

IMAGINE PEACE CONFERENCE
“CREATING A CULTURE OF PEACE: SHARING VISIONS OF EQUITABLE,
SUSTAINABLE SOCIETIES”
BY DR. HAZEL HENDERSON

On February 25, 2000, at the World Bank in Washington, D.C., the SGI-USA women of Mid-Atlantic Zone, the World Bank and American University co-sponsored the ‘Imagine Peace’ Women’s Peace Conference. Women from diverse backgrounds joined with community activists and academics to share their views on how to create a more peaceful world. Noted American futurist, environmental economist and author Dr. Hazel Henderson delivered the following speech in which she finds areas of common values with the SGI. [SGI President Daisaku Ikeda met with Dr. Henderson on two occasions, in September 1998 and October 2000. They agreed to continue their dialogue with the intent to publish it in the future.]

I am honored to address this very important conference, which gets to the heart of creating a culture of peace. I honor all of you, from so many spiritual traditions, who work so faithfully in organizing for the abolition of weapons and violent conflict and for your peace-building efforts. I am one who believes that we humans are not incorrigible or terminally stupid. I believe we have equal potential for both good and evil — and that we do evolve toward higher levels of awareness and consciousness.

As we have evolved our technologies and spread our settlements around the planet, we have created new challenges. Today, the planet itself is our teacher as the human family has grown so as to consume forty percent of all nature’s primary production: the photosynthesis of plants. Competition over territory and resources has been a prime source of humanity’s wars and conflicts. We are even polluting outer space.

At this stage, humans must balance and “de-fang” their competitive behaviors with cooperation and sharing. This requires creativity. I wrote *Building a Win-Win World* (1996) to trace the evolution of human understanding and about this transition from the win-lose games that worked in our “uncrowded” past, to the win-win strategies that would be needed for our survival in today’s small, crowded planet.

To facilitate this great transition from our 350-year-old warring nation-state stage of humanity, we must employ our collective imagination. We need to create practical visions and win-win alternatives to the existing global order. We need detailed, believable, doable transition strategies at all levels — from the personal and local to the national and global. Examples of such scenarios are these including my own in the new book *Imagine* (Rodale Press, 2001), edited by my friend Marianne Williamson. Today, violence is also evident in the ecological destruction that results from over-consumption, unregulated market forces and corporate-led globalization. Violence against women persists. The Taliban in Afghanistan have regressed to barbarism in their oppression of women. Where are the official sanctions against this wholesale abuse of human rights? And, we must heed, more than ever, U.S. President Eisenhower’s famous words about the growing power of the military-industrial complex — still unchecked today. He added: “Every gun that is fired, every warship launched, signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and not clothed. The world in arms is not spending money alone. It is spending the sweat of its laborers, the genius of its

scientists, the hopes of its children.”

Meanwhile, most of “We the People,” shown in many surveys, do not want more weapons. They want education, health care, clean water, adequate food and shelter, as well as socially responsible companies, which are “good neighbors.” Many scientists and scholars are confirming that we humans can and do evolve more altruistic behaviors, often out of awareness of our larger, long-term self-interest, including David Loye’s *Darwin’s Lost Theory of Love* (2000); Robert Wright’s *Non Zero* (2000); and Mauro Torres’s *A Modern Conception of Universal History*, which argues that we are at the end of masculine history and embarking on the era of gender-parity development. These books echo women’s literature from Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s *Herland in the 1890’s* to the works of Riana Eisler and Elise Boulding, as well as the spiritually inspired writings of Daisaku Ikeda and Josei Toda of the Soka Gakkai, His Holiness the Dalai Lama and many others.

We need to propagate our visions of how cultures of peace and sustainable societies will work and how all peoples can take part in helping create appropriate transition paths in their own situations and societies. In this way, citizens in all societies can share in these goals and strategies, identifying the deepest human values and aspirations of humanity. This will be of great value to world political leaders, including President Vaclav Havel of the Czech Republic and Nelson Mandela of South Africa. An example of such efforts is the Earth Charter, based in Costa Rica’s Earth Council and circulating in grass-roots communities worldwide since the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. You can find the Earth Charter at www.earthcharter.org. I have been a fervent supporter and will continue to promote this process as a member of the RIO+10 Commission.

As we move these strategic visioning and scenario-building activities into mainstream societies, we can reduce the resistance of current keepers of the existing order. Whether politicians, academics, business people, those who derive wealth, incomes, status and power from the current order will fear change. This includes most of us who live and vote in the United States and other industrialized, mass-consumption-driven societies of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). As these countries and others strive to maximize their GNP growth, they widen the gaps between rich and poor, as well as the digital divide, while stressing the limits of natural resources and ecosystems.

Thus, we in this gathering are at the heart of this lifestyle and its ideology: the Washington Consensus (i.e., policies of conventional economics and development promoted by The World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the U.S. Treasury Department and their academic foot-soldiers). I want to show you some visual images of how these ideologies and their current and past policies have led to mal-development, and the growing gap in wealth, incomes and information that have helped exacerbate local conflicts and wars.

How many of you have been participating in the growing global debate over economic and technological globalization — and the need to democratize global markets with global ethics, treaties, standards for human and workplace rights, equitable access to health, education and decent jobs, within the limits of natural resources and ecosystems? How many of you were in Copenhagen for the World Summit on Social Development in 1995 or last year’s follow up in Geneva? We are seeing the rise of grass-roots globalism. I attended both and joined with thousands of NGOs calling for taxation of commercial uses of our global commons: our oceans, atmosphere satellite orbits and electromagnetic spectrum of airwaves, which media use. All these are the common heritage of humanity. We also called for fines and sanctions on abuses of these common resources, including pollution, arms and drugs trafficking and currency speculation. Much conceptual progress has been made on these issues of global commons,

such as *Global Public Goods* (1999), edited by Inge Kaul. Activist NGOs have promoted currency exchange taxes among many of their governments.

How many of you were in Porto Alegre for the recent World Social Forum — the civic grassroots answer to the elite Davos World Economic Forum? I did not attend, but my ideas were there, and my friend Vicki Robin, author of *Your Money or Your Life*, sent me a full report — not available in mass media. Vicki concentrates on the spiritual poverty of consumerism — a theme deep in all my work on making the non-money “Love Economy” more visible. A new “Attention Economy” is emerging. Such new paradigms and analyses are vital in balancing the excesses of the money-driven, GNP-measured economic growth paradigm based on ever more material consumption. I have summarized most of this exciting NGO activity and many sensible proposals from global to local in my book *Beyond Globalization: Shaping a Sustainable Global Economy* (1999).

Money is not wealth. There have always been two ways of transacting. My work has focused on correcting this faulty economics whose textbooks still drive policies and business decisions in the wrong direction. Conventional economics, which drives today’s globalization of markets, deregulation and privatization is rooted in scarcity, fear and competition. Economics, unlike all other social sciences, does not embrace the full range of human behavior to include our caring and sharing behaviors, our demonstrably loving qualities, volunteerism and altruism. Women have shouldered a great share of the responsibility for such nurturing work in the families, communities and societies.

We must now insist that the time has come to create the new sectors of evolving economies, the peace-building sector, the caring sector and expand the education, health and pollution-prevention sectors fully, along with the renewable energy and sustainable development sectors. This redeployment of our tax dollars and public budgets can lead private sector efforts by cutting subsidies to the “Old Economy” weapons industries, nuclear and fossil fuels. Shifting national priorities to education and re-training our citizens for the Information Age, “New Economy” is better than cutting taxes. Let’s build the jobs and work places of the future, not subsidize obsolete corporations, which are going offshore looking for cheap labor and unprotected resources to exploit.

As you can see, in all of my future scenarios, it is the spirit, the visions and the energies of women that lead the way in shaping sustainable, equitable, eco-friendly peaceful societies. With the now 6-billion-member human family, women are no longer just joining their genes with men to procreate. As my visionary sister Barbara Marx Hubbard says, “Today, women are joining their genius with each other and our dear brothers to co-create a better future.” Women are taking equal partnership and responsibility with all men of goodwill in building cultures of peace for this new century. In a large-enough, planetary perspective, all our self-interests are identical: continuing the 15-million-year experiment of life. At this stage of human development, Earth ethics, cooperation and altruism have become pragmatic.