

ESTONIA UN @ 75 PREPCOM



SHORT REPORT

by
David R Woollcombe

The UN's Global Conversation is all about how we "Re-invent Multilateralism" – or how we re-create the UN system in a format fit for the 21st digital century. The Estonia Conference was opened by HE Herman Quarles Ufford, part of the UN Secretary-General's team assigned to promoting the UN's 75th Anniversary.

The Estonian organisers chose to focus on 4 x key elements of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals:

- **Peace:** Enabling the UN to be a more effective peace-builder / peace-keeper, through conflict transformation, peace-keeping forces, Intercultural dialogue and other means;
- **Sustainability:** Achieving Sustainable Economic Growth and creating jobs for youth through investing in Green Growth and Resource Efficiency;
- **Human Rights and Digital Protection:** Creating a Human Rights / Digital protection regime fit for the 21st Century;
- **Climate Change:** reversing global heating by transforming global consumption patterns & investing in clean energy;

To address any and all of these issues, we agreed on two things:

1. Improve education about them – both in schools and in the media;
2. Focus on solutions / accentuate the positives.

We also agreed that, fruitful though the discussions were in Estonia, we only really scratched the surface of these challenges. And we didn't really go very far on the question of "How to re-invent the UN?" I proposed in my speech the idea that came up in our Harpenden conversation about a Digital UN – and I promised to explore it further with the Estonian experts to draw up a paper on it ahead of the next meeting in Tunis. I encourage others to do the same: there was a promising idea of re-visiting the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to create a Version 2.0 – fit for the digital age. That idea needs to be fleshed out – as do all the ideas that came up.

Therefore, as we select the small group of experts who will gather in Tunis later this year, we shall have a "Call for Papers" – so that we have people around the table who are informed about the issues we are discussing. In that way, we shall come up with a series of recommendations to the UN Secretary-General that are practical, plausible and meet the needs which we are all so acutely aware of.

Our Estonian hosts mounted a stimulating evening concert at the Gala Dinner after the Conference – which got many of us dancing. That was perhaps the most memorable component of the whole conference – as, in previous Peace Child World Youth Conferences – the Talent Shows are what linger in the mind long after the speeches and declarations have faded. Therefore, it is excellent that our Tunisian hosts for the next stage of this process have agreed to host an Artist Residency so that artists from different countries, disciplines and cultures can come together to create an artistic way to communicate the ideas and energy that emerge from our discussions. It will be independent of those discussions – but linked to them.

So – we have a calendar of activity:

- February – Estonia Preparatory Conference (completed)
- May/June – Tunis: Expert Drafting Meeting
- September 21st – Promote the UN Secretary General's UNGA speech, in partnership with Peace One Day
- October – Implementation Conference, Estonia
- January 2021 – Final Meeting, London – to present and discuss ideas with UN Staff on the occasion of the 75th Anniversary of the opening of the 1st UN General Assembly in London on January 10th 1945.

We were delighted and honoured to have had the presence of Herman Quarles at our meeting in Estonia to help guide us as we shaped the content of our deliberations. He reminded us of the incredible talent and loyalty to shared values that binds the staff of the UN family of staff members together: it is those values, expressed by Peace Child as "Integrity and Selflessness" – that must drive this initiative. Just because we are led, in several governments, by people who appear incapable of following either value should be an additional spur to us to promote those values more loudly and noisily throughout this UN 75th Anniversary year – and beyond.