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Sport and Art for Peace!

Afghan Civil Society National Pre-Peace Conference

“AFGHANISTAN BACK TO THE PEACE - All Human Rights for All”

Dear members of the new Lead Group for the organisation of the next National Conference, I want to thank you all for the work that you are doing. I had already prepared a speech for today, but thinking about the discussions that we had yesterday, I decided to change it.

Yesterday night we took part in a concert. Every time I come to Afghanistan it is a discovery for me, something that cannot stop surprising me and moving me... an extremely musical and harmonical language, a language that can be shouted but also whispered. Afghan music encloses all of the Afghan spirit: resistance, sacrifice, spirituality, irony, strength, harmony, individuality and first of all the love and the drive for life.

In my imagination the Afghan HEART beats Loud as a Tabla, Vibrates as a Rubab, Dreams as a Saranda and Sings as a Lute...

Afghan history is the history of a bridge between east and west, among very different cultures, different religions; it's a bridge that from the depths of hate and of man's cruelty has arrived and will always lead us towards reaching heights of love, solidarity and peace....

There are many bridges like this one, in all times and all places, but often we are not able to see the invisible and hear the unheard. We are hell and heaven, and we can't avoid recalling this in these places.

Thinking, writing, playing music, allow us to build the bridges with the invisible and with the unsayable... these bridges unite the good and the bad... when the moment of deciding and choosing will come, there will be two bridges: one made up of iron and the other of paper. Many will run towards the iron one, they will feel safer, but the iron bridge will collapse because of their weight. Others, the ones capable of seeing and hearing, will run towards the paper one and the paper will hold them all up. How do you know which is the right bridge? this is cooperation!

At the end of our works the ones who will sign the final resolution - that is, a piece of paper - will actually have decided to be active part in the construction of the next peace conference, that, more than being national, will be opened to important regional and international presences. We have much to do and little time to do it, but we are a great team and we will do it.

Six months ago, when we started thinking that we could, we should risk to put together the Afghan Civil Society, it looked more like a wish, a dream, than a real process. But all the projects, all the processes, are born from dreams, from the strongest wishes; the man who gives up dreaming is not a man anymore and is therefore easy to annihilate. Those who have the power know this very well and it is for this reason that they try to forbid the dreams, to kill the dreams. What is war, what is violence, if not the substitution of dreams, of wishes, of projects, with fear and terror?

Fear of others, of the different one that becomes an enemy to overcome. To kill the dreams of whole generations, as it has happened in Afghanistan, is a crime towards humanity. A population that has no more young people who can dream, that have no more women who are free to wish for their happiness; this stops being a population, it becomes

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a Country populated by non-persons; this they have tried to do in Afghanistan during the years. But we are here now and this means that they failed and they will fail again.

We can say that we have won our first bet by being here all together now, trying to build something different, trying to make a revolution in Cornelius Castoriadis vision... a revolution that is not violence, not spreading of blood, but a “revolution in the sense of changement of some central institutions in the society, realised in the society itself: an explicit auto-transformation that happens in a short time... revolution is when the essential part of the community enters a phase of political activity, in other words, an instituting phase. The social imaginary starts working and is explicitly involved in the transformation of existing institutions”. It means to interpret history with facts and social structures in order to solve the problems... can you identify with this definition?

We had many difficulties; until the last moment it looked like we wouldn't have done it, and somebody would have maybe been happy about it. Somebody who claims to be working and actually works as if Afghanistan was a hopeless Country, a Country where only the emergencies count.

To demonstrate that the civil society is alive, that it gathers, that it is not only able to react but also to pro-act, that it decides the agenda, can be provocatory but can also be the necessary changement in paradigm. Actually, yes! With this pre-peace conference we decided to be provocatory. The moment we are living is inscribed in a too long forgotten history, that develops through one and a half centuries. “It was the time of the imperialist arrogance, of the patriotic pride, of the uncollapsing faith in the supremacy of the Christian society...” so wrote Peter Hopkirk in the “Great Game” in 1990. He was telling about the 19th Century phase of the fight for the control of Afghanistan. Little has changed of those elements in the fight that is going on today in Afghanistan.

In the first part of the story of “the Great Game” the protagonists, Russia, China and the United Kingdom, call things as they are, that is, they fight for the predominance in Afghanistan, while in the second part, the one contemporary to us, the new players introduce themselves as if they want to delivery presents to the Afghans, first of all freedom and democracy. The substance of the game has not changed, the variation is given by the new players that start participating in the game. Among these new and old players we can find the US, Iran, Pakistan, China, India, Russia, terroristic centrals, drug-traffickers, war lords, and many of these are external to Afghanistan. But there is something new, a new small player that can make the story end in a different way: the Afghan civil society, better if in a network with the other civil societies of the region.

This is a rare case of a conference, that, during its happening, is putting in practice also something else: an operative network, some actions of support, for example for the orphanages, for the University, but mainly, is the journey that you do walking, as the Brazilian Paolo Freire, a master of education and peace, used to say. It seems to me that we are walking and that we have already done a quite long journey. The title I have been given for this talk allows me to say that one of the more effective ways to reinforce the links between civil societies, is to discuss, to have the courage to risk, to get the responsibility of being proactive and not to withdraw from difficulties: to be there! And that's what we are doing.

There isn't someone who is just giving to others, but there is reciprocity, respect, drive for life, wish to build another world with other rules: the rules of peace, justice,

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freedom, and only in these we will be able to find the security to tackle the terrorisms, the fundamentalisms of those who shout loudly, the battle between civility and identity.

But what civility, what identity are we referring to? No! We cannot refer to only one identity in order to solve political, social, religious issues, as identities are always multiple: for example, I am European, Italian, male, but also professor, President of Peacewaves, born catholic, but very far away from a religious practice, I love music, sport and many other things: which is my identity, then?

Can all these identities get together?

Through the education, that can affect people who refer to us, it is possible to break the sectarian hates that explode in a second, and can spread the non-violence, the peace, the human rights... through co-operation that teaches us to learn solidarity, because as Goethe says: Feeling to be loved gives more strength than feeling strong.

Because if the others are apart from me, my indifference towards their destiny will be legitimated; but if they are inseparable from me as much as I am from them, if my own identity is made by the human net of relationships in which I am involved, then every authentic care towards myself will coincide with the responsible acting in the context that includes me.

Civil society extends the boundaries of justice, there is no peace without justice, we said that many times, but there is not justice without peace either, as well as antinomy freedom and security can be solved only looking security in freedom, every imposed constriction is enemy to freedom and also to security...

Quoting Gandhi, we will be strong as our last servant...Human being will be strong, free and in peace only when also the last man of the last population will be free and in peace...

By contrast, co-operation, civil society, often suffers the wish for becoming bigger and bigger, believing that making big things is a good thing. It's an illness. We need to think of small projects, of small things, of the God of small things, as Arhundati Roy suggests...of relational precious, of daily life, of reducing our ecological print.

To develop relational precious makes happy both, those who do it and those who receive it...and the pleasure of giving is re-discovered! Small practical projects, possible to monitor and above all to sustain.

What we are doing here is a small thing that moves big energies, develops hopes, lightens the enchantment.

The perspective we are using with the Afghan Civil Society is different from the one of research of 'security', that some even intend as easily reachable through the increment of the existent institutions and through an extension of them, especially military....'security' intended in this way is a passive concept because it delegates (to military forces, to police, to national and international courts, to strong powers...). It does not make to understand that the defence (for example of rights) must be active, creative in regard to always new situations; and that it is not possible to delegate everything to military and juridical services because it is necessary to have social fights to get solutions to problems.... The concept of non violent people defence, of activity of civil society is much more extended that the

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concept of 'security'...to assure peace in the world even through a renovation of the international rights, of its organs and of co-operations of NGO's and of the various components of civil society...The new paradigma needs resources, needs to reverse the shameful percentage of 8% for the civil expenses compared to the 92% for the military expenses substained in Afghanistan in the past years.

All this needs to be supported by a population who, motivated by the non-violence, the defence and sustained by human rights, has the duty to promote, with a precise political wish, a new paradigm of peace. To contribute to the change of this paradigm is the first duty of civil society and co-operation.

In order to reach the conditions for a long term world peace, a change of the paradigma is necessaryof the way to tackle conflicts, hostilities and of the actions to take. This implies also a change of how we perceive reality....In fact we realize that there is more strength in co-operation, in the reciprocate help, in respect, in forgiving, and in the non violent defence of civilians than in some big words such as powers and security.... All the human beings can be a unique big collective intelligence instead of give up to all those powers that tend to keep us divided, and want us to hate each other in order to be able to use the enormous destructive strength that men have.....our proposal wants to move the enormous constructive strength and the desire of peace and justice in all of us...

I come out of this conference with an image of Afghanistan: a population who chooses the bridge of paper, who trusts its own resiliency, art, wish for peace and justice....a population who trusts us, and we, international society, trust your trust, both capable to turn our back to the iron bridge, capable to resist to the 'security' made in fact of fire, destruction and death...we will have to build together the trust we need to make peace a reality. Trust is the essential condition to reinforce co-operation between civil societies and this conference and the next one are significative steps in this sense.

Thank You very much...

prof. Marco Braghero
PeaceWaves President
