

13th General Assembly of International Association of Peace Messenger Cities

Oswiecim, Poland, September 1 - 3, 2000

"Peace, Poverty, Racism"

FINAL DOCUMENT

We, the representatives of 78 municipalities, grouped in the International Association of Peace Messenger Cities and the World Union of Martyred Cities, awarded the title "Messenger of Peace" on September 15, 1987 have gathered in Oswiecim, a sanctuary of martyrdom and a city of peace, in order to voice our will and dedication in such important matters as PEACE, POVERTY and RACISM as well as focus on the role of the cities.

Our Association is a non-governmental agency of the UN based on its Charter and realising the goals concerning vital problems of cities of the world specified in its own Statutes. At the beginning of our activity, when on September 7-8, 1988 we laid the foundations of the Association of Peace Messenger Cities and founded the Peace Centre, the Secretary General of UN Javier Perez de Cuellar, who attended this meeting said: "Congratulations on opening this Centre which will propagate friendship among all people of good will and act for the benefit of a more peaceful and fair world where human dignity is respected, I can only say that your activity can be comparable with that of the UN: what you do at city level, we do at governmental level and our efforts are complementary."

Similar words of appreciation and hope for strengthening our efforts are expressed by the Secretary General Kofi Anan in his message to this Assembly.

Over the 12-year period of its existence the Association has kept on protesting against nuclear armaments or production and use of landmines. We recognise that from the conference in Yokohama, 1991, the Japanese cities of Yokohama, Hiroshima, Nagasaki and Tokyo have played a leading role in this.

However, our main goal emphasized in each resolution of General Assemblies and the Executive Board, is to promote defined peace activities that will benefit municipalities and appease the international situation.

Let us recall some of these. At the Executive Board in New Haven, March 1996, a delegation was received by the Secretary General of the UN. This meeting was dominated by recommendations concerning help for the children and youth in the countries afflicted by armed conflicts and natural calamities.

Through the participation in the world conference HABITAT in Istanbul we emphasized the importance of securing proper living conditions for people in today's world, especially in the countries stricken with wars and natural calamities.

The General Assembly in Lisboa, 1995, formulated objectives within the theme, "Culture for Peace" which was welcomed by many cities. The city of Oswiecim can offer a good example with its Children's Forum of Peace Initiatives.

The General Assembly in Bologna, 1996, continued with the same extensive subject focusing on the theme "Peace, Family, Education".

The Association celebrated its 10th Anniversary in Pori, 1998, focusing on theme "Human rights for all".

In the resolution from Kruševac, 1999, the Association expressed its standpoint against the NATO bombing in Yugoslavia.

We emphasize these steps of the International Association of Peace Messenger Cities because none of the objectives designed then has lost its importance. They were and they still are long lasting tasks for our municipalities and governments. We try not to overestimate the pressure

from the public opinion but we realise that without such pressure the international situation would be much worse.

Today we have presented our views and conclusions within two subjects: Poverty and Racism. They are not only live and painful problems but also show their nature with a double strength. Numerous communities in the world, especially in Africa and Asia, live now on the verge of extreme poverty and famine while rich societies abound in material wealth. Humanitarian aid for these regions which should also be given by our cities, must be spread on a larger scale. We pledge support to the postulate of the international community for the cancellation of debts contracted by developing countries in order to advance and satisfy the most urgent needs of their citizens. We feel it is to be regret that the postulate was treated only partially at the G-8 Conference in Okinawa.

We understand that famine and suffering cause discord as well as ethnic and racial conflicts although they are not the only reasons.

Racial incidents or slogans developed by some organizations supported by ideologists of different origins occur more and more frequently in highly civilised countries. It is alarming that a large number of young people are being drawn into these actions. The role of cities in preventing such occurrences is enormous through the above mentioned activities and undertakings in the field of education, culture, sports. But also administrative measures at the local level can help restrict and alleviate these phenomena.

We need to have our own individual municipality programmes of actions in these issues. The Marshal of Malopolskie Voivodship would like to ask the delegates to the 13th General Assembly of Peace Messenger Cities to support the idea of founding an International Educational Center in Oswiecim.



Oswiecim General Assembly, 2000. From left to right: Al Marder, Vice-President, Stanislav Bielecki, representative of Warsaw, Brian Fitch, Secretary-General, and Jozef Krawczyk, Mayor of Oswiecim.