

TRIGLAV CIRCLE

Harvard-Yenching Institute
8-9 December 2000

Globalization and Cultural Pluralism

QUOTES ON THE SUBJECT FROM RECENT UNITED NATIONS DOCUMENTS

From the Special Session of General Assembly on the Social Summit in June 2000

(Proposals for further initiatives for social development, 24th Special Session, 1 July 2000)

- " "Globalization and continuing rapid technological advances offer unprecedented opportunities for economic and social development. At the same time they continue to present serious challenges, including widespread financial crises, insecurity, poverty, exclusion and inequality within and among countries...Unless the benefits of social and economic development are extended to all countries, a growing number of people in all countries and even entire regions will remain marginalized from the global economy."
- " "We are strongly committed to social development, including social justice for all in a globalizing world."
- " "It has become clear that there is no single universal path to achieving social development."
- " "Respect for cultural and religious diversity" is one of the conditions for social integration.
- " "The formulation and implementation of strategies, policies, programmes and actions for social development are the responsibility of each country, with full respect for the various religious and ethical values, cultural backgrounds and philosophical convictions of its people, and in conformity with all human rights and fundamental freedoms."
- " One of the functions of education is to "promote cultural diversity and solidarity in a globally interdependent world". Also, "international exchanges in the field of education" have to be encouraged in order to develop "self-reliance" and to "increase sensitivity for and better understanding of all cultures and awareness of global issues."

From the Millennium Declaration

(General Assembly, Fifty-fifth session, United Nations Millennium Declaration, 6 September 2000)

- " "We believe that the central challenge we face today is to ensure that globalization becomes a positive force for all the world's people. For while globalization offers great opportunities, at present its benefits are very unevenly shared, while its costs are unevenly distributed."
- " "Only through broad and sustained efforts to create a shared future, based upon our common humanity in all its diversity, can globalization be made fully inclusive and equitable."
- " Six "fundamental values essential to international relations in the 21st century" are listed in this text. They are freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance, respect for nature, and shared responsibility. Tolerance is defined as follows: "Human beings must respect each other, in all their diversity of belief, culture and language. Differences within and between societies should be neither feared nor repressed, but cherished as a precious asset of humanity. A culture of Peace and Dialogue among all civilizations should be actively promoted."

From “We the Peoples, The role of the United Nations in the 21st Century”, a document presented by the Secretary-General to the Millennium Assembly
(Published by the UN Department of Public Information, DPI-March 2000, UN sales no. E.00.1.6)

- " "All these proposals (on “Globalization and Governance”, “Freedom from Want”, “Freedom from Fear”, “ Sustaining our Future”, and “Renewing the United Nations”) are set out in the context of globalization, which is transforming the world as we enter the twenty-first century.”
- " "The central challenge we face today is to ensure that globalization becomes a positive force for all the world’s people, instead of leaving billions of them behind in squalor: inclusive globalization must be built on the great enabling force of the market, but market forces alone will not achieve it. It requires a broader effort to create a shared future, based upon our common humanity in all its diversity.”
- " " There is mounting anxiety that the integrity of cultures and the sovereignty of states may be at stake...”
- " "States need to develop a deeper awareness of their dual role in our global world. In addition to the separate responsibilities each state bears towards its own society, states are collectively, the custodians of our common life on this planet- a life the citizens of all countries share. Notwithstanding the institutional turmoil that is often associated with globalization, there exists no other entity that competes with or can substitute for the state. Successfully managing globalization, therefore, requires-first and foremost- that states act in a manner consistent with their dual role.”
- " "More than ever, the United Nations is needed to broker differences among states in power, culture, size and interest, serving as the place where the cause of common humanity is articulated and advanced....Multilateralism is needed to define the ground rules of an emerging global civilization within which there will be room for the world’s rich diversity to express itself fully.”

From the Report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization
(General Assembly, Official Records, Fifty-fifth session, UN, New York, 2000)

- " "To some, globalization is imbued with great promise; to others it appears deeply threatening...Others are concerned that open markets will threaten both the integrity of cultures and the sovereignty of States.”
- " " I firmly believe that thriving markets and human security go hand in hand. But if support for open markets and financial liberalization is to be sustained, globalization must be made more inclusive and its benefits must be spread more equitably. These goals cannot be achieved without more effective global institutions.”

The Report has some more comments on the globalization process, but nothing on cultural pluralism, which is not an element of UN programmes. However, in the section dealing with “Managing change, Enhancing communication”, it is indicated that the UN web site continues “to increase at an extraordinary rate” and that improvements and new features were introduced “in all six official languages”(Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian, Spanish); also, “a pilot project is under way that will enable United nations Radio to produce and deliver daily 15 minute news bulletin, in all six official languages to radio stations around the globe”; and “the Dag Hammarskjold Library continues to focus on delivering electronic information...and supporting multilingualism.”

From a statement made by the Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the United Nations before the General Assembly, 28 September 2000

" "Culture almost defies definition because it is an all embracing climate rather than an articulated system. It is a social force that encompasses individuals and welds them into communities. It shapes their prejudices, ideas, values, habits, attitudes, tastes and priorities. In his encyclical letter *Centesimus Annus*, Pope John Paul II points out that culture is more comprehensive than either economics or politics because it deals with the deepest questions of life. Whereas politics and economics are concerned with proximate and limited goods, culture has to do with the meaning of human existence as a whole. It inquires into what we are as human beings, and what reality is in its most comprehensive dimensions."

Note: The following UN forthcoming events might be mentioned as relevant to the question of cultural pluralism:

- A World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance will be held in South Africa in 2001.
- There is a project of a draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People;
- There is also a project of establishing a UN permanent forum to discuss indigenous issues, within the mandate of ECOSOC.