



Compilation of Projects

Commemorating the

**United Nations
International Reconciliation Year
2009**

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1. Introduction

Reconciliation is a basic and initial mode upon which enduring peace and coexistence among men and nation-states can be achieved. On dealing with the past or present, reconciliation is an essential step towards achieving political and socio-economic justice. People of all cultures have proved this through the ages, as they have utilized this method in developing unique strategies and rituals in overcoming conflicts and differences.

Reconciliation does not only play an important role in international, regional and national levels, but also on family and personal levels. More often than not, successful reconciliation paves the way for a new beginning in human relations.

1.1 History of the International Reconciliation Year

In 2000 the Foundation for Subjective Experience and Research, S.E.R. Foundation, issued the 1st Public Reconciliation Appeal in a Resolution Draft for Peace in the Holy Land (**annex 1**). It was born after the Midnight-Mass 1999 in Bethlehem. The S.E.R. Pilgrims brought this into public attention through the Print and Broadcast Media which were covering the Christmas-Celebration. The S.E.R. Foundation believes that the vision for Global Peace should stand upon the hallowed ground of magnanimity through reconciliation.

During an interactive workshop of the NGO/DPI Conference in 2003 in New York the S.E.R. Foundation presented the Draft-Resolution calling for a **UN-World-Reconciliation-Day (annex 2)** in 2003.

Since 2005 the S.E.R. Foundation on its own initiative has called to an annual Reconciliation-Week at the end of April every year and participating NGOs and their projects, as well as everybody who participated, were documented.

The Permanent Mission of the government of Nicaragua submitted a draft for an **International Reconciliation Year 2009**, A/61/L.22, (**annex 3**) in November 2006, which was supported by the representatives of the governments of Argentina, Brazil, El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras.

In its 61st Session, agenda item 150, the UN General Assembly proclaimed the **Resolution for an International Reconciliation Year 2009**, A/61/L.22/Add.1, (**annex 4**).

The aim was, to disseminate concepts of Reconciliation in cultural, social and educational areas and to reconcile split societies (**excerpt, annex 5**).

1.2 Global S.E.R. Action Plan for the International Reconciliation Year 2009

In February 2007 the S.E.R. Foundation created a **Global Action Plan (annex 6)** for the International Reconciliation Year 2009 to support the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals under the theme: "The Millennium Challenge – Human Reconciliation". There shall be coordinated programmes conducted in different forms, portraying Reconciliation as a bridge between all levels of human differences (Unity in Diversity), such as debates, essay writing contests, creative work, documentary films, musical presentations including indigenous, sports and development. Outstanding projects will be awarded prizes.

The global S.E.R. Action Plan was given to the Secretariat General of the United Nations, and on May 30th, 2008 presented in a Forum to all UN-Departments and UN-Bodies in New York. In addition the Action Plan was given to the Human Rights Bodies of the UN in Geneva.

S.E.R. Foundation sent **an Invitation for participating in the International Reconciliation Year 2009 (annex 7)** with the Action Plan, translated in all six UN-languages as well as into German, Italian and Japanese and made available through www.global-balance.org where participants could register projects and send reports of their experiences.

There were **157 projects** registered from five continents and **22 countries**. They come from: Germany 55, Switzerland 50, Burundi 16, Austria 11, Palestine National Authority 4, Argentina 2, Australia 2, Nigeria 2 and the United States of America 2. One project from each country: the United Kingdom, India, Israel, Kenya, Morocco, Macedonia, the Netherlands, Northern Ireland, Pakistan, the Philippines, Russia, Serbia/Montenegro and South Africa.

The S.E.R. Foundation will award to all registered projects a **S.E.R. Certificate of Appreciation (annex 8)** for participating in the S.E.R. Action Plan for the International Reconciliation Year 2009.

2. Events and Projects during the International Reconciliation Year 2009

2.1 About 157 of them were submitted through the Global-Balance.Org website including reports, pictures or descriptions.

2.2 Activities of others

- On January 20th, 2009, the inauguration of Mr. Barack Obama as President of the United States of America took place. On this occasion he signed a **Proclamation for a „National Day of Renewal and Reconciliation 2009“**
http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/NationalDayofRenewalandReconciliation2009
- Following its long-term reconciliation endeavours, the **Government of Australia** issued a Reconciliation Action Plan 2009 – 10 in partnership with the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and community partners.
http://www.dhcs.act.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0020/64136/RAP_plan.pdf
- Referring to the significance of reconciliation, on May 14th, 2009 a reception with UN-Evening Forum in the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, located in Hamburg (Internationaler Seegerichtshof), took place, about **"Challenges by implementing the Millennium Development Goals"**. Sponsors were the Baltic Sea Forum - Pro Baltica, www.Baltic-Sea-Forum.org and S.E.R. Foundation.
- The World Future Council is a global forum of 50 respected personalities who give voice to the shared ethical values of citizens worldwide. The Council works closely with policy-makers, civil societies and business to identify and implement best policies to protect the rights of future generations. On October 1st, 2009 was given the first **"Future Policy Award 2009"** in Hamburg. The winner was the City of Belo Horizonte (Brazil) for its program about food security; www.worldfuturecouncil.org
- During the 3rd Peace and Sport International Forum, under the presidency of HSH Prince Albert II of Monaco, the United Nations Office on Sport for Development and Peace and the United Nations Office for Partnerships signed a partnership with "Peace and Sport,

L'Organisation pour la Paix par le Sport" in front of an audience of over 400 delegates from 85 countries, including many African nations. Sport as a tool to attain the Millennium Development Goals, with a special focus on sport's contribution to poverty reduction, universal education, gender equality, prevention of HIV and AIDS and other diseases, environmental sustainability as well as peace building and conflict resolution. On November 26th, 2009 **the Peace and Sport Awards Reward the Best Initiatives for Reconciliation through Sport**. The Prizes recompense initiatives and individuals in sport to have made a particular contribution to social stability in the world in 2009; www.peace-sport.org

- **The United Religions Initiative at the United Nations (URI-UN)**, chose the International Year of Reconciliation as the overarching theme for its 2009 events. It hosted a variety of side events during various UN conferences, the International Day of Peace etc., for more information see: www.uri-un.org , www.trunity.net/uriun/topics/view/17921
www.trunity.net/uriun/galleries/view/139660/
- In pursuance of the International Year of Reconciliation, **Radio Afrika TV** (www.radioafrika.net/de/2009/03/30/reconciliation-and-the-role-of-global-peace-festivals) announced an invitation to the conference on "Reconciliation and the role of Global Peace Festivals", held on April, 8th, by the **Universal Peace Federation (UPF)**. UPF launched the Global Peace Tour 2009 with events in about 190 countries under the overall Theme " A New Vision for Peace in the 21st Century".
- The **World Council of Churches (WCC)** welcomed the call of the UN to observe 2009 as the International Year of Reconciliation and encouraged its member churches and partners to actively participate in this global campaign.
- Community leader Orland Bishop explains that a cultural worldview that fails to recognize earth's primal qualities can only produce violence. Evoking transformative ideas such as foundation, stability, abundance, accessibility, reconciliation and peace, says Orland, allows a human being to move beyond limitation and conflict into one's true nonviolent nature. The **global oneness project** is exploring how the radically simple notion of interconnectedness can be lived in our increasingly complex world; www.globaloneness.org
- As an associated institution of United Nations University, the **University of Ulster/UK**, sought to raise awareness and disseminate information about reconciliation and the International Reconciliation Year and promote the importance of this topic in Northern Ireland and in other societies coming out of conflict through its special 2009 programme. The lessons from Northern Ireland were a specific focus. The programme also critically reflected on the concept of reconciliation considering how it relates to key issues such as gender and political transition (<http://www.incore.ulst.ac.uk/unrec/>).
- **International Fellowship of Reconciliation, IFOR**, www.IFOR.org has member organisations in 48 countries. IFOR supports worldwide programs for non-violence, women and youngsters, who work for peace in conflict situations.
- **Friends of India** fights poverty and creates opportunities for women and children in Tamil Nadu, India, by supporting basic education for underserved children and investing in vocational training and life-skills development for women; www.friends-of-india.org
- **The S.E.R. Kinderhilfe e. V., Wesel** (S.E.R. Children's Aid Society) achieves reconciliation every day as it guides children of different cultures and religions into

tolerance and attentive cooperation by its self-conception and statutes: www.ser-kinderhilfe.de.

- Supporting the International Reconciliation Year, the **German Adult Education Association (Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband e.V. (DVV))**, issued a report on the Adult Education and Oral History Contributing to the Armenian-Turkish Reconciliation Student Camp in Dilijan, Armenia from 8 to 14 October 2009.
- The **Mizero Children Foundation** from Rwanda was invited by the UN to share the message of forgiveness as a step to reconciliation during the International Reconciliation Year (www.mizerochildren.org/index.php/rwanda/blog/join-us-in-rwanda-at-the-gathering-of-forgiveness-in-2009). The Mizero Children Foundation understands forgiveness as the most powerful, yet unpopular weapon against terrorism and atrocity; it now plans to embark to a USA tour on the subject.
- With broad activities, the **German Worldwide Broadcasting Service (Deutsche Welle)** contributed to the International Reconciliation Year, see: www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,,4262215,00.html, www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,,4250150,00.html <http://www.dwelle.de/dw/0,,12535,00.html> , www.dwelle.de/dw/article/0,,4232790,00.html

3. Evaluation of the International Reconciliation Year 2009

3.1 Positive experience and lessons gained

Reconciliation processes led to a better understanding; change within the engaged people and sometimes, as well, of structures involved.

In the following are outstanding registered projects at www.global-balance.org from five continents briefly presented. For the prize award the projects will be put into four groups:

- a) Political, Socio-Economic Projects
- b) Creative Projects
- c) Educational, Indigenous, Athletic Projects
- d) Spiritual/Health Care Projects

a) Political-, Socio-Economic Projects

Make a date with Peace at World Peace Hologram, United States of America (Nr. 24). The project consisted of forty-nine sessions with one session per week throughout the year of 2009. The site offered free sessions to anyone in the world who wished to receive support. The first six months were dedicated to personal related problems, family, relationship, finances, life purpose and health. The second half of the year focussed on World Peace topics related to economy, leadership, environmental issues, human rights and tolerance. The aim during the year was to create a wider peace on the planet.

In Pakistan, students regularly support 145 orphans, street children and handicapped children with the project: **"The Voice"** (Nr. 28). Their motto is: "Help for those, who can't help them-selves".

On the **"Memorial Pilgrim Way courageously – then and today – with Ruth Dreyfuss"** (former Member of the Swiss Federal Counsel) Switzerland (Nr. 76). On Easter-Monday all those people, who were turned back at the Swiss boarder during the years 1938/39 and who were sent into certain death, were remembered. Especially remembered was the dismissal of

the police-commandant Paul Grüniger 70 years ago. The question of asylum still prevails, because fears are stoked and a tighter asylum law is demanded in Switzerland. It was obvious, that through reconciliation emotional wounds were healed as for example the one created by the atrocities of the 2nd world war. Only through such processes clearances are created, which are bigger and extend beyond the rational dimension. More than 350 people participated.

The S.E.R. Foundation Switzerland initiated an agenda named **“Time for Reconciliation”** with the Forum for Peace Education, the Swiss-German branch of the International Fellowship of Reconciliation, IFOR-CH, and nine others institutions from September 21st (International Day of Peace) to October 2nd, 2009 (International Day of non-violence). During this period 17 events took place in Switzerland. The network **“Servicio Paz y Justicia”** SERPAJ from Latin America, a Christian Human Rights organisation, whose president is Adolfo Pérez Esquivel, Argentina, who got the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1980 supported this agenda with various, interesting speeches (Nr. 139, Nr. 140, Nr. 141). His motto: **“Otro mundo es posible/Another world is possible”**. Another world is possible through non-violence, prevention, education and reintegration to break the circle of violence: Argentina has to deal with the past of the military dictatorship.

b) Creative Projects

The project **“Africa in motion film festival and symposium”** United Kingdom (Nr. 146), will raise awareness about the meaning of movies for dealing with the past. **“Dealing with and overcoming traumas is about filling the gaps where devastating events have left blank spaces in memory. Storytelling and filmmaking can do the same: where historiography has fallen short or where gaps have deliberately been left in our collective memories, art and film can contribute to fill these gaps by turning to individual stories.”**

The project **„Peace and Reconciliation, Burundi** (Nr. 68), presented concerts with various songs and dances, to disseminate the message of peace and reconciliation. The background was: the last rebellion signed a ceasefire agreement with the government of Burundi. The country lived through a fifteen years war situation and is longing for peace. The songs about reconciliation were recorded on CD and DVD and sold, in order to be played in different Radio Stations, shopping-markets and Institutions. More than 10 groups and approximatively 500 persons (children, youngsters and adults) were involved.

At least 60'000 people got in touch with the ideas. At the same time it was a preparation for the elections of the President, Parliament and Communal Council 2010.

Reconciliation Choir Concert, Burundi-Cologne (Nr. 91)

The Dome Choir of Cologne played music with the „Chorale Sainte Famille - Fondation Mariya Arafasha“ from Bujumbura and the choir of the Foundation „Vie Nouvelle pour la Réconciliation“ from Gitega, Burundi. 50 persons from Burundi were invited by the Dome Choir to visit Cologne. The solemn Choir Concert took place in the Cathedral of Cologne on September 29th, 2009. The event was broadcasted on schoenstatt.tv and could be seen by thousands of viewers around the world. The mass and the concert got a wonderful echo. The weekly paper of the archdiocese dedicated special pages to the event in the following editions.

On an initiative of the S.E.R. Foundation Germany with other eight institutions in the UN town Bonn/Germany, various events were organised by the **“Bonner Action Alliance for the International Reconciliation Year 2009”**, such as the **“KANSA-Exhibition”** (Nr. 111) in the Dokumentationsstätte in Regierungsbunker, where a New-Media-Artwork of the Finnish-German couple Goller-Masalin was shown, which is aimed to connect people – independent

of their language, provenance, political view, religion or skin. Kansa shall be distributed all over the world. The aim is that art points out the most important challenges of our future: peace, freedom, consciousness for the environment, respect for human rights, freedom of opinion and self-determination.

The Fringe-Ensemble, Germany, was a part of the Action Alliance and dealt with the play **“I said the things you told me not to say”** (Nr. 87) and looked into the subject of reconciliation in South-Africa. It is based on the protocols of the Truth- and Reconciliation-Commission, which had been fathered by Nelson Mandela and Bishop Desmond Tutu, to create, within the regime of apartheid, a dialogue among victims and perpetrators.

On September 21st 2009 (International Day of Peace) members of the Bonner Action Alliance created a walk-in **“Reconciliation Labyrinth”** (Nr. 143) on the Muensterplatz in Bonn, as a symbol for the way to the centre and as a condition for Reconciliation.

c) Educational, Indigenous, Athletic Projects

The Youth-project from **RadioChico Switzerland** (Nr. 31) shows how the media can contribute, in an important way, to reconciliation. Youngsters asked several people about atonement and forgiveness and the interesting answers were recorded on CD-Rom. One contribution was: “It is not possible to jump over one’s own shadow. However it is definitely possible to jump over the shadow of an enemy. Is it possible that the shadow of our enemy has something to do with ourselves? And that jumping over it will allow us to forgive and take the path of reconciliation, hand in hand with our former enemy”. Those responsible at Radio Chico initiated and implemented many projects in 2009 – but didn’t accomplish everything, which is why they decided unanimously to deepen the theme during the following years.

3019 – on the radar, Australia (Nr. 74), dealt with a conflict that has developed between the police and young people in one of the most disadvantaged areas of Melbourne. This area has a long history of housing migrant populations and has recently had a large influx of refugees and new migrant communities from Horn of African backgrounds. Through skillfully facilitated training programs and community dialogue, it creates safe spaces for young people to explore and articulate their thoughts and feelings, then expands to support all sectors of the community to understand each others’ perspectives, achieve recognition for their own challenges, and have agency in creating a safer more open community.

Crucial to the community dialogue methods are Playback and Forum Theatre. Playback invites audiences to share real events from their lives, which performers enact on the spot. This gives unbiased visibility to all, while airing community issues fully and honestly. Forum Theatre incorporates these stories into fictional scenes that depict inherent problems. Audiences suggest alternative behaviours to improve each situation.

d) Spiritual/Health Care Projects

Foster Health Care and Education of Youngsters, Morocco (Nr. 129). Children are the future of humanity, which is why they have to be taught about good health, drug abuse, sexually transmissible disease, educated about athletic activities, civic sense of duty (respect for environment) as well as human values (solidarity, mutual support and assistance) and this independent of sex, age, race, religious or political affiliation. A group of 100 skilled young people shall give the information to 2’000 youngsters (participative approach).

The **S.E.R. Elijah-Project**, Germany (Nr. 79), organizes seminars for personality development, for higher consciousness and health care in the area of Bethlehem/PNA and

Israel, where people in the locality can learn ways and methods to be attuned with oneself, with nature and with their fellow beings. The program leads to healthful experiences and the unity of being. The result is a desire for reconciliation and peace work in their own surroundings localities. In group projects they are considered for the originality of ideas about Reconciliation and Peace projects and for the well-being of civil society. The aim is primarily to create a network whereby „Unity in Diversity“ shall be experienced.

It is worth noting that despite the absence of linkage on the UN Website with www.global-balance.org 157 accomplished events or projects were submitted by many NGOs and most of them properly documented **showing the willingness and enthusiasm of civil society to support peaceful reconciliation**. It is desirable, that also bigger organisations, governments and media will support reconciliation explicitly, in order to gain deeper meaning in society.

Further reconciliation projects or events can be registered on the website of www.global-balance.org as well in 2010.

3.2 Prospect: Recommendation for a "Decade of Sustainable Peace, Human Rights and Development through Reconciliation"

Reconciliation is a concept with cross-section character and touches every area of human relationships. Reconciliation, as explicitly expressed in the resolutions of the UN-Security Council, concerning **ending impunity and recovering from conflicts to come to terms with past abuses committed against civilians**. Mechanisms of reconciliation are, as accentuated in the UN Resolution 1888, important means on the way to justice (S/RES/1888 (2009), page 2).

Crucial is always how reconciliation is implemented. In Switzerland for example take place in court conciliatory (before the main process), cases can be tried in non-formal ways to reconcile the parties. Therefore the defendant has the opportunity for example to accredit his injuries, to repent, apologize and promise not to repeat the injustice. Important are also efforts of compensation to restore damage as far as possible. The aim of these reconciliation proceedings is to heal emotional wounds so that expensive main processes can be avoided.

In another Resolution of the UN-Security Council, (S/RES/1820/(2008), page 2), is pointed out the **importance of women's participation and full involvement in the prevention and resolution of conflicts** as a result of violence, intimidation and discrimination, which erode women's capacity and legitimacy to participate in post-conflict public life, and acknowledging the negative impact this has on durable peace, security and reconciliation including post-conflict peace-building.

Reconciliation is an efficient tool, and its strategy should be explicitly allied with other UN-themes, such as health, peace-education, intercultural and interfaith dialog, sport for development and peace, environment, indigenous cultures and practices, democratization, human rights, human security and development.

A single International Reconciliation Year celebrating for transforming century-old conflicts is too short a time. On February 5th, 2009 in a **podium-discussion for the International Reconciliation Year**, organized by the Department of Public Information, DPI, in New York, the S.E.R. Foundation by its speaker proposed to prolong the UN Reconciliation Proclamation into Ten (10) Years: **International Reconciliation Decade**. The proposal met with the approval of the audience.

In summer 2009 S.E.R. Foundation requested all sovereign Member States through their Permanent Representatives to the United Nations to submit or support a **Petition for a Reconciliation Decade (annex 9)**.

The Foundation for Post Conflict Development in its newsletter and further activities strongly recommends the decade to be proclaimed.

The petition for a Reconciliation Decade hasn't yet been officially considered.

For a decade a global Reconciliation Action Plan should be developed, with many stakeholders (governments, UN-Departments, international organisations and NGOs, media, universities and colleges, trade unions etc.), where all participants can bring their network, knowledge and ongoing subjects.

The S.E.R. global Action Plan was dedicated to support the Millennium Development Goals, MDGs. According to a representative survey (www.cmdg.ch) 88% of the Swiss population didn't know the MDGs in 2008. These results were even worse in 2009 in workshops, in colleges and universities in Switzerland and Germany. This shows, in public information and in the media lies a considerable potential to be realised.

Dialogue is a key for reconciliation and peace.

Without dialogue, neither reconciliation nor peace is possible. Without respect, understanding and esteem of others there is no dialogue and no cooperation. This shows how important experienced values are. The website of www.global-balance.org wasn't available in all countries (censorship), which is why human rights play an important role for information.

It should be examined how the concept of Reconciliation can find a place within the UN-board as, for example, in the recommendations of the Human Rights Bodies, how it can be integrated and implemented in the UN-Codifications like the Charta for Human Rights. First of all the **awareness for preventive aspects of Reconciliation before violent conflicts** escalate shall be encouraged as for example through the UN-Peace-building Commission. In particular the Geneva Convention and its additional protocols, as the core of international humanitarian law, must be completed, so that during violent conflicts already means for reconciliation through the International Red Cross will be taken as for example psychological treatment of traumatised men, women and children, establishing Truth- and Reconciliation Commissions and mediation at the end of violence. In addition, reconciliation and sport can successfully be combined for peace building and conflict resolution.

During the International Reconciliation Year stood out, that in Europe different concepts of reconciliation were hardly known or not known at all. In addition, there exists no generally accepted definition of reconciliation.

Reconciliation-methods with the human body (health care), other people (social) and the environment are welcomed in the areas of education. The coordination through a UN Department like United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Office on Sport for Development and Peace (UNOSDP) and/or the United Nations for Partnerships (UNOP) would be meaningful. Furthermore, reconciliation centres should be established on all continents with the knowledge about Reconciliation and supporting the Decade with the organization of workshops or conferences about the topic, and adapted to the different cultures. For example: "Sulha" in the Arab World, "Dealing with the past" in the Western hemisphere, "Ho o'ponopono" (Hawaii), "Palaver" (Africa), experiences with the "Sorry Day and Reconciliation" (Australia), mediation etc. The documentation, evaluation and collation of the most efficient methods and best practice will be useful.

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