

Red Cross Nordic UWC

Remarks to the Council

Let's Walk the Talk!

Sir John Daniel
Chair, UWC International Board

Thank you so much for your welcome. It is a pleasure to be here and a privilege to address this meeting of Council.

I took over from Tim Toyne Sewell as chair for the UWC International Board at the beginning of this year and I am trying to familiarise myself with the movement and its constituent colleges and schools as quickly as possible.

It was very helpful that the UWC Congress held in Cardiff in February came early in my tenure. This gave me a great opportunity to meet UWC people from around the world, including some of you, and also to discover the issues that are on the mind of the UWC community. You have asked me to give you some first impressions of the UWC movement.

Let me begin by telling you how I came to this role of Chair. Twenty-five years ago Tony Macoun, who was later the founding head of your College, was the head of the Lester B. Pearson College of the Pacific in Canada. I was then president of Laurentian University in Ontario, in Eastern Canada, and Tony invited me to come to Pearson College and talk to the students about a year-abroad programme we had launched in France. I was travelling with my 16-year-old daughter and while I spoke to some of the students another group took her in a Zodiac boat to Race Rocks, the underwater nature reserve that Pearson College looks after.

She came back with stars in her eyes saying, 'Daddy, I want to go to one of these places!' We found out what was involved and the following year she went to UWC-USA with a scholarship from the Ontario government.

I think that Tony Macoun must have marked me down as useful material, because not long afterwards I was invited to become an *ad personam* member of the Council of Foundation of the International Baccalaureate. I stayed on the Council for almost ten years, ending up as its vice-president. Those were interesting years that saw the introduction of the Primary and Middle Years IB programmes and a revision of the Diploma's language requirement to reflect the growth and diversification of the students taking it.

When I moved to UNESCO as Assistant Director-General for Education in 2001 I continued to have some contact with the IB, which has an affiliation to UNESCO, and visited Mahindra UWC in India for a meeting about putting the IB online.

So I had visited Pearson UWC, UWC-USA and Mahindra UWC before taking on the role of International Chair. Since assuming office I have visited UWC Atlantic and Li Po

Chun UWC in Hong Kong. I am here with you today and next month I will attend the graduation at UWC Mostar. So I am getting up to speed as quickly as I can.

I feel that I already have some contact with your College through one of your most illustrious and enthusiastic alumni, Mark Wang. Last month I was in China on other business and made an informal visit to the project that Mark is leading to create a UWC in China.

Although there have been two false starts in attempting to create a UWC in China, I sense that this time the project may succeed. I stress that I was not there to evaluate it. The formal task force charged with assessing and making a recommendation to the International Board was there last week. However, it looked pretty positive to me because of two factors: first Mark Wang's investment of energy and his own money to get the project started; second the very strong support, both political and financial, of the city of Changshu. The City has offered an island on a big lake as the site for the College and will pay for its construction and initial operation.

Many of you will know Mark Wang's remarkable story, how he was brutally injured in a plane crash, spent five years in hospital, and was transformed by getting a scholarship to this College. Once you meet Mark and hear how his time here changed his life, you will always hold this Red Cross Nordic College in high esteem. Furthermore one of your former staff members, Xiaohang Sumner, is now the project manager for UWC China, so it is fair to say that if it goes ahead this new Chinese College will owe a great debt to UWC Nordic.

Mark is but one example of the tremendous enthusiasm that you find among UWC alumni from all the colleges. This enthusiasm is a precious asset, but what are the issues that we should be concerned about as a UWC movement?

I shall identify three, growth, governance and intolerance.

Growth

Although we now have three proposals for new colleges at a serious stage of review it seems to me that, despite the enthusiasm of alumni like Mark, the UWC is making heavy weather of growth from its tiny base. Meanwhile the IB Organisation roars ahead and has reorganised itself to cope with 20% annual growth in the number of IB schools for the next decade. And that is from a base of 3,000 schools already.

Maybe the problem is that UWC has rather little possibility for further growth using its most common institutional model, which is the two-year, residential, IB-centred programme.

This was the question in my mind after conversations with the college chairs at the Cardiff Congress and from hearing reports of the discussions among the college principals. Is the two-year UWC programme a sustainable business model? I can see that a number of the two-year colleges will need to raise substantial funds if they are to be sustainable for more than a few years. This Red Cross Nordic College seems to be an exception, because you have largely managed to keep your foundation coalition of donors intact, which cannot be said of, say, Atlantic College and Pearson College.

The impact of this challenge is that some of the two-year colleges now regard the creation of new two-year colleges as a zero-sum game. In other words, they believe that any further expansion of the two-year college model, beyond the imminent German College, will undermine their own finances. Whether this fear is rational or not, it will ensure that key players view proposals for expanding the number of two-year colleges with either scepticism or downright hostility.

What is the answer for the struggling colleges? Peter Howe, the head of UWC Maastricht, had an article in the last issue of *United World* titled 'My Conversion to the Whole School Model', which I found persuasive. The whole school model has two great advantages: it is economically much more robust and it ramps up the numbers of youngsters having access to some UWC experience much more quickly.

Governance

Turning to governance, I shall comment only briefly. Most of the issues that have kept me busy since taking on this role have been issues of governance. I am therefore very glad that the governance arrangements proposed in projects for new colleges or schools, such as those in Armenia, China and Japan are receiving very close scrutiny.

Of course, I do realise two things.

First, it is only in the last ten years, really only in the last five years, that the UWC has become a real movement with a sense of cohesion and a degree of collective self-regulation.

Second, each college must reflect its environment, so governance for a college in China or Armenia will not be the same as governance here at UWC Nordic. Nevertheless, it is already clear to me that if we get the governance arrangements for new colleges wrong they will haunt us for years to come with tough challenges.

Intolerance

Finally, let me offer a word about intolerance, which may seem a surprising word to use within the UWC. I do not mean intolerance with the student bodies, where I am amazed at the way in which youngsters from very different backgrounds rub along remarkably happily together. I mean intolerance among the senior people of the UWC movement.

It is normal for the founders of movements that carry a heavy baggage of idealism, like UWC, to be fiercely possessive of the values of the movement and protective of those values. But I have worked in such movements before and observed that the founders and their successors usually manage to find accommodations with each other about ways and means. But the UWC has serious problems of this nature, which handicap the movement as a whole.

It is normal and right that our founding fathers try to protect the fundamental values of the UWC movement. It is less acceptable when they insist that there is only one way of implementing those values. Healthy evolution means holding fast to basic purposes, but being flexible about how to achieve them as circumstances and attitudes change. The bitter controversy about full scholarships is a prime example, but this intolerance of different approaches to achieving UWC objectives surfaces in other areas as well. We

must watch ourselves. If the UWC mission is fundamentally about peace and tolerance we ought to walk the talk ourselves.

Thank you for listening. I look forward to the meeting and thank you again for letting me join you.