

United World Colleges International

UWC Robert Bosch College: Kuratorium

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UWC: The Evolving Reality

Sir John Daniel
Chair, International Board UWC

Chair, dear Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is a pleasure to be with you and to see the magnificent work that you are doing to get the UWC Robert Bosch ready for its first pupils in the autumn. Thank you for your kind welcome and for asking me to address you briefly. I shall title these remarks *UWC: The Evolving Reality*.

I joined UWC as Chair of the International Board at the beginning of 2013 so I am relatively new. Moreover I am not an alumnus, which I think is an advantage in this role because I cannot be accused of bias in favour of a particular institution or of any one model of UWC. However, I do have a daughter and a son-in-law – the husband of my other daughter – who went to UWC USA in the 1980s. The son-in-law has just finished several years' service as a member of the Board of Pearson College in Canada, which is well known to some of you.

I also served on the Council of Foundation of the International Baccalaureate for most of the 1990s, so I am familiar with an important component of the UWC student experience.

Since joining the UWC movement I have tried to familiarise myself with it. By a fortunate coincidence one of the relatively infrequent UWC Congresses took place in Cardiff a month after I started. That event gave me a comprehensive immersion in the UWC: its stakeholders, its institutions, and its people. Since then I have tried to visit UWC institutions whenever the opportunity has arisen – preferably when my other professional travel would pay part of the cost.

I am pleased to say that if I count the two institutions, UWC Mahindra and UWC USA, that I had the opportunity to visit before taking office, I have now visited 10 of the 12 existing institutions. The two missing are UWC Adriatic and UWC Waterford in Swaziland. Getting to both is a priority for the coming year. I also had the chance, during a business trip to China, to meet the very dynamic team planning the UWC Changshu and to visit the island site for the college on a very grey and misty day. Even then it was inspiring!

Visiting UWC institutions is a lesson in similarities and contrasts. Both have been particularly marked in the two institutions that I have visited so far this year, UWC Costa Rica and UWC South-East Asia in Singapore. The differences are stark. UWC Costa

Rica is a two-year college of less than 200 pupils housed in simple buildings on a pretty campus just outside San José. UWC South-East Asia is the largest institution in the UWC system with some 4,000 pupils ranging from kindergarten to the IB located on two campuses in different parts of the city-state.

Those are the contrasts. The striking similarities are in the pupils. When you sit down with the IB-diploma pupils in the cafeterias of the UWC institutions the differences disappear. You could be anywhere. Certainly, the racial and national mix varies a bit from institution to institution – more Asians in UWC Hong Kong, more Europeans in UWC Red Cross Nordic – but the attitudes, curiosity and enthusiasm you find among the pupils are the same everywhere.

UWC Robert Bosch College will add new diversity to the UWC's campuses – what a magnificent college you are building – but I am sure that in a year's time I shall find myself equally at home among your first intake of pupils.

It is a cause for great celebration that 70 years after Kurt Hahn first articulated his vision of promoting international understanding, social responsibility, academic excellence and character building, we are creating a United World College in his native land. Furthermore, Kurt Hahn was a personal friend of Robert Bosch, for whom this College is named. He subscribed fully to Kurt Hahn's ideals and added his own vision, political farsightedness and moral fortitude. The pupils who will study here will not lack for extraordinary role models.

This institution is joining the UWC movement at a significant time. The movement is now embarked on a self-conscious trajectory of growth and diversification and, it is fair to say, this College is the first manifestation of that policy.

I realise, of course, that we added two new UWC institutions in the last decade but neither went through the deliberate process of planning and assessment to which you have been subjected. UWC Costa Rica is the only college that was founded directly by UWC International. The institution was struggling as part of the SOS Children's Village organisation when UWC International was offered a donation to take it into the UWC system. There was a dramatic meeting at SOS's headquarters in Innsbruck in 2005 when the UWC representatives were given just one hour to answer yes or no.

Nearly a decade later, as I observed when I was there last month, it has done a remarkable job in blending two distinct cultures while preserving the SOS heritage. My international colleagues tell me that UWC Costa Rica leads the UWC movement in its emphasis on pastoral and residential care and that the pupils there are notable for their humility and sense of responsibility. They do this with minimal resources.

Some of you know the history of UWC Mostar better than I do, but its creation was the result of a special conjuncture and the drive and conviction of individuals rather than the sort of systematic planning process that UWC Robert Bosch has been put through.

Neither Costa Rica nor Mostar would have survived the scrutiny to which the UWC movement has subjected you.

Of course, I do not mean that the UWCs in Costa Rica and Mostar should not exist, simply that the UWC movement is growing and diversifying and thereby becoming more self-conscious about its development. It is now the duty of the whole movement to ensure that the older institutions, particularly those two, achieve a solid and sustainable financial base as soon as possible.

As I say this I express the warm gratitude of the movement for the great support that the Bosch Foundation has given to UWC Mostar. That support is both financial and personal. Last May I went to the graduation ceremony in Mostar and during a tour of the residences I had a very good conversation with Lukas Bosch, a most impressive young man who is deeply committed to make UWC Mostar work, both at the level of its high vision of inter-communal harmony and also in the practicalities of day-to-day living and studying.

Each new UWC institution brings something new. UWC Robert Bosch brings impressive financial backing, a beautiful campus and a strong relationship with one of strongest and most successful national committees in the UWC network. Furthermore you have bagged one of UWC's most respected figures, Laurence Nodder, as your head.

You also bring your focus on sustainability, particularly emphasising environmental issues, including how sustainability can be enhanced through technology. That is a matter of personal interest to me. Ten years ago, when I was Assistant Director-General for Education at UNESCO, we launched the UN Decade for Education for Sustainable Development. It is very appropriate that you open this College in the year that we conclude this decade, when there will be various meetings to assess what has been achieved. We can chalk up the creation of this College – and the ethos that permeates the City of Freiburg more generally – as important results of that UN decade.

I remember that when we launched the UN Decade for Education for Sustainable Development we had some difficulty articulating a crisp statement of what it meant. Clearly it had to do with ecology, ecosystems, and leaving a decent world for our grandchildren but what else? For the last 12 years I have worked for intergovernmental development organisations – first UNESCO and then the Commonwealth of Learning. I used to say that education for sustainable development meant, first, education for development and, second, that the development must be sustainable. When you put it that way the scope and meaning of sustainability evolves with time.

This is a real issue for the UWC movement as it realises that income inequality is today as much a force in disuniting the world as race, religion or nationality. As I commend the efforts that national committees are making to diversify the economic backgrounds of UWC pupils, I have ringing in my ears a statement made by a tall Swazi pupil from UWC Waterford at last year's UWC congress, which some of you heard too. He said of UWC

pupils generally: ‘whatever our national backgrounds, religions or nationalities, we are all middle-class liberals. And, one might add, mostly destined to study in American universities after the UWC experience.

Let me end with my main concern as Chair of the International Board. It is simply the sustainability of the UWC movement. We are embarked on a process of growth, which is very important. With just 12 UWC institutions – 14 when this College and UWC Armenia open next year – can hardly expect to change the world, but as we enlarge the network we shall expand our impact.

Growth means diversification, and here I simply make a plea for tolerance. I have worked in the United Nations system, so I know very well that individual commitments to the high ideals of an organisation do not necessarily make for harmonious relations between the staff. The same applies to the UWC movement. I have been amazed by the intolerance I have found amongst people who declare their allegiance to the same vision whilst disagreeing, sometimes venomously, on the means for achieving it. However, I do detect progress within the UWC, even in the last year.

I believe we have put behind us the divisive issue of the types of scholarships UWC should offer. The moral heat seems to have gone out of this issue as everyone converges on the simple principle that a pupil who is worthy of studying at a UWC should not be prevented from doing so by lack of funds.

Similarly, there is much greater acceptance today of the notion of a diversity of institutional models than there was when I signed up for this role just over a year ago. The two-year model is a good model if it is built on solid finances, as the Robert Bosch College is. The whole school model is also a good model, which responds to the high demand for international education at all levels in some parts of the world, and also gives added resilience to the whole system. I imagine that future institutions applying to join the UWC movement will examine carefully which of these options suits them best.

I shall leave it there. I greatly look forward to being with you again formally to welcome you to the UWC movement on September 23rd. You will be a precious and significant addition to the existing network of institutions and I am sure you will play an important role in enhancing the impact of the UWC ideals in Germany, in Europe and around the world. I congratulate you on what you have achieved so far and I wish you every success as you fill this wonderful campus with pupils.