

PIERRE SANE: Gracious ladies and fine gentleman, good evening. Let me first thank the Association of the American Sociologist for this opportunity to address an American audience. I have not addressed an American audience since I joined UNESCO. I have addressed American audiences as Secretary General of Amnesty International many, many times in the US but you understand being an international civil servant there are things that I am told I cannot say when I speak in public especially when I speak in the United States but we are not in the United States we are in Canada and that is why I accepted the invitation because I figured that here I can say really what I think, that I feel. I just have to preface it by saying this does not necessarily represent the views of UNESCO even though I've been invited as Assistant General of UNESCO but also as former Secretary General of Amnesty International and as a human rights advocate. So since I think there is precedent, I will signal to the press whenever I am talking as UNESCO and whenever I am talking in my personal capacity.

The talk is in three parts. A very short part may be to share with you why it is I am a human rights advocate because I have been asked that question many, many times. Secondly, the most boring part is about UNESCO, what it is, the board of UNESCO, the tragedies, etc., and the third part where I will speak in my personal capacity because this position has not been yet adopted formally by the organization. We are campaigning. We are pushing to get this adopted by the organization but it is not yet there. It is on poverty as the next frontier on the struggle for human rights.

So on the first question, because I have been asked that question many times especially when I was appointed as Secretary General of Amnesty International. Many journalists asked me why, why was I in human rights and behind the question was a sense that as an African if I was active in the human rights field it is probably because I had suffered myself from human rights violations that maybe I had been in prison, I had suffered torture, and it was because of that, because of that status as a former victim that I chose to dedicate my life to the struggle for human rights. Well the truth is really, really far from that. I had a very happy childhood. I grew up in a very normal family but I think I grew up in a family where even though there was no debates about human rights but it is just a very day to day behavior in that family which was a reflection of really what human rights meant. What do I mean by that? My grandfather was a medical doctor and he took an oath which says do no harm and very often in our conversation he will explain to me what do no harm means and it is only much, much later that I understood those lessons which were lessons in human rights.

Another job he held was he was appointed Ambassador of Senegal to Guinea Conakry, which is a neighboring country south of Senegal and that was during the War of Liberation in Guinea-Bissau and my grandfather at the time used to travel. When he was traveling from Senegal to his post by car, he would travel with a gun. I was really puzzled why an Ambassador would travel with a gun and he explained to me that the freedom fighters from Guinea-Bissau did not like him. I was surprised. "I mean these people are fighting for liberation; they are fighting to kick out the Portuguese colonialists. You are the Ambassador of Senegal and Senegal has taken a very clear position that Guinea-Bissau should become independent like other African countries. Why is it they would have something against you?" Well, he told me, "It's because I criticized them." I said "How?" He said, "It's because they have committed atrocities against the civilian population and it is not because you are fighting a war of liberation that you are right to commit atrocities against the civilian population so the end does not justify the means." That was another major lesson in human rights and especially in international humanitarian law. War has its' rules and attacking a defenseless civilian population is a war crime like we're seeing today in the Middle East.

My father was a journalist and a trade unionist and my mother, like Valentine said, was a leader in the Christian women's movement. They were not involved in the struggle for independence.

They were not in political parties clamoring for independence but they were campaigning for the right, my father for the right of workers for freedom of the press and my mother for equal rights for women and what they told me is, yes, we may have independence tomorrow. That will not guarantee the rights of the workers. That will not guarantee that the women will have equal rights so while it is legitimate to struggle for independence we should not sacrifice our freedoms and our future freedoms once independence is won because we have seen that time and again in history and we saw it in Africa after the independence when those who came in to power confiscated the independence that was hard won by the African people and managed the State as if it was their own private property. So again, that was for me a lesson growing up in human rights and therefore when I arrived in Paris as a student with the African Students' Movement I was not so much interested in changing the regimes in Africa or in supporting the cultural revolution in China or find discussion whether the Soviet regime was revisionist and whether Albania or Cuba or more in line with the doctrine. I was more concerned with rooms for students, with scholarships for other African students. I was most interested in defending the material and moral interests of the students who had elected me to lead the organization.

So, therefore I came into human rights not because of a traumatic experience but just because I grew into a politics where human rights were practiced every day and another stroke of luck I was born in 1948 which is the year of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the first time the international community proclaimed universal human rights for everybody. Before that, you had Declaration of Human Rights just for certain categories of people but for the first time in 1948 the United Nation adopted a Declaration of Universal Rights, indivisible rights, civil rights, political rights, economic rights, social rights, individual rights as well as collective rights and a set of obligations for government rights applying to everybody irrespective of race, creed, color, gender, sex, etc., etc. So, therefore human rights for me and the human rights revolution is something that I have naturally embraced without any questioning or without any doubt. I just moved into it and once I started working for human rights I felt completely at ease. That is why I never worked as a Chartered Accountant. Yes, I lost a lot of time in school because I started with an MBA and then moved to Chartered Accountant and then realized that this is a job I cannot do. I admire Chartered Accountants but there is no way I could do that for a job and I worked out of that as soon as I got my degree and I had to study again political science, etc. in order to be better equipped for the type of work that I wanted to do which is development work, which is human rights, which is the work that I am doing now.

Now, let me talk about UNESCO. So this is the official part. It starts with a quote in the constitution of UNESCO. A very beautiful quote actually. It says, "Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed." This is a phrase from the preamble to UNESCO's constitution and it is not without significance. It gives us a new understanding of the past with its almost prophetic reading of the future. On 16, November 1945, the United Nation Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization, UNESCO, following in the footsteps of the United Nations came into being amidst the ruins wrote by the Second World War. The defining will of its members was to establish the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind. The constitution marking the birth of the organization was signed by 37 member states. UNESCO now has 190 member states and six associate member states. The General Conference of UNESCO consists of the representatives of the state, members of the organization. It meets every two years. It is attended by the member states, associate members together with observers from nonmember states, intergovernmental organizations, and nongovernmental organizations. Each country has one vote irrespective of its size or the extent of its contribution to the budget. The General Conference that minds the policies and the main lines of work of the organization. Its job is to set the program and the budget of the organization. It also elects the members of the executive board and appoint every four years the Director-General. The working languages of the General Conference are Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian, and Spanish. The executive board in a sense assures the overall

management of UNESCO. It prepares the work of the General Conference and sees that its decisions are properly carried out. The functions and responsibilities of the executive board are derived primarily from the constitutions and from the rules or directives laid down by the General Conference. Every two years, the General Conference assigns specific tasks to the board and other functions may stem from agreements concluded between UNESCO and the United Nations, the specialized agencies of the United Nations, and other intergovernmental organizations. So sixty years ago, member states established UNESCO and entrusted it with the mission to promote understanding between people and cultures. They agreed that ignorance and prejudice were key factors that made possible the great atrocities committed during the Second World War. They wanted UNESCO to encourage the production and free circulation of knowledge, ideas, and human rights values so as to build the defense of peace in the minds of men.

Sixty years on, as we celebrate the anniversary of our organization, we feel it is essential we continue to build spaces where researchers, policy makers, and civil society organizations can interact to reflect and exchange on current processes and outcomes of social transformations and explore ways of strengthening the chain of knowledge production and use to precisely continue to roll back the scourges of ignorance, prejudice, and injustice. For never in the history of humanity has technological change proceeded so fast; never have our respective societies been so much intertwined through exchanges of information and goods, through international travels and migrations, through confrontation and dialogues about values and beliefs; never have social transformations been so complex due to the massification of education, rapid urbanization, universal democratic and human rights aspirations, coupled with growing inequalities, attachment to blood and shared beliefs, worrying health and environmental risks; never has the need to understand these social processes and act on them for the sake of human rights justice and peace been so pressing and never has it been so pressing at all levels of public decision making, local and national governments, regional and global structures and processes. Never, therefore, has the need to promote the social sciences been so vital for the harmonious development and interaction of our respective societies. The promotion of social sciences is precisely the mandate entrusted to the organization by the members of UNESCO. This decision, judicious then as it is simply indispensable today. Social sciences for knowledge, knowledge for empowerment, power of the service of justice and human rights, power of the service of the most vulnerable. Today, through Research Policy Networks we address issues related to international migrations and multiculturalism, racism, and discrimination in the city, women's political participation in context of cultural norms and structures, ethical use of scientific and technological knowledge and many others that you will find on our websites at UNESCO.org.

UNESCO has now also been called by its member states to make a specific contribution to the eradication of poverty through the design of an appropriate long-term strategy. The approach to poverty as a cross-cutting theme encompasses strategy around five areas, policy formulation and implementation, advocacy and information, policy-oriented research, capacity building, and innovative field projects, and a strategy is in development and will be shaped by the results of the twenty pilot projects being carried out in more than forty countries in all regions of the world. So that is the UNESCO part. You could see that it was drafted by a committee.

Let me now share with you my personal views on the issue of poverty eradication and my theme here is straightforward, deceptively simple proposal: poverty will only cease when it is recognized as a violation of human rights and as such abolished. One should be aware that the striking feature of our civilization as it globalizes around the aspiration to unprecedented prosperity is the persistence and even increase of poverty. It is an overwhelming fact: poverty affects half the world's population and it is spreading. The vast majority of the two to three thousand million human beings who will be added to the world's population before the end of the century will be exposed to poverty. It is putting alarming pressure on the environment and global equilibrium and the figures are apocalyptic. Eight million children die each year because of poverty, 150 million children under the

age of five suffer from extreme malnutrition, 100 million children live in the streets. Every three seconds poverty kills a child somewhere. And our world puts up with it.

When in 1994, 800,000 corpses of Tutsi, and opposition Hutu victims of genocide in Rwanda were carried on rivers of blood through the country of a thousand hills the world held its breath. We all felt guilty. We wished that action had been taken to prevent it. We all said, once again, "Never again." The United Nations established an International Tribunal to establish the truce and hand down justice. "We cannot bring back the dead but the guilty shall pay. International law will prevail. Morality is safe." But what about the 8 million children who die each year from poverty related diseases. We are well aware of these figures and they are probably underestimated. We will not be taken by surprise again and furthermore we can prevent the slaughter with means that, in the final analysis, are fairly limited.

What then is the basis of the ethical double standards which leads us to accept the poverty manufactured by our society even though it kills more surely and methodically than machetes and militias? Is there a single moral or ethical justification for the central contradiction between the equality proclaimed in the granting of rights and growing inequality in access to life-giving resources? To address this question is essential for the preservation of our own humanity.

The rush of solidarity that the world has witnessed during the Tsunami when a violent tragedy befell coastlines of the Indian Ocean was both heartening and depressing. The generosity is reassuring as it shows there is a global community. The world solidarity and the universal conscience that crosses over boundaries of color, religion, and nationality, and it shows people can wake up and manifest themselves in times of mourning and misery. And yet, this enthusiasm was also saddening in that it showed how ignorant the world is about the daily struggle of the poorest people. Because of its tremendous size, the catastrophe, the tsunami, affected all countries rich and poor alike, large or small, but they are people who paradoxically live through a silent, human tragedy every single day. It is a tragedy on an even greater scale but one that the world ignores or to which it is indifferent. Every year in the countries around the Bay of Bengal, India, the Maldives, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Miramar, Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia several million people, mostly children, die simply because they have no safe drinking water and so they drink unclean water. Poverty silently ravages and kills creating a human catastrophe that moves no one.

Another reason this burst of solidarity was depressing is that people would not have shown such solidarity if lives had not been lost. In this era of scientific and technological development, man can tame nature, foresee its batteries and even save lives. The technology has been available. A tsunami measure for the protection of coastal areas for almost half a century. It costs a mere two-hundred-fifty-thousand dollars which is apparently what war costs per second since the price of the war now a days of the rich is US 1.5 billion dollars per day. So that letter of prevention could have saved lives. Are we so unequal when it comes to cataclysms? Let's think back three years to the earthquake in Iran on 26 December, 2003. It measured 6.8 on the Richter scale and more than 30,000 people were killed. Three months earlier, on 26 September 2003, an even more violent tremor 8.0 on the Richter scale on Hokkaido Island in Japan killed no one. Each year catastrophes affect around 211 million people of whom two-thirds live in countries where poverty adds to their vulnerability. Should not scientific progress be of the service of everyone when human lives are at stake? Has the international community not committed itself on several occasions Rio in 1992, Budapest in 1999, Johannesburg in 2002 to share the results of scientific progress in the drive against poverty?

The human tragedy of the Indian Ocean brings us back to the eternal question of priorities and the primacy of values. The only priority cannot and must not be other than the preservation and respect for human life. It is a matter of the right to life from the moral as well as ethical and legal

perspective. It would seem, however, that the famous "standards of decency" are changing. Thus the international community has set as a priority for the millennium, the Millennium Development Goals. The first of which is eradicate extreme poverty and hunger. The quantitative target by which success in poverty eradication will be measured is to reduce by half in nine years the number of people living in extreme poverty which is instead of eight million children dying every year will bring that to 4 million children dying every year.

This approach, however laudable in itself, does not exhaust the issue. For one thing, the intended target will not be easily reached. But even if were successfully achieved, the basic question would remain untouched: can persistent poverty be tolerated at all?

This problem has to be tackled from another angle. As long as we consider poverty as a quantitative natural deficit to be made up, the political will to reduce it will not be energized. Poverty will only cease when it is recognized as a violation of human rights and as such abolished. And this is how and this is why.

When poverty is defined in relative terms, it is at once infinite and incurable. We are forced at the same time to consent to it indefinitely and to exhaust in vain unending resources in seeking to reduce it. This relativistic approach can only determine an arbitrary poverty line which is adopted as an artificial horizon. But such a bogus horizon remains unbearable: what do one or two dollars a day mean, and above all, what right do we have to make do with such a figure? For poverty is not a fate to be alleviated by international charity or aid. Nor does poverty reflect poor people's lack of self-reliance or their inability to compete in a free-for-all of supposedly equal opportunities. Poverty does not persist solely because of incompetent corrupt governments that are insensitive to the fate of their population. No. Fundamentally poverty is not a standard of living or even certain kinds of living conditions: it is at once the cause and the effect of the total or partial denial of human rights.

The issue is one of bringing poverty into the domain of rights and opposing the question along the flowing lines. What does the law say and what could the law say with regard to poverty? What are the rights of the poor person? National and international rights. Who has an obligation to help the poor? Where does charity end and responsibility begin? Rights have been historically defined as protection against threats. Different modern human rights theories based on positive law provide different points of view from which to understand poverty through rights.

As a reminder, let me mention that human rights groups together civil and political rights on the right hand, economic, social, and cultural rights on the other. This distinction which in fact should never have been made given the indivisibility of all these rights came from the minimal applicability and justiciability that economic social and cultural rights have assumed and like the civil political rights. In this regard, Article 2 of the International Covenant of Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights provide for a progressive realization on the grounds that they are implementation would incur a financial cost. This is utterly inconsistent with Article 2 on the International Covenant of Civil and Political Right which specifies an immediate obligation with regard to all civil and political rights. Indeed, further obstacles to justify the non-possibility put forward are for instance the difficulty there would be in constituting a precise legal context.

Even experts, such as Scott Leaky and Phillip Texy agree that these obstacles appear to be overestimated and do not really correspond to the predominant State of Law. Besides, positive law is conceived as being neutral and takes into account neither political nor moral concerns nor even social, economic concerns although that is the context in which it appears.

Regarded as apolitical, the law and expression of the public will is intended to be applied to the letter. From this positive perspective, judges and lawyers are supposed to wholly apply the rules of

law, remain detached with regard to any social drama, and refrain from any criticism of the law to which they refer. Observation of social issues and the way the law deals with them frequently contradicts this method that shows that positive law usually results in a power struggle between groups having opposing interests and that there is indeed a marked political, cultural, and ideological content.

Depending on the balance of power, the procedure results in a compromise or in the domination of one group over the other. If we take into account the above developments as well as the limitation of the progressive realization, based on Rawls Theory of Rights Based on Justice, and in the specific case of poverty as understood within a human rights law framework, I would refer to the Rights Based Theory on reaction to injustice for Edmond Cahn, The Theory of Justice as an ideal model engendering norms and rights is correct and pertinent but the responses might be too weak and not at all on the same scale as the injustice observed. Observing justice is like an illusion but identifying injustice is the result of a concrete observation. Thus, by approaching justice from its negative rather than its affirmative site it is the meaning that should become the active process to remedy justice. Consequently in the particular case of the economic, social, and cultural right, since progressive realization is ineffective, it is essential to all paradigms as Audrey Chapman suggests there comes the need and justification for the violation approach. Instead of concentrating on the progressive realization of the ESC Rights, it is now high time to identify the injustices and point out the violations of the rights contained in the International Covenant on Social, Economic, and Cultural Rights. A large part of these rights can be directly justifiable within the framework of national justification if the judicial body concerned is capable of defining its content and deciding on the steps to be taken to remedy the violation of the right.

There are many examples all over the world of cases of justiciability of economic and social rights. For example the right to food, the right to work, the right to housing, and even the right to health. As there is a general consensus to qualify poverty as an injustice, and having identified as a denial of human rights, the justiciability of all human rights and in particular economic and social and cultural right constitute the consequences of the justiciability of another right which is still to be written, the right not to be poor, in other words, the right to be protected against poverty.

Let us go back to the eloquence of the figures. Three billion people, this is nearly half the world population, live below the poverty line. That means 1 in every 2 people is excluded from the social participation process and from the enjoyment of basic human rights. That person is there for simply excluded from humanity which is clearly defined by the capacity of people to enjoy all human rights. It is a question of conquering humanity. This struggle of all struggles. The fight against slavery, the fight against colonization, the fight of woman and minorities of all victims of discrimination, and of victims of apartheid.

So many past struggles confining so many injustices to the pages of history. But today, there still remains one struggle for each person on this planet to have access to the status of humanity. The fight for the eradication and elimination of poverty and for poor people to be freed from the yoke of poverty by granting them their rights and thus correcting the balance. Dealing with poverty through the law and particularly through Human Rights Law, means regarding it as a human rights issue and including it on the human rights agenda which everything that it implies in order to legislate a subsequently apply and execute those laws. This, therefore, calls for human rights strategy. If we consider poverty to be a violation of human rights, this is because we recognize that population is a fact of human beings.

Poverty comes about when states have not given human rights the attention that it deserves. Thus if poverty exists and is increasing in our societies then it is basically because states have neither guaranteed nor sanctioned the respect for basic human rights. These are the same states

whose duty it is in a democratic system to protect and guarantee the rights laid down in their respective constitutions and to create the necessary condition for the rehabilitation of those rights. This means, therefore, that poverty is the product of states violations of a body of rules and regulations laid down by national or international legal instrument. Bringing poverty into the legal domain and including it on the human rights agenda would oblige states to foresee condition for a right to be protected against poverty to exist as it does in Article 30 of the European Social Charter.

Thinking along the same lines, civil society has not fully assumed its preventing function in mobilizing and raising everyone's awareness of this responsibility regarding the others poverty. Of the five families of human rights - civil, political, cultural, economic, and social - proclaimed by Universal Declaration of Human Rights as inherent to the human person, poverty violates the fifth, always; the fourth generally; often the third; sometimes the second, or even the first.

Reciprocally, the systematic violation of any one of these rights degenerates rapidly into poverty. As was recognized at the International Conference on Human Rights held in Vienna in 1993, there is an organic link between poverty and violation of human rights. And yet, human rights are indefeasible and inseparable. Their violation is a fundamental infringement of human dignity as a whole and not a regrettable inconvenience to be endured by distant neighbors. It must, therefore cease, and the imperative takes a simple form: poverty must be abolished. This claim sounds naïve; and may even bring a smile to your lips but condescension would however be misguided as well as inappropriate. There is nothing to smile at in distress, misery, dereliction, and death which march in grim parade with poverty. We should, indeed, be ashamed. But the issue is also substantive. The abolition of poverty is the only fulcrum that offers the leverage to defeat poverty.

Leverage in this case, comes from investment, national and international reforms, and policies to remedy the deficiencies of all kinds that are the backdrop to poverty including the international trade regime.

Fortunately, humanity now has the means to answer the challenge: never have we been so rich. Never have we been so technically competent and so well informed but in the absence of a fulcrum, these forces cannot act as effectively as they might.

If, however, poverty was declared to be abolished, as it should with regard to its status as a massive, systematic, and continuous violation of human rights its persistence would no longer be a regrettable feature of the nature of things. It would become a denial of justice. The burden of proof would shift. The poor once they have been recognized as the injured party would acquire a right to reparation for which governments, the international community, and ultimately each citizen would be jointly liable. A strong interest would thus be established in eliminating as a matter of urgency the grounds of liability which might be expected to unleash much stronger forces than compassion, charity, or even concern for one's own security are likely to mobilize for the benefit of others.

By endowing the poor with rights, the abolition of poverty would obviously not cause poverty to disappear overnight. It would, however, create the conditions for the cause of poverty to be enshrined as the highest of priorities as the common interest of all not just as a secondary concern for the enlightened or merely charitable. No more than the abolition of slavery caused the crime to vanish; no more than the abolition of domestic violence or genocide have eliminated such violations of the human conscience. The legal abolition of poverty will not then make poverty disappear but it will place poverty in the conscience of humankind at the same level as those past injustices, the present survival of which challenges us, shocks us, and calls us into action.

The principle of justice thus implemented and the force of law mobilized in its service are of enormous power. This after all, is how slavery, colonialism, and apartheid were ended but while

slavery and apartheid were actively struggled against and opposed, poverty dehumanizes half of the planet to a chorus of utter indifference. It is undoubtedly the most acute moral question of the new century to understand how such massive and systematic violations day in and day out do not trouble the conscience of the good people who look down upon them. While equality of rights is proclaimed growing inequalities in the distribution of goods persists entrenched by unjust social and economic policies at national and global levels. To deal with poverty as a violation of human rights means going beyond the idea of international justice which is concerned with relations between states and nation towards the creation of global justice which applies to relations between human beings living in a global society and enjoying absolute and inalienable rights such as the right to life that are guaranteed by the international community. Such rights do not belong to the citizens of states but universally to human beings as such for whom they are the necessary condition of life on this planet. The obligation to denounce violations and to ensure respect, protection, and effective enjoyment of rights is incumbent on all irrespective of race, country, or creed. The principle of global justice thus establishes the conditions for a fairer distribution of the planet's resources between its inhabitants in light of certain absolute rights. Let us remember that morally speaking the right to property is not absolute: it follows the territorial sovereignty, which entails ownership of natural resources, cannot qualify as an absolute right such as the right to life elsewhere.

What we must note is that nearly three billion people receive only about 1.2% of world income while one billion people in the rich countries receive 80%. An annual income transfer of 1% from one group to the other would suffice to eliminate extreme poverty. I repeat. Three billion people receive only 1.2% of world income while 1 billion people in the rich countries and the rich in the poor countries receive 80%. An annual income transfer of 1% from one group to the other would suffice to eliminate extreme poverty. In fact, the transfer continues but it operates in the opposite direction. Despite efforts towards debt reduction and development assistance.

At the end of the day, there is a simple choice. Not between a "pragmatic" approach, based on aid granted by the rich to the poor, and the alternative sketched here. The real choice is between the abolition of poverty and the only other way for the poor to obtain rights which is to take them by force. Needless to say, the latter solution usually causes misery for all: social strife, rampant crime. Mass uncontrolled migration, smuggling and trafficking are the only things to flourish. But what moral basis do we have to demand moral behavior from people to whom we deny any opportunity to live a healthy life? What right do we have to demand that they respect our rights? The somber option will become increasingly likely if nothing is done or too little as tends to be the case with pragmatism however deserving.

The option, thus reduced to a single choice which is the only one compatible with the categorical imperative to respect human rights today to abolish poverty in order to eradicate it and to draw from this principle all the consequences that free acceptance of it will create.

Ultimately, the challenge is to mobilize public opinion for a universal justice that is within our grasp. Its emergence has been lengthy, very lengthy. It will also be effective in giving poor people the right to act on legal grounds and allow them to take an active part in shaping the changes taking place around them. From the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to the Rome Conference that established an International Criminal Court, the emergence of universal justice has been defiled by acts of barbarity that have grossly infringed human indignity. Now, however the legal instruments are there and step-by-step experiments and initiatives give hope. It remains to energize political will by unceasing mobilization, true thinking, the contribution of experts and support for victims and their families.

What promises does such global justice bear? Let me quote Nobel Lauriat, José Saramago. He said: "Were such justice to exist, there would no longer be a single human being dying of hunger

or of diseases that are curable for some but not for others. Were such justice to exist, life would no longer be for half of humanity the dreadful sentence it has hitherto been. And for such justice, we already have practical code that has been laid down for fifty years in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a declaration that might profitably replace as far as rightness of principles and clarity of objectives of concern the manifestos of all political parties of the world."

What role for UNESCO in all of this? But first, I want to say that poverty eradication is not a prerogative of the United Nations neither is it its role. It is governments who must undertake the task of eliminating poverty. The United Nations system is facilitator for international cooperation and a partner for countries when drawing up national plans as well as helping with capacity building for country professionals so that governments civil society in their preventive role can take the necessary follow up action. In response to the reforms introduced by the UN Secretary-General to mainstream human rights in all programs and projects and evaluating action and results by the impact of human rights each of the UN bodies has got down to the task of following its mandate. Thus, the FAO calls for the right to food. The WHO, the right to health, and so on. And the main lines of action fall within the framework of the UN common understanding for a human rights based approach to the development corporation and poverty eradication.

We should perhaps note that since the Vienna Declaration, at the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights, there has been one declaration after another by different bodies such as the United Nation General Assembly in 2000 to qualify poverty as a violation of human dignity and a denial of human rights. Despite the fact that there is clearly consensus on this issue, the intellectual community has not spent much time on analysis or reflection on this statement. Worded as it is, the basis in this obvious premise poverty is a violation of human rights needs to be demonstrated in order to move from premise to a clear conceptual framework. This premise needs operational content meaning legal, philosophical, economic, anthropological, and political content and that is where UNESCO's role comes in.

As for UNESCO, its' goal under the terms of its founding Charter is to advance the objectives of international peace and of the common welfare of human kind for which the United Nations was established and for which its charter proclaims and questionably the present state of the world grossly flaunts this aspiration to common welfare and does so furthermore in ways that are becoming the primary threat to the objective of peace.

UNESCO's social science sector working to promote international cooperation, international standards and norms, and calling for solidarity and global justice is now working to clarify this conceptual premise through the organization of a series of research studies on different subjects which tackle all aspects of the issue. The sector is involving philosophers, sociologists, political scientists, legal experts in all aspects of poverty so that their combined efforts can converge with one conceptual framework and give content to what is now a policy declaration. Encouraging states from the south to take part in the current international debate on poverty and human rights and proposing subjects for reflection such as alternative policies to follow and reviewing their main lines for poverty reduction is another challenge UNESCO is trying to meet by providing researchers, NGOs and national institutions working for the eradication of poverty with a subsidized, empirical research program.

It is therefore for UNESCO by the terms of its mandate, in my view, to be the standard- bearer of the heart of the international debate of the key idea a powerful, practical idea and declare loud to be protected from poverty is a human right. This is UNESCO's contribution to the achievement of this crucial Millennium Development Goal, the one in which all others ultimately depend in overcoming the threats that weigh so heavily on its future. The world has the lever that Archimedes demanded: it

lacks only the fulcrum to decide to abolish poverty and thereby to ban all acts that create or maintain it would precisely provide that fulcrum. I thank you for your patience.

CYNTHIA FUCHS EPSTEIN: Thank you so much. I think we can all be inspired to go to do research to solve these major problems of the world today and now I think with a little guilt we can proceed to the reception but bearing in mind that we have a mission beyond the pleasures we will seek in the next hour or so in our welcoming reception. Thank you very much.