

**Statement by Dr. Monika Kalista
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on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders
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Mr. Chairman,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,

In our days an increasing number of human activities is unfolding on a worldwide scale. This requires credible universal answers. The long-lasting tragedy in the Balkans and NATO's intervention in Kosovo are only two examples to show that certain matters concern all of us and require international action for their solution. In the world economy interdependence between states has become so strong that today no group of countries, let alone any single country can act on its own. The same goes for many other issues which are far too complex and far-reaching for any single actor to solve. Ecological issues come to mind, questions arising in connection with growing international migratory movements and many others. Crime is not an exception to this rule, the ongoing 10th UN Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders clearly bears witness to this fact.

One of the keys for resolving problems in all human societies has been the establishment of laws and, of course, their implementation. We observe a rising trend to set up laws and regulations designed to cope with the problems confronting mankind. Again, this is a wide field covering virtually all areas of individual and collective activity.

While being fully aware of the importance of laws I feel the need to point out an age-old truth so concisely stated by the Roman philosopher and author Horace who asked, "what good are laws without morals?".

Cross-border co-operation between legal experts is rapidly intensifying in all fields. At the same time, the global ethics to support international regulations are still in their infancy at best. Of course, moral rules have been set up and are accepted in all parts of the world. The Ten Commandments, the Torah and the Koran, the teachings of the Buddha and of Confucius are only a few

living in. I would, therefore, like to draw your attention to an initiative taken last year by the then State Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Dr. Benita Ferrero-Waldner who is now Austrian Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs. At her invitation, intellectuals and experts from a variety of backgrounds, from many countries and several continents met at the Vienna Hofburg for three days to discuss the question if a global ethic could be developed to guide policy makers in meeting the challenges and opportunities which are a result of the globalisation of our societies and economics.

The points discussed and agreed upon by this conference were compiled as the "Vienna Conclusions on Globality and Global Ethics" which have been distributed as an Austrian national paper to the distinguished delegations at the ongoing 10th UN Congress.

Furthermore the contributions to the conference were published in the book "Global Ethics - Illusion or Reality'. When the book appeared in German in September last year it was welcomed with such widespread interest that we decided to publish an English edition, too, thereby making the results of the conference accessible to a wider international audience. Each delegation attending the present Congress has received a copy of our publication.

As you can see in the book, the participants at the conference focused on a wide range of issues while always addressing the same basic questions that arise in this context.

- Can a plausible and practicable global ethic be contrasted with globalisation and particularly its negative side-effects?
- How compatible is a concept of universally applicable value standards with the call for cultural and social pluralism, which is now widely seen as necessary?
- How can the international media contribute?
- What can the role of culture be in such a process? At the same time all participants agreed that the notion of global ethics remains to be defined and must be treated as work-in-progress.

I believe that we can find many interesting ideas in the eleven recommendations which form the operative part of the conclusions and which focus on three inter-related aspects of globality:

- Global Ethics and International Dialogue
- Global Ethics and the International Media Society
- Global Ethics and Cultural Pluralism.

As an example let me point out that the first two of the 11 recommendations of the Vienna Conclusions refer to human rights. I would like to particularly highlight the first one, which calls on us to "intensify the human rights dialogue within and amongst members of the public, governments, civil society,

religions and the business community'. Indeed, the key word here is dialogue, the importance of which can not be repeated often enough. Dialogue is probably the single most important way of bringing people together, helping them solve problems and enabling them to live together in a peaceful manner. A breakdown of dialogue all too often is the precursor of open conflict where the parties are of comparable strength and of oppression where one side can impose its will on the other.

Point 2 calls for strengthening compliance with human rights commitments, with particular attention to sheltering the weak and vulnerable in our societies. In the context of crime and crime prevention this may imply far more than the "traditional" human rights issues which are mainly considered to concern the protection of individuals against the state. The weak also must get shelter from criminal syndicates who exploit them for their own purposes. Furthermore many of them need support to enable them to take their lives into their own hands, so they can, amongst other things, generate enough income legally to avoid resorting to criminal activities.

Two other recommendations specifically refer to the internet, which is rapidly becoming a major tool for worldwide communication. While recommendation 6 highlights how problematic it is that disadvantaged groups only have limited access, 7 calls for innovative measures to avoid the abuse of the internet. Bearing in mind the dangers stemming from the distribution of pornographic material and other criminal activities via the internet, it is clear that this must be a matter of great concern to all of us. We must not allow the potential of this new medium for building cross-cultural respect and trust to be neutralised by criminal activities.

A question elaborated upon in one of the contributions are the effects which the presentation of violence in modern media may have. While this may trigger or reinforce violence, which is either a criminal offence in itself or is committed together with other criminal activities, media could also be a useful relief valve. However, in our age of worldwide news coverage and satellite transmissions this is yet another matter, which cannot be solved by any single society or country, it is a global issue to be solved on a global level.

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished delegates,

The ethical dimension begins as soon as we witness human interaction. Without the viewpoint of the others we cannot grasp who we actually are. Thus ethics are not a passive matter. They always involve action. They act as guiding principles for our conduct towards the people we live together with.

Today our world is more densely populated than ever before in history. At the same time, due to modern technologies, it is smaller than ever. Thanks to our nearly unlimited possibilities to travel, our contact with other cultures is often very personal in nature. Formerly far-away foreign countries are only a short plane trip from our homes, via internet we can contact people all over the world with a click of the mouse. We meet foreigners in the streets of our hometown, who have either come as travellers or as migrants, if not refugees.

Such a global world community imperatively calls for global ethics, just as every human society has always had its common ethical foundation. These ethics should make our living together at least tolerable; hopefully they can even contribute to improving it.

Let me stress that there can be no question of trying to shape people to become so-called "citizens of the world" at the expense of their cultural and other ties to their local and national background. The challenge of our days of rapidly growing globalisation is to find common ethical rules for all humans while duly respecting the values, which every one of us learns at home.

Ethics concern the eternal search of mankind for universal values. These values are not static, for they evolve parallel to the development of the world we live in. Yet they are a matter touching upon all fields of human activity and concerning every one of us. Thus they are a challenge with a political aspect in the broadest sense of the word.

Jean Jacques Rousseau pointed out the intimate link between politics and ethics when he wrote that, and I quote, "anyone who wishes to separate politics and ethics has failed to grasp any aspect of either". While it is the task of the nation state to address the development of supranational institutions, global ethics in today's world are a more complex matter. Are calls for a global ethic to be addressed to the individual citizens? Should they rather be directed to the state to which the citizen is bound or to an organisation representing the region he perceives as his immediate home? Non-governmental organisations also come to mind with a view of their growing possibilities to influence the course of many developments. Or does the answer maybe lie with all institutions, which could potentially shape the change our world is going through?

Coming back to the Vienna Conference on Globality and Global Ethics of June 1999 and to the Vienna Conclusions I want to stress that this was another attempt in the search for a definition of global ethics. Not more and not less. The subject is an immense challenge for all of us and by its very nature it must be seen as work-in-progress. By publishing the book, which you have received, and through follow-up meetings and conferences we are trying to contribute to keep up the momentum in this important matter.

An old Chinese wisdom says: "Even the longest way starts with the first step." Concerning the issue of global ethics we all do not have to set a first step. Many important factors for a credible concept are already there. I do hope the present Conference will, on the same level with other important results, equally contribute to the development of a credible and strong concept of global ethics. The issue must continue to be discussed within the framework of United Nations during the coming years. Austria declares her willingness to play an active part in this context also in the future, as we have continuously done in the past.