



3<sup>rd</sup> Draft

26. November, 2010

For the purpose of the conference held by the Forum for the 21<sup>st</sup> century on 29<sup>th</sup> November 2010, Forum for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, with regards to the positions of participating countries and international organisations, pronounces and suggests:

### **Cultural integration or integration culture?**

No culture is static. Ideas, technologies, products, and people move from one place to another. When cultures come into contact through migration, trade, or the latest telecommunications devices, they influence each other. Sometimes cultures cross-pollinate, exchange foods, music, sports. At other times, say critics of globalisation, a culture swamps another like an invasive, fast-reproducing weed. Cultures have evolved in response to contact for thousands of years. But the pace has changed. In the past the influences of distant cultures came slowly, delayed by long journeys. Today, because of digital communication via telephone, television, Internet, satellites, as well as world trade and long-distance travel, cultural influences can spread across the planet as fast as the click of a mouse. Cultural integration also concerns the adoption of a mass consumer culture where everything from fashion to sport, music to television, becomes integrated into the national culture, often without challenge. Through technology and trade, a seemingly borderless world is created. Globalisation affects economic, political, social, cultural and environmental decision-making.

### **Global English as Lingua Franca**

English is the current lingua franca of international business, science, technology and moreover, it serves as a common platform for various international meetings and forums. In order to prevent misunderstandings and misleading usage of homophones during multilateral negotiations on international level, Forum for the 21<sup>st</sup> century suggests to develop an unitarian functional system of the English language, referred to as Global English. This would serve as lingua franca for the global communication, mainly for the purposes of communication among the policy creators, negotiators, NGO's, providers of international services, representatives of international and global institutions, as well as among countries. The aim is to simplify and improve the quality of communication and to create a common international language, that would be accepted and vastly used in global communication area. The exact understanding of the „terminus-technicus“ for all participants in communication is the primary goal, as it can and will prevent fatal misunderstandings in communication. It is not the aim to set up an only obligatory official language. To the contrary, the Forum for the 21<sup>st</sup> century supports the usage of locally established languages among the communicating partners, where there is no threat of creating confusion. Nowadays, there are many different varieties of English being used around the world. In order to achieve a unification and codification of this language the Forum proposes to create a commission formed by native English speaking professionals from the academic field as the main platform. This platform will be supported by authorised representatives of each country,



in order to bring their perception and inputs for the terminology of Global English, along with the high representatives of governments.

The aim is to establish an internationally comprehensive terminology, that would express the same meaning in all languages. This terminology should be covering the most important communication interfaces among countries, such as political and business negotiations, military commanding structures and safety cooperation, science, aviation, or financial sphere. Education of authorised professionals, representatives of international organizations and high representatives of the nation on international level is crucial and therefore is the most important goal of the commission's agenda. Nonetheless, creation and spreading of materials for a system of teaching English, will also be an inevitable part of commission's agenda. The materials will be available for schools, science and business participants for a symbolic cost. During the process, the commission will be able to use know-how, scientific and cultural research offered by UNESCO. Moreover, UNESCO will serve as supervisor with Board made up of outstanding specialists coming from its Institute for Lifelong Learning, which is aimed at overcoming language barriers.

Functioning of the commission would be financed on the national level, taking into account various factors influencing the capability of the country to contribute. Therefore the Forum suggests devoting 10% of each country's national education budget for the favor of the commission's budget. All activities and accomplishments of the commission, as well as their use and implementation will be supervised by the above mentioned UNESCO Board of specialists, that could be supplemented by a supervisor appointed by the Minister of Education in each participating country.

In the future, the Forum for the 21<sup>st</sup> century might consider the option of adding a other languages of the global players, that could complement the Global English in its function. However, these are likely to be limited to the regional implications.

### **Secularization and Harmonization of Religious Differences**

Nowadays, religious differences are seen as the final barrier, separating various ethnics and populations. Until these differences are broken down, divergent cultures will never fully meld into a one global world. Religions need to accept the validity of all other beliefs to attain world peace.

The Forum for the 21<sup>st</sup> century therefore proposes the process of secularization, as the process of modernization of the societies and shifting the religion from institutional status into private sphere. This allows maintaining relatively high levels of private individual religious beliefs without interfering with the public social and political life. The main feature of this process is "believing without belonging".

Religions must not identify themselves with political, economic, or social powers, so as to remain free to work for justice and peace. Each state should respect the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and promote dialogue and harmony between and within religions. States are obliged to minimize risks of clashes among people of different religions and avoid demonstrations of communal bigotry in the society. In all participating countries, this could be achieved by helping the creation of a system of bilateral and multilateral agreements between different religious associations. For this purpose, a favorable climate for the process of



negotiations of particular treaties between religions needs to be created. The Ministry of Culture should be responsible for endorsing this climate creation by enhancing the communication between the respective institutional bodies concerned.

Forum also proposes creating a fiscal system that would allow citizens to devote a part of their taxes as a financial support to the church they belong to. This would be an optional contribution not a compulsory payment, reflected in the tax declaration.

It is highly advisable that the above mentioned recommendations are put into practice in the form of legally binding guidelines on a national level, in order to ensure secularization in the sense of equal protection to all religions and people of different faiths. However, all legally binding enactments have to conform to the national legal systems.

### Interculturalism and Importance of Common Values

Today's global trends of migration, growth of minorities and increased consciences about rights are some of the main factors that have brought the concept multiculturalism onto the social scene. As a term it has provoked public and professional attention, commencing significant scientific and political debates related to its implications on the redefinition of the traditional concept of the state. However, one of the most significant arguments against multiculturalism, is that it stands for the respecting and supporting of cultural differences that can potentially lead to serious obstruction of universally accepted values. This is the reason why, the concept of multiculturalism is transforming into the concept of interculturalism. Interculturalism is a political ideology that does not place a priority for all cultures to be on the same level. Its main objective is to develop a common civic culture based on the values of freedom and liberty, and of human rights, while encouraging interaction between the communities living in the same country. It requires democracy and full respect for universal human rights.

Nonetheless, no political ideology, as a form of organization of the state is sustainable unless there are binding elements identified in supra national, supra ethnical, supra cultural, supra racial, and supra religious level. The power of these elements should surpass the particular interests of one group.

With respect to this notion, Forum for the 21<sup>st</sup> century suggests to outline a set of elements on a national level, in order to create and maintain favorable conditions for sustainable interculturalism. The list of common values should be accomplished not only on the political field, but also various groups of specialists or non-governmental organizations should take part on this process. As migration brings new elements into a resident culture, a research on the cultural, historical, political, social, psychological, educational and economic factors, which facilitate the peaceful coexistence of different cultures, is essential.

Forum suggests creation of a special body, functioning under the Ministry of Culture, responsible for this research in every state. According to the outcomes of various surveys and presented experience of individuals, a concept of so called „democratic interculturalism” should be created. It would combine cultural and political communitarianism, recognise the importance of cultural identity and be committed to bringing the issue into the political domain. Each state could also provide cultural programs for foreigners in order to help their better integration. Increased awareness of the population should be achieved via spreading the



idea of interculturalism by teaching in secondary schools, rejecting prejudices. The use of media under the influence of state for this purpose might be considered as well.

Forum strongly recommends, that each state should intervene in religious and cultural practices in order to banish any kind of demonstration of racism, xenophobia or affirmative actions, as in case they become bold the probability of them jeopardizing the state security is extremely high.

### Prevention of Intra-national Conflicts

Traditionally state has been the carrier of the dominant culture, which was prevailing. Nowadays, the impact of massive globalization, migration and digital communication are changing the role of the state. Split identities are becoming more common, multiple identities are negotiated, dual citizenship proliferates and a global network of shared symbols render cultural exclusivity less tenable. The contemporary multi-ethnic state is now a site of relentless interrogation of the validity of any sort of cultural consensus or attempts to impose one. Intercultural dialogue is crucial in preventing and ending conflicts. It could promote reconciliation in the aftermath of conflict and could also introduce moderate voices into polarized debates.

In order to prevent ethnic conflicts and misuse of cultural differences, Forum for the 21<sup>st</sup> century considers crucial creating intellectual engagement among scholars and nongovernmental organizations about possible approaches for preventing and resolving intra-national conflicts. Drawing attention to self-determination movements and issues that would likely lead to violent conflict in case of absence of international attention also play an important role in preventing conflicts.

Moreover, building a foundation for an active international network of experts from university, policy, NGO, and think-tank sectors, that can advance new thinking and policies about the self-determination-sovereignty-governance and cooperation conundrum.

The principal objective of this international working group is to bridge the gap in knowledge about other cultures and to lay foundations for a debate based on universally shared values.

The results of activities of the working group should help the governments undertake particular activities especially in the areas of education, cultural diversity and heritage, the sciences and media. For this purpose, the working group would consist of scholars representing each member state, selected by the Ministry of Education in cooperation with the Ministry of Culture, according to the fields of interests of each particular country.

Representatives of nongovernmental organizations, both national or international, will help to bring a broader picture to the debates, providing information coming directly from the citizens. Summits on the highest level, with ministers' active involvement, would be held once a year, while the regular working group meetings would take place twice a year.

Cooperation within this international structure has to be built on the basis of equality, mutual respect, trust and benefits. All the activities and project will be focused on achieving strategic long-term harmony. Moreover, they have to be built on the basis of respecting the fundamental principles of international law and the spirit of the Charter of the United Nations.

The outcomes and achievements of the working group need to be well communicated by using mass media to ensure general public awareness and acceptance, as well as by using educational systems and governmental policies. Regarding the financing, Forum proposes to



**The Model Conference**

**Cross-Cultural Issues in the Global Context**

Faculty of International Relations, University of Economics in Bratislava



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**Interkultúrna problematika v globálnom kontexte**

Fakulta medzinárodných vzťahov, Ekonomická univerzita v Bratislave

create a common budget for the working group platform with a contribution of 15% of each country's national cultural affairs budget.

The Forum for the 21<sup>st</sup> century believes that the future lays in cooperation, sharing and common goals. People have the power to perform the change. It is not important what we lost, its important what we have left. How we are going to proceed is in our hands.



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THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

