

Ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you, Professor Giddins, for your very kind introduction.

It is a privilege to be invited to share some thoughts with you at the world famous LSE, a school that has been a bastion of free thinking and forward ideas and a model of high intellectual integrity.

For over a hundred years, LSE has been not just a center of excellence, but also the crucible of the new social sciences, the place where a profound humanism confronted both scientific rigor and an imperfect world. Its thinking has had profound impact on political action. From the days of the Fabian Society to those of New Labour, the LSE has marked British and world political currents and has become a symbol for the application of analysis to political, economic and social action to improve the human condition.

The school has had many distinguished professors from the developing world and has been concerned with the issues of development. Efficiency and equality, as much as economics and education, have been at the center of the school's concerns.

These are timeless concerns. We all share them and bring our different perspectives and experiences to discussing them. For myself, an Egyptian who has devoted a large part of her life to public service for education, gender equality and development, these are themes that resonate with a compelling immediacy — themes that echo throughout the reflections that I would like to share with you today.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We live in a world of plenty; of dazzling scientific advances and technological breakthroughs that promise great hope for humanity. Yet, too many people are being left behind. This disregard of the needs of some amid an unprecedented pace of global change has produced environments of inequality that breed alienation and desperation. Some may dismiss these human situations as sad, but too distant to matter. But if there is one thing recent history has taught, it is that when one country suffers the devastation of famine, desperation, lawlessness and loss of hope, that level of suffering is rarely contained within geographic or economic boundaries.

Few would have imagined that the new millennium would see so much of humanity still blighted by insecurity stemming from violent conflict, abject poverty, poor health and illiteracy. Few would have thought that universally enshrined political ideas and the core values of tolerance, justice, equality, respect for the other and the right to self determination would still be denied to so many. Fewer still would have expected to see the credibility of international legitimacy and legality reach such a low ebb, leaving the international community troubled, confused and uncertain. Indeed, these are truly paradoxical times.

Genuine peace, security and development must be explored by thinking across boundaries – national, ideological, cultural and disciplinary. Without political stability and peace, human welfare will be jeopardized.

It is quite easy to fall into the trap of a dangerously simplistic view of peace and security, one that defines them in terms of strength and military might. Indeed, peace has been elusive to humankind so far, but it is possible to achieve. It can exist, but it must be radically redefined.

Clearly, an environment where might is seen as right is not

conducive to peace or confidence building. A state of affairs where legality is determined in the eye of the beholder is a prescription for anarchy. The application of one standard for one people and of a completely different standard for another breeds frustration and instability. Two recent examples of this spring to mind. Many in the world were seriously troubled when ancient statues were demolished by the Taliban in Afghanistan, while the same degree of concern was not displayed when the world's heritage was plundered in Iraq after the war. Also, only some countries are being chastised for their perceived ownership of weapons of mass destruction, while others who have well known stockpiles of these weapons are not admonished.

Most importantly, as much as the promotion of democracy within states has become an ultimate goal to be attained, democracy among states is equally important to fostering a culture of peace. It is difficult to promote ideas of participation and decision-making inside a country, while the same principles are ignored at international level. The call for the democratization of the decision-making process in international organizations is urgent — one that can no longer go unheeded.

Today, international peace and order has been gravely

impaired. A serious healing process is in order to restore harmony to the world political body and to ensure that the “we the people” in the charter of the United Nations remains the capital “We” — a strong, united “We” that enhances collective action and restores trust to the system. What is needed is a soul-searching exercise and a genuine dialogue, not a cosmetic surgery or an attempt at whitewashing.

At the very least, we must stop and realize that warfare, under any name, is reckless, irrational and inexcusable. The scourge of war dislocates societies, disperses people, causes environmental degradation and creates vicious cycles of destruction, poverty and misery. As UNICEF’s executive director told the UN in January: “We must recognize that when it comes to the suffering of children in conflict, all of us are accountable.”

I am not a politician — I have always been far more concerned with people than with power. But when policies are made, let me urge again and again that people are placed at their center. That principle must be paramount, especially in the serious decision any country can make — the determination to go to war.

Peace and security will not be achieved through

confrontation, but through the ongoing, ceaseless pursuit of understanding, on all sides. We have been forced to realize in the most horrific of ways that peace is not a matter of circumstance or even politics, but requires, in the words of UNESCO's constitution, "the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind."

Meanwhile, despite frequent political declarations of commitment to peace, we find that military spending today is 14 times the total flow of Official Development Assistance. Former secretary general of the UN, Boutros Ghali, said in the 1992 Agenda for Peace that global defense expenditure at the end of the previous decade has approached one trillion dollar a year or two million dollars per minute. Surely, it does not reflect well on the priorities of the rich and powerful segments of humanity to see such patterns of spending at a time when there is no doubt that half the human family lives a marginalized and highly vulnerable existence. The wealthy nations of the world have an obligation to do more to spread the benefits of globalisation so that it reaches the underdeveloped world.

It is against these very real challenges that those who would promote our common humanity must, with institutions like yours, focus on education and culture as the keys to bridging the chasm

between the present we endure and the future we seek. It is indeed remarkable that, for nearly every kind of human insecurity, education can have a preventive role – a constructive contribution to make.

Distinguished guest,

It is, first and foremost, through education that the values of non-violence, tolerance, democracy, solidarity and justice, which are the very essence of peace, can be passed on to individuals at a very early age. Education should promote open-mindedness, which is vital in a world where the interdependence of nations and peoples and their interactions are growing in importance day by day. The task is not to reject what is different, but to explain and understand it.

If we have failed to cross the divide, to realize that diversity is not a synonym of adversary and, in doing so, we have built walls rather than tearing them down, it does not mean that the new generation cannot transform those walls into bridges and walk across them.

Lasting peace cannot be constructed around a conference

table unless it is deeply rooted in the minds of men. Nor can it be merely a matter of signing treaties, as history has made only too plain. It must be founded in the long term on the values handed down to young people by their families, teachers and social players, decision-makers and democratically elected representatives. Peace means building up: it cannot be invented from scratch, but it is built up, from day to day. It is a task that requires a long-term view and a daily struggle at individual, national and international levels.

To that end, education for citizenship, for participation and for tolerance is vital. Every individual should be trained in respect for human rights and in understanding the value of the transfer and sharing of knowledge between the various cultures and societies, because it is through the contact of minds that positive peace may emerge. And this is where the role of an educational institution such as your esteemed school has an instrumental role to play.

It is my hope that new and existing links between universities, research centers and professional legal bodies in the developed and developing worlds could be promoted.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Today another major force for world change is civil society. Women have emerged as influential players in this field, making up the majority of civil society volunteers and activists worldwide. New networks are linking grass-roots organizations to the political process, diversifying the voices heard in the corridors of power. New partnerships across governmental, non-governmental and corporate lines are making major advances by focusing on the issues that concern them, rather than the distances that divide them.

Through these partnerships, civil society members are finding out how their work can indeed make a positive contribution to the problems plaguing their societies — how they can actually make a difference. As the great leader Gandhi so perceptively said many years ago, “We must become the change we want to see.” Real change depends on all of us: governments, private sector corporations, mass media, civil society, educational institutions and citizens – the entire human family.

In developing countries, NGOs are often better and more

cost-effective than governments at meeting the needs of citizens, creating opportunities for them and protecting them from the new vulnerabilities of globalisation. Their impact can be gauged by their increasing share of resources and by the impressive list of their achievements.

A vibrant NGO community is now being counted on to advocate for human development and maintain pressure on national governments, international agencies and corporations to live up to commitments and to protect environmental standards and human rights. Having become development catalysts, advocacy tools and invaluable supports to the social safety net all at once, civil society agencies are undertaking very important work in such vital areas as the promotion of education, the alleviation of poverty and the backing of peace-building activities worldwide.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In Egypt, we have realized that women need to be more involved in the peace and security activities of the world. Given women's disproportionate suffering in times of war and armed conflict, their traditionally limited role in the area of peace advocacy, promotion and preservation appears to be unjust. It is

against this background that we launched the “Women for Peace Movement” at an international women’s peace conference in September last year. Leading figures from all over the world came together at Sharm El-Sheikh to express a new and profound sense of solidarity that stems from a common concern to promote peace as essential to the protection, improvement and enrichment of the quality of life of all our people. This solidarity transcends differences of religion, ethnicity and nationality.

Participants believed that women have a central role to play in advocating, defending and participating in the realization of peace, as well as in the reconstruction and rehabilitation activities that follow armed conflict. They urged women to work alongside men to find sustainable ways to foster a culture of peace, tolerance and human security. Here, I would like to offer you a few notable quotations from prominent personalities who attended the conference, which show how these women fervently believed in their cause. Mrs. Mary McAleese, the president of Ireland, said: “It is my strong belief that there is a requirement for a global response to conflict. Women, as half the citizens of our planet, have an undeniable stake in its future and a right to insist on having a central role in such a global response.” The first lady of Ghana, Mrs. Nana Rawlings, said: “We must appeal to the

sensitivity and conscience of all women of the world, to pause for a moment and say I want to live on this world in peace. I am saying that we should come together and fight for that peace.” First Lady of Tunisia, Laila Bin Aly, said: “There is a necessity to unite all efforts to establish a culture of peace and solidarity in the minds of people — a task that women have a great deal to contribute to.” And, the words of Baroness Uddin, member of the United Kingdom House of Lords: “Let us demand our right to be at the highest table of world politics. Let us fight for our responsibility to bring balance to this dangerously skewed world: where there is hatred and loathing, let us seek courage and call for peace and conciliation. Where there are cries of mothers and children, let us chant for hope; where there is pain, let us bring consolation and justice to the victims. I believe this is not asking for too much.”

The movement we launched urges all women-groups, associations and organizations to join in. We intend to utilize it as a platform for making silent voices heard, a forum for dialogue and information sharing, a means of building alliances and a strategic avenue for enhancing the role and visibility of women as active partners in the elaboration of international policies and action for peace. Our efforts also come in response to Security

Council Resolution 1325, which calls for increased participation of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, in peace-building and in post-conflict reconstruction efforts.

The conference was a first stage in a longer process of formulating and institutionalizing a global women's peace movement. Its mission is to find realistic and unconventional methods to mobilize efforts and resources of women's peace organizations and women peace leaders from around the world to create a platform for collective action.

The subsequent conference to be held in 2004 will provide the opportunity to reach a common framework and agreement on methods and mechanisms for launching the next phase of the campaign for world peace through the collective strength of diverse women's organizations.

The meeting in Sharm El-Sheikh reinforced our belief that we women of the world have a message to deliver to be heard worldwide: that we, as women and mothers, want to pass on to our children a world that offers the promise of peace, development and stability.

The 2004 conference will be held at the Bibliotheca Alexandrina — one of the world's finest centers of learning and innovation and a source of pride for all Egyptians. At a time of global uncertainty, Egypt has come forward with a major cultural complex that preserves the legacy of the past as it looks to the future — a future of peace and mutual respect, of learning and understanding, of promise and opportunity.

So the choice of venue is not accidental. The Bibliotheca Alexandrina promotes rationality and civility in discourse. It calls to the better angles of our nature, at a time where conflict and suspicion need to be replaced by mutual respect and understanding and a dialogue between cultures and individuals.

Yet this is no philosophical debating society. Yes, it does have many eminent scholarly activities, but it is also devoted to the needs of societies today and tomorrow. Its activities address the profound issues that underlie the problems of the world today. It addresses the very foundations of long-term peace — peace based on equity and justice and on the participation of all in the shaping of their own destinies.

Already in the last year, the activities of the Bibliotheca

Alexandrina show this profound commitment to bring together all the best minds of the world with all the relevant social actors to address the issues of peace and development and the rights of men and women everywhere. Let me cite a few examples.

The library hosted a major international conference on “Biotechnology and Sustainable development: voices from the South and North,” in March 2002. The conference created the space for the voices of developing countries and those of women to be heard. And the message that came out clearly was that special efforts must be launched to ensure that the new sciences address the needs of the many rather than be channelled to add to the luxuries of the few. Indeed, that if science — currently dominated by the rich industrialized countries — is harnessed to the needs of the 80 percent of humanity that live in the developing world, it would help build bridges of understanding and collaboration and promote peaceful cooperation rather than confrontation.

Women were prominent in that event and in shaping its message of peace and understanding.

But beyond sharing of the fruits of science and technology,

there are ethical questions to be addressed. That is why the library organized another major conference on “Ethics and Social Responsibilities of Science and Technology” in October last year. This major international event addressed the issues of governance and participation of society in making the social choices that guide how science is to be practiced and how technology will be deployed in the world. International agencies, national and local governments, NGOs, the private sector and distinguished scientists from all over the world, men and women, participated in the debates. It is important that this conference was strongly imbued with the need to harness the possibilities of science and technology for the benefit of all of humanity, especially the disadvantaged and for the cause of peace, rather than promoting the destructive efficiency of weapons.

The library was also the venue for the first-ever “Youth Employment Summit,” which I co-chaired with former US President Bill Clinton. Almost two thousand persons from 140 countries attended the event. It was wonderful to see these young people from all over the world, working together, imbued with a spirit of collaboration and seeking to learn from each other’s experiences. The youth at the summit were engaged in finding ways to achieve a number of ambitious goals in the area of

employability, employment creation, equity, entrepreneurship and empowerment. Indeed, unemployed youth, deprived of hope and opportunities, become a political and social time bomb. Peace demands attention to such problems, which also represent an enormous waste of talent and capabilities.

In the coming few weeks the library will host the “Freedom Project” and become a repository of its bibliography of banned books from all over the world, as it launches a discussion on freedom of expression and plans further activities on that topic. Without freedom of expression, there can be no understanding, which is a prerequisite for peace.

I have given these examples to make a point: that peace is not just something that is negotiated at the end of war, it must be rooted in justice, equality and freedom. It has to be anchored in the belief of men and women alike that they have a role to play and that the future is one of hope and possibilities, not of marginalization and exclusion.

We hope the Women for Peace Movement’s 2004 conference will meet the same success as Sharm El-Sheikh’s meeting in bringing women closer to peace efforts worldwide and

in reinforcing our message for peace.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Anyone who has been monitoring the history of the Middle East knows how important peace and development are to the peoples of this region. Today, two peoples in our region, the Palestinians and the Iraqis, are still awaiting an uncertain future. The Palestinian people have been longing for their freedom for too long. They have suffered tremendously under oppressive occupation and their call for a just peace has not materialized. Nothing is as deeply embedded in the psyche of the Arab people as the suffering and injustice perpetrated against the Palestinian people. Why is the Arab-Israeli conflict, which constitutes the most serious threat to peace and stability in the region, not addressed with the same vigor as other issues? It is the answer to such questions, or unfortunately, the lack thereof, that is the reason why so many people in the Arab world are angry. And this anger has fed extremism and violence. We need to reinspire hope in the peace process and to demonstrate to the Palestinians by deeds, not words, that there is truly a light at the end of the tunnel.

We must recognize that there are no wars without casualties

and that these are usually the weakest and most vulnerable groups in society. In Iraq, beyond the casualties, the suffering and the deaths, we have just witnessed the heritage of the world and the memory of a nation destroyed in a few moments of looting and vandalism, while concerned citizens around the world watched helpless to stop this enormous calamity.

Most of us sit in our living rooms sipping tea or having dinner watching the various media channels give gruelling accounts of what is happening in areas of conflict and war, the most recent being Iraq. We watch with mixed feelings — horror, anger, sympathy and frustration. But do we really feel the trauma and pain the victims are suffering? Is it possible that people have to suffer war to appreciate the need for peace and to realize that the value of human life is the same regardless of whose side we may be on? The fact that millions of people rallied against war in every city of the world proves that this is thankfully not required.

It is a cruel irony, that those who suffer most are the ones who are most forgotten in the end. During a conflict, the wounded, the refugees, the widows, the orphans, are the ones in need of aid and protection, just when these are the hardest to provide. When war ends, we celebrate the achievements of the

negotiators, we applaud the fortitude of the returning soldiers, we mourn the dead — but what about those who survived? Strife flares in another part of the world, the cameras and aid agencies move on, and those at the center of the suffering, especially women and children, are left alone to pick up the pieces of their shattered lives. And it is at that moment — when they turn to the future — that the world seems to turn its back on them.

Ladies and gentlemen,

A strong message needs to emerge soon: that nothing is more in the interest of the world community than the renunciation of war. A genuine sense of universal responsibility must govern international relations. Today, we are truly at a major crossroads in history. We are asking ourselves: is the world going to be led by fear and aggression, or will it be driven by diplomacy, morality and peace? Will the revolving door of hatred and violence continue to spin or can we stop this cycle and open new doors of trust and tolerance?

In the wise words of UN Secretary General Kofi Annan: “If war is the failure of diplomacy, then diplomacy, both bilateral and unilateral, is our first line of defense.”

We need to continue to talk to each other, listen to each other and, most of all, understand each other. We need to recognize as viable and legitimate those ideas or views that may seem foreign to us because of our own preconceptions. Belief in change and renewal is a defining characteristic of social progress and development. The genius and beauty of modern civilization lies in the synthesis and harmony of all people of various races, religions and ethnicity. It lies in its inclusion of our common values and on the fact that what brings us together far exceeds what pulls us apart. Indeed, in preserving our different traditions, we celebrate the greatness and strength of our common humanity.

We must ensure that the voices of the under-represented, the excluded and the marginalized are amplified, rather than silenced or drowned out. Many of those are silenced before they even have a voice – those are the voices of our children. We must give our children a chance; we must give peace and development a chance.

The rapidly globalizing world is full of promise. Development can indeed reach the unreached. But this will require a dedication on our parts to universal ideals, a determination to wage peace, sensitivity to fellow humans and a

commitment to the cause of rationality, dialogue, learning and understanding.

In this age of uncertainty, it is time to rise to these challenges. Surely we can dream of a better world where peace and inclusion are the norm not the exception. We must dare to dream, for dreams are the spark that ignites the flame of change.

The London School of Economics is a wonderful venue to urge these timeless values. Through spreading the power of knowledge, elevated by humanistic ideals, yours and other similar institutions can be a driving force for the understanding and peace we so deeply need. Together, we can confront our shortcomings as we draw strength from our renewed commitment to creating a better world for all.

Thank you.