The United Nations as a Vehicle for Dialogue

by Courtney B. Smith

The United Nations (UN) proclaimed 2001 as the Year of Dialogue among Civilizations in an effort to examine how confrontation and hostility in world politics could be replaced by discourse and understanding. However, in the midst of this process the world was witness to the tragic events of September 11, 2001. Since terrorism represents the antithesis to dialogue, the UN’s discussion of these issues became more urgent and focused. Two major documents were produced, but they do not explore adequately the United Nations’ potential role in regard to building dialogue. This article begins this undertaking by considering the UN as a forum for debate where different peoples of the world meet and as a catalyst for an ongoing process of interaction and change. In other words, serious thinking about the UN’s role as a vehicle for dialogue requires appreciating both its passive and dynamic characteristics and functions.

INTRODUCTION

In a speech before the United Nations General Assembly on September 21, 1998, President Seyed Mohammad Khatami of the Islamic Republic Iran called upon the United Nations (UN) to “designate the year 2001 as the ‘Year of Dialogue Among Civilizations,’ in the earnest hope that through such a dialogue the realization of universal justice and liberty may be initiated.”1 Less than two months later the General Assembly responded to his call and proclaimed 2001 as the “United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations.”2 Secretary-General Kofi Annan appointed Giandomenico Picco, a former assistant-secretary-general and chief UN hostage negotiator, to be his personal representative for the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. Additionally, Kofi Annan selected 20 distinguished individuals, including Nobel Laureates and former heads of state, to become a Group of Eminent Persons to assist his personal representative in examining how confrontation and hostility in world politics could be replaced by discourse and understanding.

PEACE & CHANGE, Vol. 28, No. 4, October 2003
© 2003 Peace History Society and Peace and Justice Studies Association
At least some observers, including most academics, saw the decision to proclaim a UN Year of Dialogue among Civilizations as a reaction to Samuel Huntington’s now well-known 1993 *Foreign Affairs* article titled “The Clash of Civilizations.” While his arguments had sparked a substantial amount of debate in both academic and policymaking circles, the members of the Group of Eminent Persons always viewed their efforts as much broader than a simple response to Huntington.\(^3\) From the start their discussions tried to synthesize a broad range of pressing issues related to both conflict and reconciliation, including the indignities of ethnic cleansing, the inequitable effects of globalization, and the common perception of diversity as a threat. The goal of these efforts was to offer a new paradigm of international relations based on six key elements: equal footing of actors; a reassessment of the concept of “enemy”; a dispersion of power across units; a focus on stakeholding over shareholding; greater emphasis on individual responsibility; and the role of issue-driven alignments.

Just as the Group of Eminent Persons was finishing its work, the world was witness to the tragic events of September 11, 2001. Since terrorism clearly represents the antithesis to dialogue, issues associated with the Year of Dialogue among Civilizations immediately assumed a more prominent place on the UN’s agenda across the 56th Session of the General Assembly. Two full days of debate took place in the Plenary on November 8–9, 2001, just before the rescheduled high-level General Debate. Across these sessions, more than 60 speakers (including the secretary-general, the president of the Islamic Republic of Iran, more than 50 member states, and eight members of the Group of Eminent Persons) highlighted the importance of dialogue in contributing toward peace.\(^4\)

The speakers had in front of them two documents for discussion. First was the report of the Group of Eminent Persons titled *Crossing the Divide: Dialogue among Civilizations*, which had been completed in October 2001 and had been made available to all member states in early November of that year.\(^5\) Second was the draft resolution prepared by the Islamic Republic of Iran, titled “Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations,” which the General Assembly adopted by consensus at the conclusion of the two-day debate.\(^6\)

**OUTCOME OF THE UNITED NATIONS DISCUSSION ON DIALOGUE**

The Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations begins its operative clauses by defining dialogue as “a process between and within
The United Nations as a Vehicle for Dialogue

civilizations, founded on inclusion, and a collective desire to learn, uncover, and examine assumptions; unfold shared meaning and core values; and integrate multiple perspectives through dialogue.” Included in the resolution’s specific objectives are well-established UN commitments to peace, inclusion, equity, equality, justice, tolerance, understanding, mutual respect, shared values, cultural diversity, human rights, and the advancement of knowledge. As such, the process of dialogue is consistent with the basic principles of the UN charter and includes an effort to work for progress at the local, national, regional, and global levels by drawing on the insights of a wide range of actors from civil society, including nongovernmental organizations and individuals drawn from academia, science, medicine, law, the arts, and the media. It envisions a special role for the youth of the world as they are necessary participants if dialogue is to reach its full potential.

As is the case with many UN documents, the Global Agenda for Dialogue also includes a nonbinding program of action that enumerates 14 types of initiatives that nation-states, UN bodies, regional intergovernmental organizations, and civil society actors are encouraged to utilize in an effort to promote the following objectives:

- Interaction among intellectuals, thinkers, and artists of various societies;
- Mutual visits among experts in various fields from different civilizations;
- Organization of cultural festivals to increase understanding across cultures;
- Sponsorship of conferences and workshops to enhance mutual understanding;
- Planning of sports and scientific competitions to encourage youth interaction;
- Encouragement of translation and dissemination of basic texts across cultures;
- Promotion of historical and cultural tourism;
- Incorporation of cultural learning in educational curriculums;
- Advancement of research on objective differences among civilizations;
- Utilization of communication technologies for the dissemination of information;
- Provision of equitable opportunities for participation in information exchange;
• Implementation of programs to enhance the spirit of dialogue in the youth;
• Utilization of the existence of migrants to bridge gaps in understanding; and
• Consultation on how to protect the rights of all people to their own cultural identity.

The program of action also calls upon these different actors to make sure their efforts are mutually supportive and to report their activities to the secretary-general, who in turn will report back to the General Assembly on the implementation of the Global Agenda for Dialogue during the Assembly’s 60th Session in 2005. Finally, it identifies the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as a central agency in efforts to facilitate dialogue and calls upon both civil society and private sector actors to contribute to a trust fund established by the secretary-general in 1999 to mobilize the necessary resources for these dialogue initiatives.

THE ROLE OF THE UNITED NATIONS

The Global Agenda for Dialogue and *Crossing the Divide* both indicate that the UN has an important role to play in the process of dialogue among civilizations. This point also was echoed by nearly every single speaker, including Secretary-General Kofi Annan, during the two days of plenary debate on the dialogue in the General Assembly last November. However, exactly what role the UN can and should play in this effort remains unclear when one reads these various documents and speeches. Some offer only a very limited role for the UN, mainly as a forum for state interaction. However, others suggest that the UN can be, and even already is, far more than just a facilitator for the interaction of its members. These different ideas on the current and potential UN role regarding the dialogue are consistent with a scholarly distinction—between the UN as a framework through which member states pursue their interests and the UN as an independent actor that can embody more than just the collective will of its members—that long has been part of the international organization literature.7

Thinking about the UN’s role in the dialogue also can be informed by an additional, and related, consideration. Some of the proposals advanced in the November debate see the UN as a more passive agent of dialogue, as a forum or facilitator, but not as a direct contributor. On
the other hand, other proposals clearly envision the UN as an agent actively promoting the objectives of the dialogue through its unique constellation of characteristics. In other words, while some see the UN as just a location for dialogue to take place, others see it as a participant in generating the content of the dialogue that occurs.

These distinctions have important conceptual and practical implications for the UN’s role as a vehicle for dialogue. Specifically, they direct attention to the all-too-frequent divergence between UN ideals (including the importance of dialogue) and the reality of state sovereignty and self-interest in which the UN must operate. As a result, a more nuanced discussion of the UN and dialogue, one that takes these tensions and contradictions into account, is required. Drawing on the actor versus framework and passive versus active distinctions just discussed, three different roles for the UN in the dialogue effort are possible: the UN as a passive framework; the UN as an active framework; and the UN as an autonomous actor. Each of these will be considered in turn.8

Passive Framework

The first type of role the UN can play regarding a dialogue among civilizations is as a passive framework through which member states pursue their own efforts to promote reconciliation and cultural understanding. In this conceptualization the UN acts merely as a facilitator or forum for member state interaction and does not offer any contribution to the content of the dialogue that takes place. The UN’s ability to perform such a role is based on one of its most defining and unique characteristics, its universality. The organization often has been considered the “hub of the world,” to borrow a phrase used regularly in the General Assembly debate on the dialogue. In fact, no other intergovernmental body can offer an essentially universal membership (especially with the recent additions of East Timor and Switzerland) the opportunity to come together to exchange ideas on such a variety of issues. Four possible manifestations of this phenomenon relevant to dialogue will serve as examples of the UN’s role as a facilitator of dialogue.

First, the UN always has been used by parties in conflict as a forum for airing their grievances on the world’s stage. Often this process may involve simply “blowing off steam” so that cooler heads can prevail once the real efforts to negotiate a resolution commence. Whether it is a case of interstate conflict during the Cold War with superpower entanglements or a more recent case of intrastate dispute in a former colony,
the political bodies of the UN centered around the Security Council and General Assembly often can represent a launching point for dialogue. While these efforts often remain at the level of tried and true rhetoric or maybe even symbolic overtures, they can generate possible avenues to explore, such as the “land for peace” approach to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Furthermore, the political bodies of the UN, while composed of member states, have found mechanisms in recent years that can allow for both nonmember states and nonstate entities to participate in their deliberations. Finally, the UN’s role as a facilitator of dialogue extends beyond its own deliberative machinery in its role as a “world meeting place” where many member states engage in bilateral contact with each other. This can be especially important for generating dialogue between states that lack normal diplomatic relations, either due to the presence of conflict between them or the absence of sufficient resources to maintain a global or even regional diplomatic presence.

Going beyond acting as a forum for resolving specific conflicts, the UN also can act as a forum for placing pressing global problems on the international agenda. This process is arguably one of the most important activities of the UN, and it is certainly relevant to a dialogue among civilizations because part of this endeavor must be learning about the issues each state, culture, or group of people find most inhibiting to their full expression of human dignity. Since the Year of Dialogue first was proclaimed in 1998, the agenda of relevant concerns has been expanded continually through the UN to include conflict resolution, human rights, the inequitable effects of globalization, and post-conflict peace building, to name just a few of the most frequently raised issues. Simply generating this agenda alone can be seen as a process of dialogue because it requires member states to reach agreement on what efforts deserve their scarce resources and attention.

In addition to the creation of the agenda, the UN can play a role in fostering dialogue that is inclusive and participatory. Speaker after speaker in the General Assembly debate indicated that an effective dialogue must allow for all civilizations and cultures to play a role, both in terms of sharing their ideas and of listening to the ideas of others. The UN is in a unique position to facilitate this due to its universal membership and its procedures of parliamentary diplomacy. Not only is every state allowed a seat at the table, but also the conversation held at the table affords all seated to have their turn to address the group and requires that the others, by and large, remain respectful of what is being said. While differences of opinion certainly exist, these often can be
handled in a less chaotic and more deliberative manner than otherwise would be possible. This is especially true when the dialogue centers on the great inequities between the developed and developing states. The disadvantaged of the world certainly understand that a universal forum has much to offer them as a vehicle for sharing their concerns with those who are better off, and even those who are better off can realize that honest and inclusive discussion based on mutual respect has the potential to yield great rewards. This potential certainly is not apparent immediately on every issue, but when it is present the UN has an indispensable role to play in the dialogue.

A final role in which the UN can act as a passive facilitator of dialogue involves the common practice of member states, and occasionally of other actors, reporting their activities in a given area to a particular UN body or forum. This is done across a range of UN issues, from human rights to the environment, and often is included as a specific request or obligation in UN-sponsored treaties where implementation rests on the “good faith” of the parties. In the case of the dialogue among civilizations, a number of member states used their addresses before the General Assembly last November to highlight national efforts to promote and to encourage understanding and reconciliation. From conferences to compensation funds, each speaker tried to portray their programs as “best practices” that could and should be adopted by other member states. Since the Global Agenda for Dialogue specifically asks for states to engage in this self-reporting as they plan future activities related to the Year of Dialogue and beyond, it has the potential to act as an important vehicle for learning about the process of mutual understanding and reconciliation.

**Active Framework**

A second role the UN can play in regard to the dialogue among civilizations is as an active framework where member states are still central players who pursue their interests through UN organs but where the bodies and officials of the UN itself can have a distinct contribution to the content of the dialogue that takes place. This conceptualization of the UN role falls between the UN as framework and the UN as actor dichotomy discussed previously, and it is where the tensions between UN ideals and the reality in which the UN must operate become most clear. Additionally, it is this view of the UN that most observers adopt: The UN is a creature of its members, but the organization can help
shape and influence exactly how the member states interact on some issues. In other words, the UN has moved beyond just serving as a facilitator of dialogue to become a catalyst and participant in the process of building mutual understanding and reconciliation.

The UN’s ability to move into these new areas of activity is based on another of its most important attributes, its perceived legitimacy and credibility in the eyes of most, if not all, of its member states. This enables the UN to offer suggestions and proposals for consideration that would be more problematic had they been advanced by one particular state or group of states. In fact, it allows discussion to proceed into areas where, quite frankly, the UN would not go if left to the member states alone. Again, four of the many possible roles the UN can play in this more active conceptualization will be examined. Some of these ideas are clearly extensions of the more passive roles discussed previously; however, the key difference here is that the UN itself is contributing to the dialogue.

First among these more active roles is the UN’s effort to generate consensus on the most appropriate international response to a number of global issues. As part of this undertaking, UN deliberative bodies focus a large percentage of their attention on the process of building consensus around the common values that will guide future action. Often these common values are first expressed in a nonbinding fashion, such as the 1948 Universal Declaration on Human Rights, but some are later turned into binding treaties covering areas as diverse as genocide, ocean law, global warming, and nuclear testing, to name but a few examples. In nearly all of these successful efforts to uncover common values, and in many of the unsuccessful ones as well, the UN has moved beyond acting merely as a forum. Instead, members of the Secretariat, from the secretary-general on down, regularly provide crucial contributions to the member states involved in the consensus-building process. These can include drafting the rolling text of the resolution or treaty; suggesting areas of potential compromise, particularly on language; and pushing the discussions to include certain issues that thus far have been left unexplored. These contributions within and between member states and UN staff can take place in both formal and informal settings and certainly help to foster an environment of dialogue, especially on the more contentious issues on the agenda.

Going beyond building consensus on common values, the UN and its member states can engage in a dialogue regarding certain goals that need to be achieved in order to promote understanding and reconciliation. A number of speakers in the General Assembly last November,
including the secretary-general, addressed the need to create a “culture of prevention” in order to inhibit future conflicts from arising or escalating. This is particularly true in regard to global inequities between rich and poor, both within and between societies. These inequities are far more likely to foster tension, resentment, and hostility than they are to create an environment for dialogue. As a result the UN can and has moved from serving as a neutral forum through which states set the agenda to become an active partner with states in terms of advancing concrete targets of achievement. For example, through the work of both member states and UN officials, the international community has spent more than four decades designing programs to help foster the economic and social development of the poorer regions of the world. One concrete manifestation of this type of dialogue that involved interaction between the UN and its members was the secretary-general’s Millennium Report and the subsequent General Assembly Millennium Declaration, which set specific goals relating to human rights and poverty that, if achieved, would do much to create an environment for effective dialogue.10

Considering the UN as an active framework also raises the issue of interaction between civil society and the state and the UN’s role in this process. The Global Agenda for Dialogue adopted by the General Assembly calls upon member states, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and UN bodies to work together in their efforts to promote discourse and understanding. This is very much consistent with the notion of a partnership among these three actors that has become the centerpiece in many conversations at the UN about the most effective relationship with NGOs. However, Crossing the Divide suggests a greater role for the UN than solely acting as a forum through which states and NGOs try to resolve their often different approaches to global problems. The Group of Eminent Persons clearly sees the UN as an active participant in the relationship between states and NGOs, due at least in part to the fact that both NGOs and states are more likely to have confidence in the UN than either has with each other. Some ideas for a greater UN role in this area advanced by the Eminent Persons are as simple as expanding the mechanisms through which states and NGOs exchange information (a more passive function) and evaluating the content of this information (a more active function). This is especially important in the case of trying to promote an effective dialogue since both state governments and grassroots-oriented NGOs often claim to represent the same group of people, even in the case of otherwise marginalized populations most in need of inclusion.
A final role the UN can play in dialogue as both a facilitator and participant draws on the three previous examples but was advanced most explicitly in the closing chapter of *Crossing the Divide*. Giandomenico Picco and the Eminent Persons argue that a “global social contract” is continually consummated at the UN. More specifically, they argue that some states (i.e., the major powers) use the UN to legitimize actions they would rather not take unilaterally, whereas other states (i.e., small and medium powers) are willing to confer this legitimacy if all other states actively participate in the process of pursuing UN objectives such as fairness and justice. These types of contracts can leave the UN Secretariat with a very prominent role to play, for instance in the pre-war effort to disarm Iraq. The United States repeatedly indicated its willingness to use force unilaterally if necessary but worked through the Security Council in late 2002 to temporarily create a new, more intrusive, inspection regime. This allowed the UN, at least briefly, to continue a process of dialogue among the different parties involved as the inspections continued. Even though the work of the UN inspectors was not sufficient to avoid war, the dialogue involved in debating their findings certainly affected the nature of the coalition that opposed the Iraqi regime.

Another type of situation where the Secretariat can find itself with some degree of latitude to engage in dialogue involves the implementation of peacekeeping missions approved by the Security Council. Even after the major powers and small states agree to set up a particular mission, the mandate can be vague, which may force the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, in consultations with the council, to decide how best to maintain the credibility of the UN. It often has been assumed that credibility is derived from impartiality; however, both *Crossing the Divide* and the “Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations” (otherwise known as the Brahimi Report) suggest that credibility in fact may depend on taking sides when one party clearly has violated charter principles. This raises the possibility that both the UN and its member states may have to make difficult choices between credibility and impartiality when helping to promote dialogue.

*Autonomous Actor*

The third type of role the UN can play in the dialogue among civilizations draws on its ability to act with at least some degree of independence and autonomy from its member states in some situations. While there is considerable disagreement within and between scholars and
policymakers on this point, there are certainly some circumstances when it is possible to talk about the UN as an actor irrespective of the interests of its members. The exact circumstances that can give rise to this role for the UN usually are related inversely to the perceived salience of the issue to the member states involved. In other words, if key members feel that the UN is moving in a direction that challenges their interests, they almost always will move to block those policies and actions. However, examples of situations when the UN operates with only very occasional oversight by its member states are present across a wide variety of UN issues. Furthermore, some of the suggestions advanced by the Eminent Persons in *Crossing the Divide* definitely would involve an expansion in the domain of autonomous action by the UN. As a result, despite the reality of sovereignty in which the UN must operate, it is important to consider some potential roles an independent UN can play in promoting dialogue and reconciliation. As before, four examples will be discussed.

One activity relevant to dialogue that the UN has long played with a large degree of autonomy involves the peaceful settlement of disputes. As mentioned before, some of these activities get performed with the UN simply acting as a passive forum through which member states can negotiate and can make suggestions. However, on other conflicts the secretary-general or his personal representatives may become in fact the most important third party attempting to resolve the dispute nonviolently. In some cases, like Kofi Annan’s 1998 trip to Iraq, the member states give only a narrow window of autonomy in which the secretary-general can act. However, in other situations the secretary-general and his personal representatives have enjoyed a wide freedom of action to try and resolve protracted conflicts, as was clearly the case late in the tenure of Javier Perez de Cuellar. This is true largely due to the issues of credibility and political acceptability discussed above. Representatives of the Secretariat, operating independently of the dictates of member states, can be seen as respected outsiders who will facilitate the conflict resolution process honestly without pushing the parties in particular directions in which they may be unwilling to go. The performance of Kofi Annan thus far in office, and his selection for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2001, will serve only to increase the importance of the secretary-general and his personal representatives in their efforts to promote dialogue.

Another issue area where the UN has been identified as having some degree of autonomy concerns social and economic assistance. While member states certainly play a role in helping set development goals and
in creating assistance programs, UN agencies involved in assisting the poor generally enjoy a high degree of independence when it comes to implementing strategies for each particular recipient state. These efforts can include technical assistance, multilateral development aid, the provision of goods and services, and the allocation of resources across different sectors. The implications of these activities for dialogue can be tremendous, a point made most persuasively by the secretary-general’s High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Anwarul Chowdhury.\textsuperscript{13} He argues that the poorest countries of the world have benefited from these UN activities across all aspects of their post-colonial development. While the UN’s development efforts have not been without criticism, these countries certainly would be in worse condition without the UN’s help. As a result, the UN’s development work is helping to build the foundation for a dialogue that is more inclusive and less confrontational.

Beyond these more concrete areas where the UN can be an autonomous actor, the Group of Eminent Persons also discussed how the UN can have an independent effect on the mindsets of the people who interact there. More specifically, the final chapter of \textit{Crossing the Divide} observes that the community of international civil servants who make up the Secretariat already represent the embodiment of a “dialogue mindset.” They are, by their very nature, inclined to view the perception of diversity as an opportunity for learning, not as a threat to one’s own identity. Promoting this type of human understanding is obviously a central concern of the dialogue among civilizations; however, a few thousand UN employees are insufficient when it comes to spreading this manner of viewing the world. Fortunately there is some scholarly evidence, albeit rather dated, that all participants in the political processes of the UN and other international organizations, including the representatives of member states, do experience a learning process while engaged in multilateral diplomacy.\textsuperscript{14} Even more encouraging is the fact that this may be true for participants who only spend a limited amount of time at a multilateral conference. Therefore, as more and more states join the UN, as the number of NGOs involved with its work increases, and as the UN Global Compact Initiative gains additional participating businesses, the community of those individuals with a dialogue mindset centered around the UN will become an ever more important phenomenon in global politics.\textsuperscript{15}

Furthermore, \textit{Crossing the Divide} suggests that the UN has an important role to play in extending this dialogue mindset to include
individuals outside the UN community. Of particular concern to the Eminent Persons are those societies where long-term peace building is required due to years of conflict, oppression, and inequality. Since political legitimacy is often fragile at best in these post-conflict societies, the UN can play a special role in the reconciliation process that individual states would be unable to play due to perceived biases and colonial legacies. Possible functions for the UN in these societies include acting as a “witness” or “amplifier” of the truth, acting as a “listening device” while grievances are aired, and acting as a “guarantor of commitments” for the different parties involved. All of these general ideas point in exactly the same direction: that the UN can draw on its credibility and legitimacy in order to build the potential for dialogue at the grassroots level in post-conflict societies. Of special relevance to this process would be initiatives that strengthen the process of dialogue across local, national, regional, and global levels. For example, one might consider the “hybrid” tribunal for Sierra Leone as a model for using the resources of both the international community and the local society in an effort to promote lasting dialogue. There are numerous additional possibilities should these early efforts prove fruitful.

CONCLUSION

The UN certainly has an indispensable role to play in global efforts to promote dialogue within and between civilizations. This article has offered a preliminary exploration of some possible activities for the UN, grouped into three conceptualizations of the organization’s relationship to its member states. Many of these options are rooted very much in the reality in which the UN most often operates: a world of state sovereignty and conflicts of interest. In these situations the best the UN can do in terms of promoting dialogue is to try and push, prod, or persuade individual states that they have more to gain through cooperation and understanding than they do through conflict and discord. If states are willing to permit the UN this role, the results can be beneficial to all involved. However, it is the states themselves that ultimately decide how far and in what directions the UN can go.

This article also suggests that the UN can play a more active and autonomous role in promoting dialogue in some cases. For example, in the recent effort to disarm Iraq, the Security Council, in the form of resolution 1441 (November 8, 2002), provided the UN inspectors with a robust mandate to violate Iraqi sovereignty in search of prohibited
weapons and material. While the major powers, and in particular the United States, reserved the right to act outside the UN if necessary, the periodic reports issued by the inspectors certainly affected the manner in which the member states worked to address that issue. No one would suggest that the UN has the final say on these issues—just that what the UN does on these issues has an impact on how the member states pursue their interests. This type of UN role may seem more or less promising depending on the perspective of individual readers. The most significant point to remember, however, is that it represents one of many options that can be used by the UN to work for dialogue in different situations. Greater appreciation of the strengths and limitations of the different strategies on this menu will allow for a better understanding of the contributions the United Nations can make toward promoting reconciliation and understanding. This article is but a first step in this regard.

NOTES

3. This observation, as well as a number of other insights in this paper, is based on this author’s experiences as a member of the Secretariat supporting the work of the Personal Representative and Group of Eminent Persons that was based at the School of Diplomacy and International Relations at Seton Hall University.
5. Published by the School of Diplomacy and International Relations, Seton Hall University, South Orange, New Jersey, 2001.
8. Unless specific attribution is given, the following ideas regarding the UN’s role as a vehicle for dialogue are based on the General Assembly debate on the Dialogue among Civilizations (see footnote 4), the report of the Group of Eminent Persons titled Crossing the Divide (see footnote 5), the General Assembly Resolution on the “Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations” (see footnote 6), and the author’s participation in discussions hosted by the secretariat for the Year of Dialogue among Civilizations based at the School of Diplomacy and International Relations at Seton Hall University.


12. Some of these efforts are discussed in Giandomenico Picco, Man without a Gun: One Diplomat’s Secret Struggle to Free the Hostages, Fight Terrorism, and End a War (New York: Times Books, 1999).

13. Ambassador Chowdhury serves as an adjunct professor at the School of Diplomacy and International Relations at Seton Hall University. He has made this observation in at least two different meetings with our students.


15. For information on the UN Global Compact Initiative visit the web at www.unglobalcompact.org.