



WAR IN IRAQ

The statement proposed by Milan Kucan to the "International ethical, political and scientific collegium", which was read on the occasion of the presentation of the Collegium in the European Parliament

Brussels, April 2, 2003

There is something eerie in holding this meeting today.

A war is being fought. Its legitimacy and its legality are being questioned, regardless of the totalitarian character of the regime, the mass violations of human rights in Iraq and the threat that emanates from that country onto the entire world. Men and women are dying. The international community has failed to preserve peace and is now shattered

It is in these circumstances that men and women of goodwill, some who have public responsibilities, others coming from various fields of thought, propose to establish an »International Ethical, Political and Scientific Collegium«, which would only have the moral authority of its opinion to appease the world's tensions and light its way. The emergence of a worldwide ethical conscience is today's emergency, in particular because it will take time.

We can no longer escape the gravity of the situation. The war in Iraq is compelling us to make this call to the world. It is meant neither to accuse nor to judge. We want to deal with the phenomena the Iraq crisis has unveiled and which, in our firm belief, are important for humanity and its future. We are offering our findings and proposals for consideration.

We are finding a deep rift between the ethical principles, which relations in the international community are supposed to rest on, and the legal order defining these relations. We are referring to the global ethos based on the sanctity of life, the hallowedness of the dead, human dignity and the age-old golden rule of reciprocity in human society: do not bring unto others what you would not want brought unto yourself. This, in our view, is also the lowest common denominator for the ethical guidelines of all the world's religions, civilisations or cultures. All of them can embrace it in their individuality as a criterion for their actions without sensing it as coercion into a different world of values or even hegemony of one over others. They can serve as an orientation marker, as a vision and as practice in the wielding of power. We find that the existing legal order primarily protects states and safeguards the principles of

sovereignty and non-interference in internal affairs. It does not place man as an individual in the forefront, it does not sufficiently safeguard that ethos.

We are finding differences in the understanding of democracy. We are noticing attempts at global level to establish the kind of understanding of democracy that sets and dictates values to others who are sought to be unconditionally bound by them. This, in our belief, is a denial of democracy as a form allowing competition between different substances. Instead we are seeing an introduction of monism, a political monopoly and a monopoly of values, as well as spiritual violence. Our position does not exclude the need for democracy to be open to substance, to the global ethos, which, as already stated, constitutes in itself the ethical prerequisite of democracy and its common foundation. It is based on the point of departure that the right to difference and diversity must be taken into account, that the diversity of the roots democratic cultures stem from has to be recognised. Letting be is more than essential for world peace and the future of humanity. Coercing values and behaviour patterns on others leads to conflicts that are a threat to world peace and security.

We are finding a deep crisis and insufficiency of governing our globalised world, including a crisis of credibility and efficiency of its institutions. The United Nations have been almost completely pushed away from managing this crisis, although this was the precise task for which they were formed in the first place over half a century ago. Multilateralism as the usual and desirable method of resolving the world's problems has been jeopardised. This is worrying not only from the point of view of preserving peace and security in the world, but also from the perspective of resolving other great challenges facing humankind (climatic changes, protecting the atmosphere from harmful emissions, protection of waters, disabling so-called fiscal paradises, arms control and disarmament from chemical, bacteriological and nuclear weapons, aid to the Third World and its development, the workings and the authority of the International Criminal Court, supervision of the implementation of international conventions, etc.) We cannot face these challenges without common responsibility and solidarity, for we are living in an interdependent and interconnected world. In essence, we are deciding on the future of the international community and on the principles and rules that are to guide that community's existence. The new world order is being decided.

We therefore propose:

The re-establishment of the institutions governing a global world and the strengthening of their authority and legitimacy, primarily that of the UN and the Security Council. Managing the Iraq crisis must be brought back under the auspices of the Security Council where accountability of the international community must be created, whereby it must respect the adopted positions and resolutions. We emphasise that the right of veto is a privilege counter-balanced by an equal level of responsibility, including ethical and spiritual responsibility, which are becoming humanity's central political issue. Ending the war and a humanitarian, political, social, economic and cultural reconstruction of Iraq is the first great opportunity for this. We particularly underline the need to strengthen the United Nations.

The authority of the UN will be indispensable in the resolution of the great problems of the future, and there is no alternative. The impotence of the UN in resolving the Iraqi crisis is no reason to overlook the Organisation. On the contrary, it is reason for

enhancing its power and influence. It is also reason for strengthening its normative role and its control of the inseparable fundamental civic, political, economic, social and cultural rights of man as an individual and as a member of ethnic and other human communities.

We propose that the founding acts of the UN be amended and adjusted to the present situation and developments in the world. The United Nations and its entire system of norms and institutions must protect human life and dignity as well as fundamental rights as the supreme values in the creation of a global ethos. No one, least so dictatorial regimes, can take recourse to national sovereignty and the principle of non-interference in internal affairs to kill their own citizens with violence and state terror, humiliating and violating their fundamental rights, robbing them of their dignity and threatening their physical existence, while at the same time threatening the peace and security of neighbouring states. In such cases the United Nations should have the right of effective and timely intervention, thus preventing humanitarian disasters such as those recently witnessed in Rwanda, Somalia and the Balkans, now in Iraq and Palestine.

This principle is what the institutions considering and deciding on whether the situation anywhere in the world requires such humanitarian intervention on the part of the UN should be adjusted to. This is necessary also in order for the international community and its members to protect themselves from the temptation of individual states and ad-hoc coalitions deciding on these issues themselves and assuming responsibility for such intervention outside the UN or seeking justification for such unilateral action in postponing and stalling Security Council decisions. Mere power and the longing for power cannot be the deciding factor. This would not dispel the risk of war and terror, it does not improve the capacity to tame violence and barbarism, all of which make it seem as though the greatest threat to humanity today is its own inhumanity.

Also in need of amendments are provisions granting the UN or through its decision a regional community of states (not an individual member state of the UN) the mandate to govern a state, particularly following an intervention, when it would not be capable of establishing democratic government and administration, ensuring economic life and growth, as well as legal and social security. This is what the situation in Somalia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, perhaps also Afghanistan and Palestine are driving us towards, soon certainly to be followed by Iraq.

Our positions have no ambition to encompass all the problems unveiled by the Iraqi crisis. As we regret that there is war, as we accept war only as a last resort, as we profoundly and sincerely share our sympathies with the people of Iraq suffering this terrible war, we remain firmly convinced that this is not enough. We must thoroughly study the messages this crisis is sending out. First and foremost we must take action to alleviate its consequences for humanity and the international community. We are not seeking unity and general acceptance of our views and proposals, for that would be unrealistic in the given circumstances. We are simply after seeking a common denominator of the positions of all those who wish to see a solution to this crisis and the exclusion of future situations of this kind. There were too many in recent years and it is time to act. This is what we are seeking like-minded people for. The world is too interdependent, every one of its great challenges being a common challenge for us all. Including Iraq. We are working on the conviction that all of us are members of the

same family. We must create an international legal order and institutions that will suit our times and the deeper understanding of the ethics underlying our actions. This would constitute a great step forward by our generation in humanity's long trek towards civilisation and towards its own self. Our declaration seeks to contribute to making that step a lighter one.