

# “THE NEW CHALLENGES OF THE UNIVERSITY COOPERATION FOR PEACE”

**Intervention of Prof. Massimo Caneva, PhD, MD**  
**University of Oxford – 11 May 2013**

**Summary:** *The intervention will focus on university cooperation as an important tool to help promote reconciliation between young people divided by conflicts (such as in the Middle East and in the Balkans). This cooperation will also be viewed as an essential means of contributing to intercultural and interfaith dialogue. The presentation will provide an opportunity to present respective experiences in this field, focused in particular on the Middle East and Balkans. There will be considered commitment to fostering reciprocal knowledge and respect, both on a national and on an international level. Therefore to analyze the roles of education and Academic Institutions as crucial tools of public diplomacy in action for young people. Tools which, from each country's domestic perspective, are also vehicles of integration for an effective management of cultural and religious.*

## **Introduction**

One of the basic challenges for the XXI Century is international peace and development in the light of the new world balance. Today, there are problems that can only be solved by action at the global level. New strategic thinking is required to approach global issues and advance “global public goods”. Consequently, international communities must become protagonists of a new strategy to intervene in crisis areas and to promote peace, development, a strategy based on realistic and effective foreign common policy.

Such a strategy must include the collaborative efforts of diplomatic, economic and peace forces actions, while being rooted in the common goal of development of a strong cooperation culture of solidarity capable of understanding local needs and providing quick and efficient solutions that are at once professional and respectful of human dignity.

New problems when addressed with new sensibilities can lead to truly effective solutions. Such a strategy must rely on cultural expertise and include expert knowledge of the theoretical elements of crisis and development management, and the capability to understand the real comprehensive needs of the populations, and their historical and cultural roots in order to give effective answers to them and to promote peace and development even in the first phases of the interventions.

## University Cooperation and Humanitarian Crises

A competent and comprehensive response requires a multidisciplinary approach. In every university cooperation programme for peace it is necessary to take into account that the objective of an action aiming to analyse the situations must take into consideration the cultural context, in order to advance the technical and cultural objectives of the cooperation.

Universities can play a significant role in this new strategy, if they build partnerships with other relevant actors, including international organizations, diplomacy, peace forces and NGOs. Universities should not act as an elite, far removed from real problems and challenges. On the contrary, universities and their faculty should be engaged in the field and share their expertise and knowledge as well as learn from other actors.

The traditional “*academic collaboration*” is distinct from the “*university cooperation for peace and development*” understood as a strategy of action aimed to build a more developed and peaceful society. In fact, *university cooperation* needs to manage and deal with a double problem of independence in order to face the challenges to which it is called: from one side, it has to tackle the problem of research, didactics and operational services naturally built into the academic structure; from the other, it has to deal with the necessity of reconciling technical-scientific interventions, that must be tailored to the real demands of the local populations whose needs become are gradually discovered as the project proceeds.

When we speak about *university cooperation* we don't refer only to the exchange of lecturers and researchers - which is usually the objective of traditional forms of academic collaboration - although this kind of activity may be very useful. *University cooperation* implies a more general strategy based on both analysis and action, of training and research in the field, of cooperation among the academy and civil institutions, diplomats and international organizations, volunteers and peace forces, in order to provide support in both the prevention and solution of crisis promoting future development.

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**Presentation of University Cooperation Programmes in the Middle East and Balkans (power points)**