

## **Words of appreciation on behalf of the Spirit of Humanity Forum**

By Scherto Gill

At the Mayor's Reception held for the 3<sup>rd</sup> SoH Forum

On 26<sup>th</sup> April 2017

Mr Mayor, we thank you for your kind reception, and through you, we thank your team at the City and the members of the Hofde Reykjavik Peace Centre for hosting the 3<sup>rd</sup> Spirit of Humanity Forum.

Reykjavik (and Iceland) has been a friend of the Forum for a number of years. We are most grateful for the City's generosity in hosting our previous two forums, the first being in September 2012, the second in April 2014. Reykjavik's support to the Forum has always been appreciated by the forum's partners and its worldwide participants.

The SoH Forum was drawn to the City for many reasons, not least due to its commitments to peace and its achievement in aspiring to become a world Capital of Peace. I might be speaking the obvious, but I will still say the following for the interest of those who are joining the Forum and visiting Reykjavik for the first time:

The City places a great emphasis on human values in its work and policy. Reykjavik itself truly embodies all the qualities to be a City of Peace and the launch of the Hofde Peace Centre last year is just one such expression. There are many peace related events in Reykjavik, all of which are exceptionally captivating, such as the annual LennonOno Peace Award, the lighting of Imagine Peace Tower, the Arctic Circle Dialogue, and many more. But what appeals to the Spirit of Humanity Forum the most is that Reykjavik, and Iceland as a whole, have created an environment where humans and the land celebrate close ties. In preserving the wealth of nature and caring for all the beings on this land, or we may say, this island, Iceland is becoming the greenest country in the world, demonstrating that true peacefulness is rooted in our relationships with *all that is*.

Mr Mayor, all these qualities that Reykjavik represents and embodies recall the Earth Charter's definition of peace. Here I quote it in full:

**Peace is the wholeness created by right relationships with oneself, other persons, other cultures, other life, Earth, and the larger whole of which all are a part.**

I am pleased to say that this emphasis on such relational nature of our being also captures the focus of the work at the SoH Forum. Indeed, the founders and partners of the Forum believe that peace, justice and flourishing all spring from our shared collective strengths – our spirit or spirituality.

Being aware that more and more people and communities today not only recognise but also inhabit the spiritual in their lives, the Forum doesn't aim to tackle questions such as "Why is spirituality necessary today?" Nor do we ask: "who would need spirituality now?" Instead we pose a different question: "*As spiritual beings, how do we integrate spirituality in our decisions and actions in the world, for the world?*"

In the light of the challenges confronting us today, the Forum strives to create a space for global leaders to come together, to dialogue and to explore the myriads ways this Earth Charter's vision of peace, of wholeness, of values, of *right* relationship can be at the basis of our decisions that affect the flourishing of all.

Our hope is that these dialogue and conversations will in some ways bear fruit in the world, engendering a ripple effect. Here is an example. As one small piece of fruit from the last Forum, an edited book entitled "Why Love Matters: Values in Governance" brought forward a collection of articles written by global leaders who were able to illustrate that values-based decision-making is indeed a reflection of the spiritual nature of our social and political life. These stories and words of commitment are what they shared during the 2014 Forum, and by capturing these narratives, the book is now inspiring others to pursue an undivided life of integrity.

Mr Mayor, the Spirit of Humanity Forum has once again gathered leaders from around the globe in your City of Peace. For this 3<sup>rd</sup> forum, we will discuss how there can be more care and caring in our world today – caring for each other, for the global communities and for the Planet Earth. Our concern is to encourage a shift from "What can we do ...?" to "How shall we be ...?" In this way, leaders (including emergent leaders such as young people) can be empowered, and will be empowering us all, to reclaim and re-assume our shared responsibility for the world today and for our collective tomorrow. Clearly this will not be possible without the Reykjavik's hospitality and generosity, and your personal support.

Here at this beautiful reception, in the thought of gratitude, we are reminded that:

As long as we see love as the promise of belonging and commitment to relationship,  
As long as we regard the self as a journey of growth, becoming and transcendence,  
As long as we experience the human spirit as a sense of beyondness,

We can all be part of the whole as envisioned by the Earth Charter. And instead of having 'US' and 'THEM', there will always only be "WE".

Thank you!