



Australians facing global challenges in Caux

After more than a decade in Vietnam during the war, and then in Cambodia as commander of the 16,000-strong UN peace-keeping force, Lt Gen John Sanderson knows what it is to face tough situations. Having served five years as Governor of WA, Sanderson was then commissioned to report on Aboriginal disadvantage in WA. His report proved too tough for the Government to accept.



Lt Gen John Sanderson

Last month, at the *Initiatives of Change* (IofC) conferences in Switzerland, Sanderson didn't limit his scope, leading a three day workshop on **"Meeting global challenges – the role of belief systems"**. Faced by vast inequalities (where the world's richest 83 individuals have as much wealth as half of the globe's entire population), contending with angry terrorists and the irresistible market forces, Sanderson said no-one should doubt that we are "in a period of great global change". Holding to the premise that "we are not alone in time and space, God wants us to succeed and has already forgiven us", Sanderson led participants through what it will take to create "boats of trust... to ride the whirlpool". He sees service and leadership through civil society as key

to taming "the great paradigm shift that is upon us".

Sanderson was one of the 26 Australians participating or providing support at the annual conferences in Caux, Switzerland. He contributed to a week of dialogue on **"Just Governance for Human Security"** which brought together 200 people from 32 countries.

Another Australian participant tackling global concerns was Steve Killelea from Sydney, who has developed one of Australia's largest private overseas aid organisations, reaching the poorest of the poor in many countries. He founded the Global Peace Index, which examines the conditions needed to achieve peace. "We face challenges such as decreasing biodiversity and the use of the planet's fresh water," he said. "Yet we are still running the world on a consumer-based capitalist system. We need a philosophy that incorporates all individuals in a global vision. Unlike any other epoch in human history, peace is a prerequisite for the survival of society as we know it."

The conference included people from many situations of tension and conflict – from Russia and Ukraine, from the Sahel region of Africa, from the Middle East.

Tensions were immediately evident between the Ukrainians and the Russians. The wounds were too fresh for calm objective discussion. After several sleepless nights of debate, they managed to write a declaration which most were ready to sign, stating the common values and principles needed as they try to form "practical steps for peace-building and establishing good neighbourly

relations". (See commentary by Ian Parsons on the next page.)

Another participant was Dr Christine Fejo-King, chairperson of the National Coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Workers Association. "Caux opened my eyes," she said later. "What was amazing was that everyone is struggling with the same issues in their own countries and sharing the answers they've found. My whole focus has been working with my people. We are not struggling on these issues on our own. We have progressed things here which we have to offer to other people."



Dr Christine Fejo King: 'Caux opened my eyes'

A coordinator of the conference, and its action in the field, is John Bond, who was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia for his work with the Stolen Generations. Among other Australians participating at Caux were Phil Jefferys, a NSW grazier who is international president of the Farmers' Dialogue, part of the **"Caux dialogue on land and security"**. Mohan Bhagwandas from Melbourne opened the **"Trust and integrity in the global economy"** which this year got into subjects such as "the future of money" and becoming "doers of justice in the economy".



Steve Killelea from Sydney (right) talks with Michael Møller, Director-General of the UN at Geneva.

Worth all our energy and sanity

Alex and Ruth Birnberg, with Athalia Zwartz, all from Melbourne, ran the Caux Interns Program with a Polish colleague.

Alex's blog sums up the program:

Imagine 31 highly energized young people aged from 18 to 30. Each one packed with education (lawyers, a psychiatrist, dentist, business owners) and ready to take on the world. Every continent was covered.

If all you did was to sit down and chat, the Caux Internship Program would be a rich experience. Of course, we did much more. Interns were required to assist in running the conference centre. Additionally, every intern was involved in workshops run by us on the training team. Ruth was involved in organising the mentoring program – the first year this part of the program was formalized.

Our first few days were designed to build them into a team. This involved

coming up with a community charter, and team activities like the 3am hike up the 2042 metre high Rochers-de-Naye, just behind Caux.

One of the great things about Caux are the guest speakers we could coerce to present to the interns. We had an expert in dealing with trauma, a business psychologist talking of economic change and, of course, Ruth adding in her expertise in non-violent communication. Meanwhile, Alex was getting interns to explore the real world implications of their value systems.

In the final closing circle, each intern had the chance to speak of the impact of their time. After one month, many did not want to leave;

tears were shed, and new directions discovered. Although it took all our energy and sanity, it was well worth the effort.



Alex and Ruth at Caux. Credit: Ruth Newport

A different perspective on Ukraine

A year ago, the then Ukrainian President Yanukovich invited Russian Orthodox Patriarch Kirill and Russian President Putin to be present as the Ukrainian Orthodox Church celebrated 1025 years since the baptism of Prince Volodymyr. This year, no such invitation was made. One year has significantly changed relations between the closest of Slavic cousins.

At the end of the Soviet era, Russia agreed to defend Ukrainian sovereignty on condition that Ukraine surrendered its vast store of nuclear weapons. But Russia's deception of Ukraine in its annexation of Crimea, and its infiltration of the ethnic Russian Eastern Ukraine, changed that. The shooting down of flight MH17, allegedly by pro-Russian separatists with Russian training and ground-to-air missiles, has focussed world attention on the conflict.

Initiatives of Change has a different story to tell, not of hostility but friendship. Over the past 15 years, hundreds of Ukrainians have taken part in IofC's *Foundations for Freedom* programme, in the IofC conferences in Caux, and in *Action for Life* training courses.

Graduates of these programmes have taken initiatives such as

training young politicians and activists in countering corruption. Two young men, Valentin and Sergey, formed a vision to build a "mini-Caux" at Baranivka in central Ukraine, and set to work remodeling an existing property. A small community is now living there, headed by AfL graduate Lena. Friends of IofC in Australia have supported it from the beginning, and six Australians have worked or visited Baranivka.

Olka, another AfL graduate, launched "Healing the Past", a programme to address the suffering from WWII and the Soviet past through sharing stories and memories. Zoryana facilitated a F4F series of dialogues in centres across Ukraine in late 2013, continuing in 2014.

In the midst of the deteriorating situation in Crimea, Anna Bondarenko (who trained for several months with IofC in Australia in 2003) ran the first Creators of Peace Circle in Russian. When my wife, Karin, and I were in Ukraine in 2012, Crimea was a peaceful and incredibly beautiful place. Now the Russian regime is promoting propaganda against the Ukrainian minority and the indigenous Crimean Tatars. Anna's Peace Circle gave women a chance

to tell their experiences in an honest and supportive way, despite acute differences.

At the recent conference in Caux, 25 courageous Ukrainians came together with several Russians. Two Moscow professors present had both suffered under Russian regimes due to their outspokenness. Heated opinions sparked tensions, shouting and sleepless nights. But the group persisted. They finally reached agreement that all had suffered from the enormous World War II loss and the inhumanity of the Soviet system, and reached for a different future. Ultimately, almost all accepted their document, titled: "On the way to peace, a platform for Ukrainian and Russian contact, dialogue and initiatives."

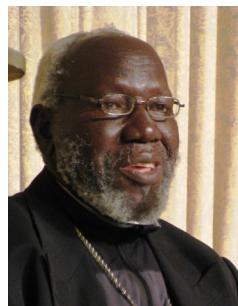
They are not government or military leaders, but people whose courage and commitment has made its mark on both countries. Theirs is a courageous statement in the circumstances – an attempt to help build a workable relationship on the basis of honesty. They recognise the state of war between them, but are determined to do all they can to build bridges between the peoples of their two countries.

by Ian Parsons, Melbourne

An evening with Bishop Paride Taban

A short, white-haired man stood before some 50 people on a cold winter's evening at Armagh, the IofC centre in Melbourne. His very demeanour was humble. Bishop Paride Taban, born in South Sudan in 1936, has celebrated 50 years as a priest, 30 as a Bishop.

"I am coming as your shepherd, not from a political party," said the



Credit: Kathryn Gor

Bishop, sometimes known as "the Tutu of South Sudan" for his work in grassroots reconciliation. The Bishop established a

"Peace Village" where he uses football, theatre, education and community policing to end a long tradition of violent cattle raiding. Just last May, he concluded a year of patient negotiations to end an ethnic conflict in the state of Jonglei which has cost thousands of lives.

"God created tribes but not tribalism," he said. "Tribalism is of the devil."

His narrative was peppered with wise sayings: "Make your neighbours equal to you otherwise they will become jealous," and "If we don't begin to love ourselves, it will be very difficult to build a future."

At least half the audience were young South Sudanese, keen to know

if the future was going to be any different from the past. The Bishop counselled them: "Be patient with your elders who are not young enough to know *everything* – but they do have *some* wisdom!" To him, service is the key: "If you go for service, you go for people. If you go for power, you go for money."

Many don't know the real history of South Sudan. Those who do, know that "we are all cousins, all family".

His program in Victoria was cohosted by IofC's South Sudan Australia Peace Initiative, led by Nyok Gor.

Cheryl Wood

Healing the moral damage done over generations

Nyok Gor, founder of the South Sudan Australian Peace Initiative, has been actively working for healing and trust among the diaspora community. He writes of his recent trip to Africa:

It wasn't an easy decision: choosing to travel to Addis Ababa and Nairobi in response to the crisis in South Sudan. I am dedicated to building peace and finding the way through this tragic war. But the mediation process between warring groups has been going for months, led by international peace experts. What could I contribute?

Over the past few years the unwavering support of people in Initiatives of Change has been significant in helping me and other South Sudanese commit to bring healing from unspeakable memories of wars that have affected generations. So much physical and moral damage has been inflicted on the whole nation by its own people, myself included. So I must take responsibility, especially within my generation, to change our behaviours and think through a nonviolent approach.

Since spending four months in South Sudan last year, a few of us have kept in touch as a "South Sudan Support Group". In May we decided some should go with a mission to listen to those involved

in negotiations. We had built strong relationships with influential South Sudanese last year and needed to hear what they had to say about the crisis. We also went to remind our friends of stories of forgiveness and reconciliation from other conflicts.

Supported with fund-raising through IofC, three of us decided to go: Mike Brown, David Vincent and myself. We had meetings with key figures in the "opposition" group, with some of those MPs who were imprisoned at the start of the conflict, and with people on the government side. We met civil society activists, church leaders, and friends I had known from our refugee camp in Kenya.

I was touched by the hardships they had endured and the impossible choices many of them were forced to make during the crisis. Hearing their stories, we pondered with them options for moving out of conflict into lasting peace. There are still more questions than answers, but I know IofC's solidarity with South Sudan through this tough time is greatly appreciated.

As an organisation that does not currently have a presence on the ground in South Sudan, what can IofC offer? IofC must maintain relationships with key leaders and diaspora groups to address the tide of

mistrust that is sweeping the global South Sudanese community.

IofC is well-placed to support the Committee for National Healing, Peace and Reconciliation to put reconciliation front and centre on the national agenda. However, IofC also needs to look beyond this official committee to bring others in, particularly from the side of the "opposition".

We should also consider how to build trust and inspire personal change among the hundreds of thousands of internally displaced people (IDPs), living in UN-protected camps within South Sudan or on its borders. Because of their continuing suffering, hatred and mistrust are growing. Programmes like the *Creators of Peace Circles can contribute to preventing future conflict.

May IofC continue to walk with South Sudanese friends on the journey towards lasting peace.

** The President of the South Sudan Women Association has asked Creators of Peace to "saturate South Sudan" with its Circles. In September two facilitators expect to travel from Juba to Johannesburg, South Africa, for further training along with coordinators from 13 African countries. But they still need to find their airfares. If you would like to help, please email jean.brown@iofc.org*

Working for hope and healing in both Gaza and Israel

Last month Mike and Jean Brown were visiting Perth and, at a meeting of IofC friends organised by Lindsay and Margaret Cartwright, made an interesting discovery. Jean writes:

Ayman Qwaider from Gaza has recently come to Australia with his wife, both doing doctoral studies. We were amazed to hear from Ayman of an IofC team at work in the Gaza strip.

As the situation in Gaza worsened, Ayman sent us updates. Responding to a message of encouragement from Australian IofC friends, he wrote: "Thank you very much for your kind words. It assures us that we still live in one human community

which cares about each other. I will translate it and convey it to our IofC team in Gaza. They have carried out a remarkable effort this week of supporting displaced families."

This small Palestinian IofC team has focused their efforts on 290 families taking refuge in one school, including 461 babies and children. They are raising funds for milk powder and other vital provisions as well as seeing how to address the psychological trauma of the children.

At the same time Merri Minuskin, who has worked for years in Israeli-Palestinian dialogues including in Caux, Switzerland, wrote from Israel: "During this horrific time there

is only one possibility and that is keeping communication open. This means listening to the very real pain of the other but also being willing to shoulder the anger and hate that you know is not really meant for you directly.

"On the other hand it is important not to lose one's own dignity and to be able to express one's own feelings of loss and pain," she continued. "The process is difficult and painful but being a true human being makes it worth it. I personally have seen two friends bury their children. One today."

She ended her message, "Thank you for listening."



Visier and Pari Sanyü, with their son Siezo, have moved into Armagh, the Australia-Pacific centre in Melbourne, to "provide an anchoring presence" with other residents during the current process of "cultural and structural change" within IofC Australia. Originally from north-east India, the Sanyüs will serve there for a year while also carrying day jobs,

Visier in World Vision Australia and Pari with the City of Camberwell. In teamwork they want to develop Armagh's potential "as a vibrant centre... embracing the best of IofC core values whilst creating improved structures of accountability and best practice".

Sending a simple note

Little did I realize what a pivotal day this would prove to be. It was my first teaching appointment. With a growing school population, all the classrooms were already occupied, with some furniture set up at the end of the corridor. My children were the youngest beginners.

In my first week, I received a note from the mother of a four and a half year old, asking me to remind her daughter to bring home her school bag. I did so and wrote a note in reply. That led to an invitation to their home. I was finding teaching far more

difficult than I had expected. When the mother told me about the ideas of *Initiatives of Change* I experimented with listening for inspiration during a time of quiet each morning. The thoughts that came helped me in my teaching, my family relationships and my understanding of what made me tick.

I recalled that when I was a primary school student in fourth class I had stolen money from my mother's purse to buy lollies to give to my friends. Then we spent one Saturday morning shoplifting. Being honest with my

parents and with the manager of Coles was a very challenging hurdle. It set me on a path which I have tried to follow throughout my teaching career and my life ever since.

That mother and I kept in touch until she died, and the daughter and I have reconnected. We are still in touch.

A retired teacher, in Melbourne

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Newsbriefs is published by *Initiatives of Change* (Moral Re-Armament ABN 22 004 350 789) www.au.iofc.org
Newsbriefs can also be read online at: www.au.iofc.org/newsbriefs

This issue edited by Mike Brown. Contributions, news and comments welcome.
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