

To the Italian Parliament
To the European Parliament
To the national commissions of UNESCO
To the UN

APPEAL

We represent “Youth for a United World” and we belong to the Focolare Movement which began in 1943 arising out of the experience of Chiara Lubich. We are young people from all over the world, of different religions, cultures, beliefs and traditions; we identify with the principle of universal fraternity and we commit ourselves to live according to what is known as the Golden Rule which invites us to do to others what we would like done to us.

We are aware of the current global scenario where there are so many conflicts which cause migrations of peoples who attempt to flee from violence, extreme poverty, hunger and social injustices which they are victims of in their own countries. We feel challenged by these appalling situations and want to find practical solutions and ways we can commit ourselves personally.

All over the world Youth for a United World carries out many activities directed towards promoting peace, cooperation and unity among peoples. We have collected these fragments of fraternity into what we call the United World Project, a project that emerged from the idea to do an historical and geographical mapping of universal fraternity to show that, besides being something to which people are naturally called, fraternity can become a new cornerstone for politics, economics, work, sport and all fields of human behaviour.

To accomplish universal fraternity individual good will is not enough: we are in fact convinced that direct political action is needed to combat the causes of the conflicts and the conditions that generate inequality.

A first crucial issue in peace building is that of the massive expenditure in many nations on arms and the arms trade. Every year about half a million people are its victims. Analyzing the flow of arms exports we can see the quantity of weapons sold by producing nations to countries engaged in conflict (Disarmament Archive). According to UNHCR (the UN Refugee Agency) data, in 2014 alone there were at least 218,000 refugees who crossed the Mediterranean escaping these war zones while there were 3,419 known victims. This is a humanitarian crisis which requires coordinated action by the international community.

In the year 2000 the Heads of State and government of all the member States of the UN signed the “Millennium Declaration” in New York. In it they affirmed that “The globalized civilization of the third millennium possesses the wealth, knowledge and means to achieve the dream of a humanity freed from poverty and the lack of basic needs.” These goals were meant to be reached by 2015 but this has not happened.

There are many issues still open. Therefore we appeal to the Institutions and ask:

1. To reduce the public financing of weapons production in order to guarantee a fairer distribution of resources. Currently the amount spent on weapons on a global level is equal to 1,740 billion dollars (Disarmament Archive). We believe that a turnaround is necessary on current investments to allow greater support for cooperation between countries in order to build peace.
2. To get to the roots of inequality to combat extreme poverty. The financial crisis in fact has further emphasized the gap between rich and poor. More than 35% of the world's population finds itself in a condition of malnutrition while 20 cents a day would be enough to save a child from hunger (World Food Programme). In this sense Pope Francis' words are meaningful: "How can it be that it is not a news item when an elderly homeless person dies of exposure, but it is news when the stock market loses two points? ... we also have to say 'thou shalt not' to an economy based on exclusion and inequality. Such an economy kills" (Evangeli Gaudium 53).
3. To review the current models of governance: greater democratic control is needed in the choice of economic and monetary policies and more control over financial institutions whose behaviour was one of the main causes of the economic crisis. We need to rediscover a political vision centred on the common good and to enable money and finance to become tools and not goals of human behaviour.
4. To adopt a model of organized lawfulness in opposition to criminal phenomena like drug dealing, human trafficking and the illegal exploitation of the environment. We appeal especially for renewed commitment in effectively opposing corruption in institutions.
5. To guarantee a level of universal primary education in order to allow the full development of human persons and their capacity for self-determination. According to recent data from UNESCO (2014), one child in ten still has no access to a school and 759 million adults are not able to read and write.

Thank you for listening. We are grateful for all you can do regarding our aspirations and requests. We greet you sincerely renewing our commitment to putting into practice, as Gandhi said: "be the change you want to see in the world".

12 March 2015

Chamber of Deputies, Montecitorio, Rome

the Youth for a United World