

SECOND PLENARY SESSION

Panel Discussion - Summary of debates

The Second Plenary Session was chaired by **Dr. Rami Hamdallah** and it was devoted to the presentation and discussion of the reports of the Working Groups. In order to allow for an overall view of the recommendations emerging from all the working groups, the four rapporteurs presented their reports after which a general discussion with regard to all of them was opened. There were many interventions from the floor, which emphasised the top priority of certain recommendations, or referred to new activities that should be undertaken. It was also pointed out that the separate recommendations of the four Working Groups sometimes overlap. Hence there is the need to integrate them into an overall set of conclusions and recommendations, emerging from the Conference as a whole. Moreover, it was pointed out that some of the recommendations could be considered for inclusion in the workplan of the PEACE Programme which had been adopted by the General Assembly of the Programme, the previous day. These tasks were entrusted to the Organising Committee of the Conference and to the Steering Committee of the PEACE Programme.

Panel Discussion: *Palestinian Higher Education in the International Context: the role of interuniversity co-operation*

The panel discussion was co-chaired by **M.A.R. Dias**, Director, Division of Higher Education of UNESCO and by **Dr. Khaled Kan'an**, Assistant to the President, Al-Quds Open University.

Dr Kan'an underlined two facets of international co-operation, which are of particular relevance for Palestinian higher education. They reflect the spirit of both solidarity and competitiveness that underlies such co-operation. It is important, therefore, for the Palestinian universities, for their teachers and students to know that, by seeking co-operation with higher education institutions abroad they enter a competitive field, in which they must act, as equal partners. On the other hand, such co-operation is also an expression of solidarity and of assistance in their efforts to better meet the needs of Palestinian society.

Dr. Shihab Eldin, Director of UNESCO Cairo Office, referred to the need of strengthening links between Palestinian universities and universities in other parts of the world, particularly in the area of research. Since such links require substantial funding, he urged that a funding campaign be launched in the industrially developed

countries, with the support of influential academics, scientific societies, foundations, public and private companies, etc. A special role could be played by Palestinian intellectuals, businessmen and entrepreneurs in the Diaspora. He further referred to the activities of the Cairo Office of UNESCO and offered its co-operation for the promotion of research at Palestinian universities, for enhancing the quality of teaching, particularly in science and technology, including through the PEACE Programme Network.

Dr Sufian Kamal, President of Al-Quds Open University, referred to the gap between developed and undeveloped countries concerning higher education and the important role that interuniversity co-operation is called upon to play in reducing it. Palestinian universities are in great need of further developing their international links, in the effort to enhance their quality and relevance, to introduce advanced programmes and to promote research. Interuniversity co-operation needs *will* and *ability*, but also *financial means*. Palestinian universities have the will and are constantly developing their capacity, but the financial means are extremely limited. Dr Kamal made the following concrete remarks and recommendations aimed at promoting the participation of Palestinian universities in interuniversity co-operation:

- all forms of interuniversity co-operation (bilateral and multilateral links, networking, etc.) should be pursued;
- international co-operation with Arab universities is reduced, and should be expanded;
- the Palestinian universities seek both moral and academic support from the foreign universities with which they co-operate. The latter are expected, therefore, to expand their role and to assume more responsibilities in this co-operation;
- some Palestinian universities are less active in international co-operation, because they lack the necessary know-how and infrastructures. The PEACE Programme should give priority to assisting them in order to build up the necessary knowledge and structures which should allow them to remedy this situation;
- PEACE Programme should give priority to granting scholarships for Palestinian staff, so as to strike the right balance between opportunities for post graduate students and for young academics to pursue further studies and to upgrade their training abroad;
- there are ample opportunities and a very strong need to develop co-operation with Palestinian universities in the field of the *distance education*. In the specific conditions of Palestine, distance education can play a key role in increasing access to higher education by making it available to young people who would not have access to traditional forms of higher education. Also, it

can overcome current difficulties in free mobility of both staff and students. On the other hand, it can be an instrument for upgrading teaching and research, through access to scientific data bases and to advanced teaching materials and methodologies.

Dr. Carlo Di Benedetto presented the activity of the Community of Mediterranean Universities (CUM), which counts at present over 150 universities in all countries bordering on the Mediterranean. CUM provides an excellent framework for co-operation with Palestinian universities on a regional basis. In fact, two Palestinian universities are members of CUM. It is on these grounds that, despite its own financial limited possibilities, CUM has decided to make a contribution of US\$18,000 to the PEACE Programme, for scholarships for Palestinian students. As an associate collective member of the PEACE Programme, CUM could also contribute to the upgrading of academic staff at Palestinian universities and to the promotion of research, through the "CUM schools", and through various joint research projects now in progress, or through new ones which could be initiated in order to meet specific needs of the Palestinian universities.

Mr. Anthony Smallwood, speaking on behalf of Directorate General 1B of the European Commission, began by recalling his meeting with Thafir El-Masri in early 1985, during the Commission's first formal mission to the Occupied Territories, following the visit by Commissioner Claude Cheysson to East Jerusalem the year before, which marked the starting point of the co-operation programme with the Palestinian people. Mr. El-Masri's constructive ideas strongly influenced the European Union's early programme and Mr. Smallwood expressed his pleasure at being able to participate in the inaugural event at the auditoria dedicated to Thafir El-Masri's memory.

He briefly reviewed the support given by the European Union to Palestinian higher education and stressed that this support was in recognition of the unique social and education role played by the universities in Palestinian society. European support had been extensive, not only via Med Campus, Peace Campus and the PEACE Programme, but also through project and programme funding, via the Higher Education Council. More recently, European funding had provided recurrent cost support to the higher education sector to cover the collapse in external funding following the Gulf War. However, this was a short-term measure and recurrent support would be run down rapidly in favour of more concrete actions.

The European Commission remained committed to the continued development of a healthy Palestinian education system within which higher education had a critical role to play. All donors needed to recognise the new challenges of sector development and rationalisation. Such issues would form part of a dialogue with the Palestinian Ministry of Higher Education on how to ensure that continued European assistance to the Palestinian higher education sector will be used most effectively. He hoped that the higher education sector would retain its special relationship to the socio-economic

well-being of the Palestinian people and was confident that it would continue to benefit from its international links, including those built up under the PEACE Programme.

Speech by **Dr. L. Eudora Pettigrew**, President, State University of New York College at Old Westbury; Chair, International Association of University Presidents; UN Commission on Disarmament Education, Conflict Resolution and Peace Studies

The Role of the International Association of University Presidents

I am very pleased to be here today and have this opportunity to speak to you. As a member of the Executive Committee of the International Association of University Presidents (IAUP) and as President of the State University of New York at Old Westbury, I bring you greetings from all of my university presidential colleagues from throughout the world. I am deeply moved as I visit this region of the world which has such a rich and remarkable history, dating back beyond antiquity.

I want to talk briefly about the role of the university today as we prepare to enter the new millennium. I will address how the university interrelates with society in general and its potential to effectively improve society as a whole. I will also speak briefly about the International Association of University Presidents, and some of its major goals. In addition, I will provide some observations about how the IAUP and its resources might be helpful to the rebuilding of universities in Palestine.

The first and perhaps the pre-eminent task for the university is the transmittal of knowledge through teaching. Through its faculty, the university has the major responsibility of co-ordinating the dissemination of knowledge from one generation to another, to the general community and ultimately to the world. Teaching links the past and the present and can point to the direction for an inspiring future of great dimension and positive force. Faculty and staff of institutions of higher education carry the hopes of the future often through dangerous passages. When travelling a long road it is often difficult if not impossible to see far enough ahead or behind to understand if the journey has charted any particular direction. Faculty, administration and staff must climb to a high point, if only for a few minutes, to get a full view. This conference allows participants to make that climb and to look for future goals as well as the past. Curriculum and teaching can only benefit from that view.

Second, the university, through its faculty, conducts scholarly research which frequently has major benefits for society - particularly research in the sciences which has led to countless medical and scientific breakthroughs. University research is constantly pushing back the parameters of human knowledge and its successes often benefit society as a whole. Research on social issues including education, health, economic development, environmental concerns must be major components of future directions. Such research should be both basic and applied and must be designed to

benefit the world culture and should focus on ways to develop economic viability of the world cultures.

And finally, the university - again through its faculty - has a responsibility to become involved in service to its relevant communities. Known as public service or community service, these activities often involve the voluntary participation of faculty and other university staff in local community projects and activities often of benefit to members of the non-university community. Such service can complement teaching and research. Teaching can be conducted for community residents on a variety of topics such as health or government. Applied research can be beneficial to the country, i.e., environmental concerns - agriculture, water conservation.

Universities all over the world are engaged in some fashion in teaching, research and service. The International Association of University Presidents with more than 600 members is a major world organisation engaged in all university functions. The IAUP was founded thirty two years ago, in 1964. Its main purposes are to promote the peace, welfare and security of mankind through education, to generate friendship, understanding and confraternity among leaders of higher education, to arrange for joint research through the exchange of faculty, students and academic materials as well as to facilitate cultural and academic exchanges as a means of helping in the maintenance of world peace and the preservation of the cultures of mankind.

The organisation is particularly interested in facilitating dialogue and collaboration among institutions of higher education in developed and developing nations. As a result of the hard work and dedication of members from throughout the world community, IAUP has realised several major achievements since its founding. These include the designation of the International Year of Peace in 1986 through the United Nations, the increased participation of women in education, the signing of numerous exchange and academic collaboration agreements among universities of the world, the internationalisation of curricula and the training of leaders in member institutions.

The Association is free from political and partisan interest and maintains dialogue with international, regional and national educational associations as well as other official organisations within the international sphere.

In 1989, the Executive Committee of IAUP approved in substance a proposal to work in conjunction with the United Nations on disarmament education and the next year the Association membership approved the formation of an IAUP/UN Disarmament Education Commission for the purpose of advancing the teaching of disarmament education in institutions of higher education. The Commission membership includes chief executive officers of colleges and universities, faculty scholars, diplomats and government officials, arms control experts and others from such diverse disciplines as literature and the arts, journalism, politics, economics, health, environment, business and industry. Presently, there are over seventy corresponding members from many countries with a significant number from Russia and other Eastern European countries. There are also more than twenty observers and

consultants. The Commission members give of their time and resources for meetings, sub-committees and conferences. I am now chair of the Commission.

The Commission in conjunction with universities and colleges has conducted seminars and workshops for scholars from developing countries, as well as other countries and has developed course work in conflict resolution, confidence building, conventional arms issues, nuclear proliferation threats, environmental conservation and recovery, economic development resulting from the conversion of military dollars to peace economics, health, psychology, legal education and journalism. Concepts of peace and security have been incorporated into course work. Course materials have been widely distributed to scholars in Latin America, Africa, Asia and the Middle East. Each participating university/college has assigned a host professor and a faculty committee to oversee the development and instruction of the course work. The results have been achieved because of IAUP's commitment to peace through education.

With more than six hundred member institutions, IAUP has a broad array of resources which are available to higher education systems such as Palestine's. In the area of teaching, member universities could be interested in providing experienced professors in exchange programs which would enable Palestinian professors to serve as exchange professors at foreign universities. Established teacher education programs at IAUP member universities could serve as models for planning and developing such programs throughout Palestine.

Along the same lines, opportunities for graduate education for Palestinian faculty who have had limited opportunities to pursue advanced degrees could be available through IAUP institutions.

The heads of universities in Palestine could benefit from visits to or extended stays at some of the IAUP campuses. Exposure to a variety of management styles and approaches might provide Palestinian senior staff opportunities to enhance their management practices. University heads from IAUP institutions could benefit from visits to Palestinian institutions. Rebuilding universities as will be done in Palestine can be instructive to other countries. In the area of academic research, similar or related research projects underway at individual IAUP and Palestinian campuses might benefit jointly from interaction and sharing of research findings.

Public service or community service ventures currently underway at IAUP campuses might have the potential to be replicated at Palestinian campuses. For example, voter registration drives, interactive programs between universities and elementary/secondary schools, environmental developments, agricultural planning for economic developments may be useful for the Palestinian culture.

What about the future of IAUP and its Commission? A review of the IAUP's activities since its founding clearly indicates that it has a successful track record internationally. For example, the IAUP Commission on Disarmament Education has clearly influenced university curricula throughout the world through developing seminars, symposia and course work on this subject. It should be emphasised,

however, that the IAUP is not an institution of higher education. It is meant to serve as a catalyst, a gadfly, to stimulate interaction among and between institutions of higher education.

It might be possible in the future to share some of the Commission's activities with institutions of higher education in Palestine. Possibly, through combined efforts, IAUP institutions with Palestinian institutions can work to provide a powerfully effective learning environment. Plans do not always lead us nicely and neatly forward. Choices must always be made along the way. If we know anything about the feel of the present and the difficulties in finding a dream for the future, it is that life is far from simple, it is full of complexities and interdependencies. If planning for the future of higher education in Palestine could be conducted jointly with IAUP assistance, the results might assist to interpret the unpredictable intervening events. There is strength in working together and strength must be used to confront and surmount tough realities and strength must be available to make steady if not orderly progress. I invite you to share your thoughts, plans, ideas with fellow IAUP members. There is an interconnectedness among us that transcends country boundaries, disciplines, even political disagreements. We must maximise our common needs to the benefit of human needs and human rights.

In closing, I have been very privileged to have this opportunity to speak to you today. My colleagues in IAUP and its Commission on Disarmament Education and I formally invite you to join hands with us in working together in friendship and mutual respect in our continuing endeavour toward ensuring a more peaceful planet. My experiences with IAUP and the Commission give me an ever present sense of optimism and an unshakeable belief that universities that work together and believe that they can and will be successful can and do make a difference.

Speech by **Dr. Ibrahim Al-Khawaja**, Assistant of Secretary General, Association of Arab Universities.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to speak, briefly, in Arabic for several considerations. First, I am a representative of the Association of Arab Universities. Second, I am a professor of Arabic. Third, I am a member of Palestinian Arab Language Conclave. On behalf of the General Secretariat of the Association of Arab Universities, I have great pleasure to extend my thanks to UNESCO and to the PEACE Programme for inviting our Association to attend and participate in this important international conference. I would like also to extend my gratefulness to An-Najah National University for having this academic conference. I highly appreciate the university efforts in the organisation and preparation of the conference. All this, coupled with warmth and hospitality, has made this conference possible and distinguished.

As many of you know, the Association of Arab Universities is a non-governmental organisation headquartered in the Jordanian capital, Amman, and has more than 120 Arab Universities in its membership. These, of course, include the eight Palestinian universities. In fact, I had wanted to speak in detail about the most important goals of the Association which are in full harmony with the aims of this academic conference, but because of pressure of time, I have to speak in brief.

I have listened, in this academic conference, to the speeches of organisation representatives, the goals of whom cross and meet with ours. We fully support their views and opinions. On behalf of Professor Ihab Hassan Isma'il, Secretary General of the Association of Arab Universities, I would like to express our readiness, as an Association to continue providing all assistance possible at our disposal. For instance, in the few years, a fund has been established to support the Palestinian Universities. Although, the fund, until now, has not achieved all its goals, in terms of funding Palestinian university programme it has succeeded, in the last two years, to secure \$40,000 to support scientific research at Palestinian institutions of higher learning. The Association is yet to provide another \$40,000 in the near future. The fund administration, based in the university of Jordan and run by the University of Jordan, President Dr. Fawzi Gharaybeh, has raised a considerable amount for the same purpose. We hope the Palestinian universities will maintain their close contacts with the Association bodies and institutions. This should enable the universities to make active use of them in different ways.

The Association has the following institutions:

- I. Arab Council for Graduate Studies and Scientific Research. This Council is based in the University of Cairo, Egypt.
2. Arab Council for the Training of Arab University Graduates. The University of Jordan is home to this Council.
3. Centre for the Registration of University Dissertations. Dissertations are available on microfilms and microfiches. The Centre is based in Ain-Shams University, Egypt.
4. Centre for the Registration of University Theses. This Centre is based in the University of Jordan, Amman.
5. Arab Network for Vocational Development of Faculty Members at Arab Universities. It is based in the University of Alexandria.
6. Support Fund of Palestinian Universities. This also includes all announcements of scientific subjects. The last common scientific prize was co-ordinated with the Association of Arab Universities Research Council based in Baghdad.
7. Scholarly journals in different disciplines. These referred journals are published by the Association centre.

Recently, the Council of the Association approved plans for the establishment of scholarly societies for deans of faculties at Arab Universities. Moreover, the Association has called and encouraged twinning projects between Palestinian Universities and their counterparts in the Arab world. This has been initiated by the Arab League's Cultural Committee. A number of twins have been forged with Palestinian universities.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I do not want to digress on this, but I would like to emphasise, once again, that the Association of Arab Universities, with all its humble facilities, is willing to co-ordinate and co-operate with the various scientific and cultural institutions: UNESCO, European Community, International Association of Universities ALECSO, International Association of University Presidents and the PEACE Programme for Educational Co-operation with Palestinian Universities.