**Crans-Montana Speech, “Which World for Tomorrow?” 5 July 2017**

**Mr. Jean-Paul Carteron**

**Excellencies**

**Distinguished Participants**

**Dear friends**

**I would like to begin by commending HE Carteron, for bringing together such a distinguished gathering, to focus on the kind of world we hope to enjoy, by working together, for sustainable peace and a prosperous wellbeing for all of humanity.**

**It is my pleasure to address this opening session, entitled “Which World for Tomorrow?”**

**There is surely one world for tomorrow… the world that recognises peace building as the only way forward, for humanity, to move ahead in peace, towards prosperity and holistic wellbeing.**

**This is certainly a tall order.**

**However, I am convinced that, if each and every one of our nations work together, with one aim or objective, we will be able to live up to the challenge.**

**Definitely, the presence of deep-rooted conflicts, taking place across our world, are amongst the main challenges we must face.**

**Although quite a number of initiatives are taken up by the international community to resolve conflicts, I believe we must do more, to replace old cycles of violence and coercion with a renewed sense of respect; with processes of dialogue; and with peaceful methods to achieve deep-rooted social change.**

**I also believe that, to achieve these goals, we must be determined and courageous.**

**We must accept our responsibility, that we need to be a generation of innovators.**

**We need to initiate the complex, but the much-needed changes, to the status quo, within our countries and the international community.**

**We must think outside the box… to take the necessary action to address conflict.**

**Conflict and wars are blocking our children’s, aspirations, for a peaceful and prosperous future.**

**We must admit that, too often, our authorities address political and social disturbances either through management by crisis, or by conflict prevention.**

**We must also admit that management by crisis is a longstanding practice, by many of our countries.**

**To give a concrete example, of management by crisis, let me mention the way, for example, that Europe reacted, and is still reacting, to the ongoing migration situation.**

**Countries in the Mediterranean knew, for a very long time, that the situation of migration was escalating.**

**Indeed, countries in the Mediterranean such as Malta, Italy, and Greece, had been drawing the attention of Europe for over a decade.**

**However, unfortunately, the European Union has dragged its feet, with devastating repercussions for all the people concerned, that is, both Europeans and migrants.**

**To top it all, the situation is becoming even worse now, due to armed conflicts in the region, which are propelling the migration situation into further crisis levels.**

**The lack of appropriate management of migration flows has now led to social tensions, and increasing unease within European communities.**

**On the other hand, and undoubtably, conflict prevention is more sustainable.**

**Conflict prevention aims to prevent armed conflicts from breaking out in the first place, by emphasising, or in some cases by building, structures which impede violence.**

**A successful example of a constructive strategy of prevention has been adopted by Tunisia.**

**Let us stop for a moment, to briefly analyse the Tunisian example… Tunisia stands out, as a relevant leader in the region, by having read the signs of the times.**

**The young people of Tunisia took the lead, and stood up to recognise the importance of social change.**

**Tunisians, though with much difficulty and great sacrifice, are holding on, to overcome the challenges of conflict, and build strong processes of democratic participation, instead.**

**However, I believe there is a third way to overcome conflict, which we must consider more seriously, to secure a better world for tomorrow.**

**This third way is the transformation of conflict.**

**This is a most challenging way.**

**Such a way is not only more sustainable, but it is more enriching.**

**I believe that we must seriously take up efforts for conflict transformation, by introducing a self-reflective and constructive critical perspective, which focuses on the underlying attitudes that different communities, cultures, ethnic groups and faith traditions, bring to the concept of conflict.**

**Conflict transformation initiates a process of constructive change, that includes, and goes beyond, the mere resolution of specific problems.**

**Conflict transformation initiates a process of healing, through peace making and peace building, with communities and groups.**

**Real change can only take place with a grass roots approach, using a bottom-up methodology.**

**Sustainable peace can only begin within the hearts and the minds of each each and every one of us.**

**Conflict transformation is successful when it moves from a symptomatic approach, which deals with conflict in a fragmented way, to a more holistic and integrated understanding of conflict.**

**Conflict transformation is definitely more than a toolkit of techniques.**

**Conflict transformation is a new way of seeing and understanding conflict, by drawing our attention to the underlying situations that create social tensions and therefore trigger conflict.**

**By identifying the underlying situations, and making them visible, we can trigger a more substantial, meaningful, and sustainable change.**

**Identifying the root causes of conflict, and making them visible, is therefore essential.**

**We must appreciate that different cultures and groups bring in different attitudes and approaches, in the way they manage conflict.**

**However, there are still certain universal perspectives which we all hold in common.**

**It is these shared perspectives which we can, and we must, identify, to work together, to achieve the successful transformation of conflict, and to build, in the process, a more sustainable and peaceful world.**

**I might sound controversial, but I believe that to transform conflict, we must first learn how to envision conflict as a possible source of constructive change.**

**Although this might sound like a very different way of analysing and responding to situations of conflict, it is precisely this kind of innovative approach that we need, now, more than ever before.**

**We must admit that contemporary forms of conflict are no longer being fought in the ways they once were.**

**Our old responses to conflict are not effective anymore, therefore, we need to be innovative in our approach to resolve conflicts and build peace.**

**Therefore, we must encourage our communities and our authorities to understand that, while conflict creates profound cycles of destruction and precarity, we should be determined, and capable, of responding to conflict through necessary constructive changes.**

**Moreover, we should never perceive conflicts in isolation, by singling out one particular country or region.**

**Violence and conflict in one part of the world leave tangible effects, across other countries and regions.**

**For example, we have only to look at the unfolding situation in Syria. Undoubtably, Syria’s situation is affecting not just neighbouring countries such as Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey, but also nations across the European Union and the Mediterranean.**

**This is because we are all connected, through socio-economic, political, and environmental factors.**

**I explain this by using the following analogy.**

**Just like when a stone is thrown into a pond, the surface of the water is disturbed and its ripples take time to disperse.**

**We cannot afford to ignore these ripple effects of conflict, such as the rise in transnational crime and modern-day slavery; increases in poverty and intergenerational cycles of exclusion fro education; the presence of terrorism across our borders; and the de-centred nature of radicalisation in our communities and societies.**

**These are all evidence of the complexity and interrelated nature of conflict.**

**Let us also recognise that, while conflicts are devastating, we must seek the streak of opportunity, which they contain, to create a necessary change.**

**Let me once again mention the case of Tunisia, where conflict and unrest was transformed into an opportunity for inclusive democratic participation.**

**I believe that it is often our outdated social and institutional structures, which create social exclusion, perpetuate inequalities and discrimination, and give rise to instances of violence.**

**This is why I believe that we need to be innovative, to find ways to put a stop to violence, to bring peace, prosperity, and wellbeing.**

**In order to achieve justice, equity, and equality, our nations and international community must trigger effective political and social processes, which address the root causes of conflict.**

**To ensure the successful transformation of conflict, we must make sure that all relevant stakeholders are effectively engaged in ongoing processes of structured dialogue.**

**Communities must be empowered to share their concerns, their aspirations, and their experiences, as valued collaborators in the work of peace.**

**Let me reiterate that this focus on promoting peace, prosperity, and wellbeing should entail peace-making, and peace-building, from a bottom-up approach.**

**It is only through such an approach that we can truly bring sustainable prosperity, and a culture of positive peace, to our nations.**

**All of this centres on the most basic element of our humanity, which is the importance of human relationships.**

**According to research carried out by my Foundation, which is the President’s Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society, and confirmed by other leading academic institutions and stakeholders, healthy relationships are the most necessary indicator for social, economic, and cultural wellbeing, for all individuals, families, communities, and societies.**

**By nurturing healthy relationships, we can successfully transform conflict, for the benefit of our peoples.**

**By focusing on the importance of healthy relationships to build peace, prosperity, and wellbeing, we will also understand, fully, the strong guidelines contained in the United Nations’ Agenda 2030, and its Sustainable Development Goals.**

**Agenda 2030 can stimulate our innovations, because it provides a comprehensive roadmap for the sustainable future of our world, agreed upon by the international community.**

**Agenda 2030’s mandate, for the peace, prosperity, and wellbeing of all humanity, depends on our commitment to nurture healthy and peace-oriented relationships, at every level of human interaction.**

**For this reason, the Sustainable Development Goals begin with the scourge of poverty.**

**SDG Number 1 declares, in no uncertain terms, that the eradication of poverty is an essential step that we must take, as one human family, to end injustices and promote equitable prosperity.**

**Without initiating the necessary fair redistribution of wealth, not only at the level of our communities but also on a global scale, there can be no justice.**

**So long as certain nations derive their prosperity from the exploitation of others, there can be no real peace, nor can there be an effective transformation of conflict, which is so often linked to issues of precarity, deprivation, and oppression.**

**For example, let me mention alarming reports, which state that more wealth is pouring out, every year, of the 48 countries which the World Bank classifies as ‘sub-Saharan Africa’, than is actually, being channeled in, for development.**

**I would like to share with you a very meaningful quote from the ‘Honest Accounts 2017 Report’, which was compiled by a coalition of UK and African NGOs:**

**“*Research for this report calculates the movement of financial resources into and out of Africa, and some key costs imposed on Africa by the rest of the world […] The countries of Africa are collectively net creditors to the rest of the world, to the tune of 41.3 billion dollars in 2015 alone. Thus, much more wealth is leaving the world’s most impoverished continent than is entering it.*” End quote.**

**Commenting on this report, Aisha Dodwell, a campaigner for the NGO Global Justice Now, said:**

**“*This research shows that what African countries really need is for the rest of the world to stop systematically looting them. While the form of colonial plunder may have changed over time, its basic nature remains unchanged.*” End quote.**

**We cannot allow this institutionalised injustice to continue.**

**Therefore, the conflicts we seek to transform, whether they occur within our communities, our societies, between our nations, or at a regional scale, must begin with the acknowledgement of the intrinsic dignity of the human person.**

**On concluding, let me quote the wise words of John Paul Lederach, Professor of International Peace-building, and one of the formative theorists at work on the concept of conflict transformation, when he says:**

**“*We commit ourselves to the journey toward reconciliation because we believe it is right, even when we are not sure how it will progress or end. We believe that walking down the path to peace offers a way better than violence, and an instrument more powerful than force, to conduct the affairs of humankind.*” End quote.**

**I urge us all to take this opportunity to embrace a transformational approach to conflict, as part of our vision for the world of tomorrow.**

**I urge us all to be bold, to make use of all opportunities to encourage relationships, which are life affirming, and rooted in respect for universal human rights and fundamental freedoms.**

**Finally, I urge us all to work in synergy, whatever our capacity or our responsibility, for peace.**

**We must work together, to ensure a more sustainable, equitable, and prosperous future, for the benefit of all humanity. Thank you for your attention.**