCO’s Constitution which reads: “Since war began in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses for peace must be constructed”.

There are several reasons for making this suggestion at this stage:

- To give a most overdue credit to an organization whose mandate it is to create peace through international cooperation within the fields of education, culture, science and communication and who is celebrating its 70 years this year. After some years with a lower profile on a culture of peace, UNESCO has again reintegrated a culture of peace into its program for 2010-2015 (General Conference October 2009). The organization has in particular been active on this issue in Africa. The first female Director General of UNESCO again underlines the Organization’s deep humanistic mandate. Besides, UNESCO has accepted, as the only UN agency, Palestine as a member of the Organization, and has thereby taken a most courageous step towards peace in the Middle East. This decision has, however, created huge financial difficulties for the Organization with the withdrawal of the membership fees both from the United States of America and Israel.
- To give credit to a person who with extraordinary skills worked way beyond the call of duty and helped UNESCO and its many partners realize their potential for peace in an unprecedented manner; and who developed post-UNESCO his own Foundation for a Culture of Peace (2000 -) and who, through a series of engagements, such as the chairpersonship of the Dialogue among Civilizations and Ubuntu, has proven his deep commitment to the culture of peace ideal. With the present financial crisis in Spain, the Nobel Peace Prize would not only be a very deserved honor, but also a financial help to continue his work.
- The 11.09.01 syndrome and the “war on terror” undermined seriously the development and flourishing of the culture of peace initiative on the world agenda. Some countries also obviously felt the culture of peace movement as a threat to their military-industrial situation of power. Instead of the hoped for “peace-dividend” and disarmament after the “cold war “, military budgets continue to grow, even though some 1/10 of the military

budgets would be enough to meet the agreed UN Millennium Development Goals. A similar yearly and worldwide reduction in military costs is vital in order to finance the new UN Development Agenda (2016 – 2030). With the present, dangerous over-arming of the world, we do need a new hope that the world again may consider a more human and humanistic path and understand that “prevention is better than cure”.

- The International Decade on a culture of peace and non-violence for the children of the world” (2001 – 2010) has come to an end without the results hoped for. Many organizations and individuals around the world have been reflecting on how to revitalize the culture of peace initiative both inside UNESCO, in the entire UN and in governments; and how to further strengthen it in institutions and in civil society. Federico Mayor and his Foundation for a Culture of Peace have given vital guidance and inspiration to this end, including through a major conference on the Decade, December 2010 in Santiago de Compostella. The outcome document strongly focused on “the right to peace”, an initiative emanating from Federico Mayor’s time as Director General of UNESCO. Presently the Right to Peace is being discussed in the Human Rights Council in Geneva. These creative and constructive impulses are necessary to be able to face and counteract shortsighted political decisions leading humanity from crisis to crisis. The High level meeting in the UN September 2014 gave a new impetus to the importance of the culture of peace initiative, including in relation to the UN Post 2015 Development Agenda, which in its draft now includes a Sustainable Development Goal on peaceful societies (SDG 16).

For more information on UNESCO’s work, please see [www.unesco.org](http://www.unesco.org) and please find some of Federico Mayor’s initiatives and articles at [www.fund-culturadepaz.org](http://www.fund-culturadepaz.org) and on the blog <http://federicomayor-eng.blogspot.com>

I am at your disposal for any further information you may require.

Kind regards,



Ingeborg Breines, co-President IPB