

Global Citizens Pursuing a Just, Peaceable, Inclusive, and Sustainable Future:
An ICCGC-CoNGO Collaborative Conference
26-27 August 2024 @CCUN

A Multifaceted Approach to Building Global Peace

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Today, the conflicts and environmental issues we face are becoming increasingly severe, and the causes and solutions to these problems are deeply intertwined. Thus, the pursuit of global peace has become not just a hope but an urgent necessity for our survival. This essay delves into how we can promote and build peace, emphasizing the importance of global cooperation, mutual understanding, and the contributions of various actors such as faith leaders, governments, educators, and NGOs. Additionally, as a Won Buddhist practitioner, I would like to offer the Won Buddhist perspective on this theme, as we believe that collaboration is not just an option but a fundamental requirement for achieving global peace.

The Role of Global Cooperation and Understanding

Global cooperation and mutual understanding are foundational pillars for achieving lasting peace. In today's interconnected world, the actions of one nation can have far-reaching effects on others. Therefore, fostering a spirit of cooperation and dialogue among nations is essential. International bodies such as the United Nations, with its extensive network of member states and specialized agencies, play a crucial role in facilitating this dialogue, helping to mediate conflicts, and promoting initiatives that encourage peaceful coexistence.

Cultural diplomacy is another vital aspect of global cooperation. By promoting cultural exchanges and mutual respect, we can break down barriers and bridge gaps that often lead to misunderstandings and conflicts. Educational programs emphasizing global citizenship and intercultural understanding also play a significant role in this effort. By educating young people—and indeed all individuals—about the importance of empathy, respect, and cooperation, we can lay the groundwork for a more peaceful and sustainable future. In this context, the role of NGOs and faith-based organizations is crucial. Their ethical values, grassroots connections, and cultural sensitivity empower them to implement peacebuilding initiatives effectively.

Contributions of Faith Leaders, Governments, Educators, and NGOs

Faith leaders have long been at the forefront of advocating for peace and harmony. Their moral authority and ability to mobilize communities, inspire ethical actions, and provide spiritual frameworks for understanding and resolving conflicts make them indispensable in the pursuit of global peace. In the Buddhist tradition, the teachings of compassion (Karuna) and loving-kindness (Metta), grounded in the profound understanding of interdependent arising, emphasize the crucial role of empathy and understanding in resolving conflicts. Indeed, these virtues of love and compassion are inherent in all religious and spiritual teachings. Faith leaders can and should harness these teachings to guide their communities toward peaceful coexistence and reconciliation.

The role of politics and government is also essential for peace. By implementing the right policies to promote social justice, protect human rights, ensure the equitable distribution of resources, and uphold the rights of citizens, they can effectively address the root causes of conflict and provide means for resolving disputes. Recognizing the interconnectedness of all nations, governments must collaborate closely with other countries to create an environment where peace and justice can flourish. Strong ethical leadership and effective governance are essential for building a sustainable foundation for peace.

Educators play a vital role in peacebuilding by shaping the awareness and mindset of both future generations and current learners. Through curricula that emphasize peace education, conflict resolution, and global citizenship, educators can equip students with the skills, knowledge, and mindset needed to navigate and resolve conflicts peacefully. Schools and educational platforms, extending beyond traditional classrooms, serve as incubators for peace, fostering a culture of dialogue, respect, and cooperation.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are often at the forefront of peacebuilding efforts, playing a vital role in addressing both immediate and long-term challenges within communities. They work tirelessly to meet the urgent needs of vulnerable populations, advocate for human rights, and promote sustainable development. By implementing grassroots initiatives, NGOs build trust and foster dialogue among diverse groups, creating opportunities for collaboration and understanding. NGOs frequently collaborate with other stakeholders, including governments, international organizations, and private sector entities, to amplify their impact. Through partnerships and alliances, NGOs can leverage resources, share best practices, and coordinate efforts to develop a more comprehensive and sustained peacebuilding strategy.

Won Buddhist Perspective on Peacebuilding

The Won Buddhist perspective on peacebuilding is deeply rooted in the teachings of Sotaesan, the founding master of Won Buddhism. It emphasizes the interconnectedness of all beings and the cultivation of inner peace as a foundation for outer harmony. A core teaching in Won Buddhism is the principle of interdependence, encapsulated in the Fourfold Grace: the grace of

heaven and earth, the grace of parents, the grace of fellow beings, and the grace of laws. This teaching highlights the interconnectedness of all life in the universe and the mutual responsibilities arising from these relationships. Recognizing that our well-being is intricately linked to the well-being of others fosters a spirit of cooperation and mutual respect, which are essential for peacebuilding.

Sotaesan's teachings emphasize that " We should not be useless in the world by being Buddhist disciples, but, through our practical application of the Buddhadharma, we become useful people who can help individuals, families, societies, and nations" (The Principal Book of Won Buddhism, Doctrine, 7. The Four Great Principles). This underscores the responsibility of practitioners to make deliberate efforts to bring peace not only to themselves but also to others. Unlike past religious practices, Won Buddhism calls for active, responsible engagement in creating a harmonious world for all.

Practical Actions for Promoting Peace

To address the complex and intertwined issues and promote global peace, a multifaceted approach is necessary. This approach should encompass individual, community, national, and global cooperation. It is only through such diverse and comprehensive efforts that we can achieve lasting peace and harmony. Here are some practical actions that can be taken at different levels to achieve this goal.

Individual Actions

Without inner peace in individuals, achieving peace in the world is impossible. Practices such as mindfulness, meditation, and prayer help individuals manage stress and develop a calm and clear mindset, equipping them to handle conflicts constructively and contribute positively to their communities. Nurturing empathy and understanding through active listening and striving to understand others' perspectives can reduce misunderstandings and foster empathy. Advocating for nonviolence by adopting and promoting nonviolent communication and conflict resolution strategies, avoiding aggressive language and behavior, and supporting initiatives and policies that promote nonviolence are essential steps toward fostering peace. Additionally, individuals can support the work of community, national, and global leaders who strive toward peace and justice, amplifying their impact and contributing to a more harmonious world.

Community Actions

Building inclusive communities involves creating and participating in programs that promote inclusivity and diversity, such as cultural festivals, community gardens, and volunteer projects that bring people from different backgrounds together. Supporting local peacebuilding efforts by getting involved with organizations that work towards conflict resolution, social justice, and community development is crucial; this can be done through volunteering time, donating

resources, or raising awareness about their initiatives. Facilitating dialogue and mediation by organizing and participating in community dialogue sessions allows individuals to discuss their concerns and seek common ground, while providing mediation services helps resolve conflicts peacefully and constructively.

National Actions

Advocating for just policies that promote social justice, human rights, and equitable resource distribution is essential, as well as supporting laws and regulations that protect the vulnerable and address systemic inequalities leading to conflict. Fostering ethical leadership at all levels of government and society encourages leaders to act with integrity, transparency, and compassion, inspiring trust and cooperation among citizens. Promoting education for peace by integrating peace education into the national curriculum teaches students about conflict resolution, human rights, global citizenship, and the importance of empathy and cooperation, while supporting initiatives that provide training for educators in these areas. Strengthening social services by investing in mental health, education, employment, and housing reduces social tensions and prevents conflicts from arising.

Global Actions

Supporting international cooperation involves promoting and participating in international organizations and agreements that work towards global peace and security, addressing challenges such as poverty, climate change, and human trafficking. Engaging in cultural diplomacy through cultural exchanges and international dialogue builds mutual understanding and respect, with programs that send students, artists, and professionals abroad to share their cultures and learn from others. Providing humanitarian aid to conflict zones and supporting peacebuilding efforts ensures that aid reaches those in need and helps build sustainable peace, working with international NGOs and agencies. Promoting sustainable development by supporting global efforts to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) addresses the root causes of conflict by fostering economic stability, social inclusion, and environmental protection.

Conclusion

In conclusion, striving for peace in our world requires a collective effort involving global cooperation, cultural diplomacy, and the contributions of faith leaders, governments, educators, and NGOs. Many religious traditions, particularly Won Buddhism, offer valuable insights into achieving this goal through collaboration with other sectors. By embracing the principles of empathy, understanding, and cooperation, we can create a world where peace is not just an aspiration but a reality.

As we gather for the CoNGO-ICCGC Global Futures Conference, we must reaffirm our commitment and responsibility to fostering global peace and unity. By working together, we can lay the foundations for a just, peaceful, and sustainable future for humanity and the planet. This

conference should serve as an opportunity to harness our collective wisdom and resources to create a legacy of harmony and prosperity that future generations will inherit with pride.