

Tourism – vector of peace

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The world summit of Nobel laureates, held in Rome, October 2002 concluded that: "We stand at a critical moment in earth's history: a time when humanity must choose its future. As the world becomes increasingly interdependent and fragile, the future holds great peril – and we, the people, have great responsibilities." Echoing a state of the world report – they concluded that humanity is facing a triple security crisis resulting from:

- repercussions of social inequities and poverty
- environmental decline and its effects
- dangers arising out of an unchecked arms proliferation and the increase of armed conflict.

Social inequities

Scientists believe that human life began in Africa some 5.6 million years ago. It has taken these 5.6 million years – to 1900 – for the world population to reach 1.6 billion people. We will be adding that same number of people to the face of the earth in the next 15 to 20 years, reaching a total 7.6 billion inhabitants of planet earth. Ninety percent of this growth will be in developing countries where fully one half of the world's population live on us\$2 a day or less and 35,000 children die each day from preventable diseases.

Africa, with the highest rate of population growth, will have 30% of this growth, some 500 million people – a continent where population at the start of the 20th century was less than 100 million, and at the start of the 21st, was 800 million.

The gap of have and have not regions of the world continues to grow. David Landes, in his book, *The wealth and poverty of nations*, points out that the ratio in income per capita in one of the richest nations of the world, say Switzerland, and the poorest non-industrialized nations, is currently 400 to 1. Approximately 250 years ago – that same ratio was 5 to 1.

The 1995 World Social Summit on Poverty held in Denmark, acknowledged that poverty, unemployment, and social disintegration are closely linked to issues of peace and security. The summit concluded that there is an urgent need for a new global commitment to reduce deep inequities that breed explosive social conditions, fuel ethnic antagonisms, and drive environmental decline.

Environmental decline

Persons who follow environmental trends are aware that forests are shrinking, water tables are falling, soils are eroding, deserts are expanding, wetlands are disappearing, fisheries are collapsing, rangelands are diminishing, reefs are dying, and plant and animal species are disappearing.

As world population continues to expand at a rate of nearly 90 million people a year (the entire population of Africa in 1900):

- each day we push an estimated 150 plant and animal species into extinction
- we produce chemicals that destroy the ozone layer exposing ourselves and others to harmful solar radiation
- we put toxic chemicals into the air, water, and soil that return to poison us and further contribute to global climate change.

The Iroquois Nation of North America have passed on from generation to generation an ethic that can serve to guide us all. In their belief system "God created Man – to take care of everything else that God created."

Arms proliferation

With the Gulf War and the war in Afghanistan – world military expenditures are approaching US\$ 1 trillion - the equivalent of 2/3rds the total income of half the world's population.

In his farewell address to the nation some 50 years ago, U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower, himself a five star general of World War II fame, warned us of the perils of an unchecked "military industrial complex". "Every gun that is made," he stated, every warship launched, every rocket fired, signifies in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed. This 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."

Every two and a half seconds somewhere in the world a child dies from hunger or other preventable diseases. Less than 4% of the world's annual military expenditures would cure this situation. Since the end

of World War II, more than 32 million civilians, mostly women, old men and children have perished as a result of hatred and ignorance and the sale of weapons.

A post-9/11 world

In a post 9-11 world, we can no longer delude ourselves that the harsh realities a half world away are without real consequence at home – and for all humanity. As far back as 1932, in a message to a disarmament conference in Geneva –Albert Einstein concluded that: “it is not the task of the individual who lives in this critical time merely to await results and to criticize. He must serve this great cause as well as he can. For the fate of all humanity will be that fate which it honestly earns and deserves.”

This message was echoed 70 years later by the Nobel Peace laureates as noted above and warrants repeating here: “we stand at a critical moment in earth’s history: A time when humanity must choose its future. And we, the people, have great responsibilities. They did not say we the governments – or we the politicians – they said we the *people*.”

In a post 9-11 world, we must be more than spectators – watching world events unfold before us on the evening news. We must be engaged in shaping the future for ourselves, for our children, and for our children’s children. As Ghandi said, we must be the change we seek in the world.

As decision makers, policy makers, and educators – of the world’s largest industry – an industry that facilitates travel, people to people encounters, meetings and dialogue among people of all nations, we are collectively a powerful force for the shaping of a positive future for all humanity. We have the power to instill an ethos and philosophy for world travel that can underpin the critical role that travel and hospitality can play in a 21st century world. Its potential to contribute to a better world for all. An industry that contributes to international understanding and respect for all cultures; an industry that recognizes the vital role it can play in contributing to a culture of peace and poverty reduction; an industry that recognizes the vital role it can play – and in deed its responsibility for -environmental stewardship and the preservation of bio-diversity; an industry that recognizes the vital role it can – and does play – in the preservation of heritage and precious world monuments.

Shortly after 9-11, in an address at Georgetown University, former U.S. President Bill Clinton said: “Don’t you think it’s interesting that in the most modern of ages, the biggest problem is the oldest problem of human society – the fear of the other. And how quickly fear leads to distrust, to hatred, to de-humanization, and to death.”

Speaking at about the same time, Pope John Paul II – almost as a direct response to Clinton, stated: “tourism puts us in touch with other ways of living, other religions and other perceptions of the world and its history. This helps people to discover themselves and others, both as individuals and as communities, immersed in the vast history of humanity, heirs to and responsible for a universe that is both familiar and strange. This generates a new vision of others that frees us from the risk of remaining closed in on ourselves.”

Travel can be one to one citizen diplomacy in its best form. Travel shatters the isolation and ‘fear of the other’ to which President Clinton refers. Tourism in its best form can serve as a means of dialogue at a personal level – it can be a path to the oneness of humanity.

The story is told about a U.S. Senator approaching Abraham Lincoln at the height of the Civil War in the United States – one of the bloodiest wars in history. Mr. President, the senator said, “I believe that enemies should be destroyed. I agree with you sir, responded Lincoln, and the best way to destroy an enemy is to make him a friend.”

I could not help but reflect on this story in watching the news coverage of the passing of Ronald Reagan a few short weeks ago. Reagan who spoke of the Evil at the beginning of his presidency and who escalated the arms race as no president before him had done. And Reagan, who by the end of his presidency, could be seen in numerous photos with his arm around Mikhail Gorbachev – both of them with big smiles on their faces – sharing in appreciation the cultures of their respective cultures. Both men recognized the vital role that travel can play in breaking down historical barriers of isolation. Their joint statement following the Geneva Summit in 1986 stated in part, “there should be a greater understanding among our peoples and to this end we will encourage greater travel.

In 1995 – two years before he was assassinated – I had the honor of participating in Prime Minister Yitzak Rabin’s Conference on Tourism and Peace in Israel. The words that remained with me from that conference were spoken by Ben Kingsley – who received an award for his role as Gandhi. Kingsley said – “It is time we added an 11th commandment, “honor thy children”. This profound insight takes on even greater significance in the current world context and serves as an illuminating beacon for this the UN Decade of Peace and Non-violence for the children of the world.

There is no better way to “honor our children” than for our generation to leave them a legacy of peace. There is no industry that has a greater opportunity to forge this legacy of peace than the travel and tourism

industry: It is with this vision that the International Institute for Peace through Tourism was born in 1986 – the United Nations International Year of Peace.

It has taken some time – but now – nearly 20 years later – following three global conferences – two African conferences – global summits on peace through tourism in Amman and Geneva – and several smaller conferences – workshops and symposia – that vision is gaining in substance and momentum. More than 30 major international travel and tourism organizations have become partners with IIPT – each committed to a millennium project that contributes to the vision of tourism as a global peace industry. Chapters have formed in different regions of the world and five global networks including an educators network, community tourism network, and spirituality in tourism network have been formed. A global peace parks project was launched from Bethany beyond the Jordan, site of Christ's baptism on the 11th hour, of the 11th day, of the 11th month, of the first year of the new Millennium – as a legacy of the First Global Summit in Amman. Our goal is 2000 peace parks circling the earth by the year 2010. Noteworthy parks to date include IIPT Peace Park at Pearl Harbor, the Dag Hammarskjold Memorial Site in Ndola, Zambia, and in the months ahead in Bagamoyo, Tanzania – a proposed world heritage site.

And a strategic alliance is being formed with the world's three largest youth travel organizations: international youth hostels, the federation of international youth travel organizations, and the international student travel confederation, with a view to developing youth travel initiatives for peace and understanding. International youth hostels has already launched a flagship program – “hostelling for peace and international understanding.”

Our Global Summit on Peace through Tourism in Geneva last year honored U.N. Secretary General Dag Hammarskjold as a “man of peace”. Hammarskjold left us with a message appropriate for our times by the way he lived his life. He stated in his last address of 1953 that “our work for peace must begin within the private world of each one of us. Only in true surrender to the interest of all can we reach that strength and independence – that unity of purpose – that equity of judgment – which are necessary if we are to measure up to our duty to the future – as men and women of a generation to whom the chance was given in time to build a world of peace.”

That opportunity – 50 years later – has been passed on to our generation. That opportunity is here with us today. That opportunity is the opportunity of the world's largest industry – an industry that has the potential to be the world's first global peace industry.

I look forward to collaborating with each of you in as we continue in our efforts to “build a culture of peace through tourism” and in closing, I invite each of you to join with us at the 3rd IIPT African Conference in Lusaka, Zambia, February 6-11, 2005, and the Third Global Summit on Peace through Tourism in Thailand in the Fall of 2005.

Thank you and God bless you all.

Louis J. D'Amore

Louis D'Amore is the Founder and President of the International Institute for Peace through Tourism (IIPT). He has been instrumental in promoting the travel and tourism industry as the world's first “Global Peace Industry” since the founding of IIPT in 1986. He has organized Global Conferences on Peace through Tourism in Vancouver (1988), Montreal (1994), and Glasgow (1999). In November 2000, he organized the first Global Summit on Peace through Tourism in Amman, Jordan, honoring the legacy of King Hussein as a peacemaker and serving as a demonstration of support for a continuation of the peace process in the Middle East and other regions of the world. The Second Global Summit on Peace through Tourism in partnership with the World Travel and Tourism Council –was held in Geneva, February 2003. The first IIPT African Conference on Peace through Tourism was held in South Africa, January 2002 and the second in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, December 2003. He is currently organizing the 3rd IIPT African Conference – Lusaka, Zambia, Feb. 2005, and the 3rd Global Summit, Thailand, Sep. 2005.

Prior to founding the IIPT, Mr. D'Amore was President of L.J. D'Amore & Associates, a Canadian consulting firm with clients that included all levels of government and major private sector companies in various industry sectors including airlines, hotel chains, a national railroad, and developers. In 1976, he conducted the first study in North America on the future of tourism following which his consulting firm introduced “TOURSCAN” – an on-going research project on the future of tourism serving Canada's key organizations in travel and tourism both public and private.

Mr. D'Amore has been a pioneer in promoting a social and environmental ethic within the travel and tourism industry since the mid-70's and in 1992, following the U.N. Conference on Environment and Development (Rio Summit), Mr. D'Amore developed the world's first Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Sustainable Tourism for the Canadian tourism industry. He also developed the Guidelines for the Pacific Asia Travel Association GreenLeaf Program and was a consultant to the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) in identifying the state of the art in Codes of Conduct for Sustainable Tourism.

His consulting experience includes working with governments and the private sector in a range of areas including: community development, social impact assessment, public participation, social aspects of environmental and resource planning, cultural/heritage development, and conflict resolution with an emphasis on win-win solutions.