

# BIOPOLITICS INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION



## **Pursuing Global Citizenship through Education for Peace** Geneva Peace Week – 7 November 2017 Palais de Nations, Geneva, Switzerland

### *Visionaries meet to promote a new role for peace education internationally*

A most successful and thought provoking event was organized in the framework of Geneva Peace Week 2017, by the **Biopolitics International Organisation (B.I.O.)**, a pioneer in peace education since 1985, and **3DlexiaCosmos**, an initiative in holistic education for a world we deserve. Educators and policy makers presented a “thesis” and “antithesis” on key issues concerning global citizenship in order to create a “synthesis” of new values for peace-building around the world.

The event, which was held in one of the most dynamic venues in the world, the UN’s Palais des Nations, was attended by dozens of international delegates and civil society agents from across the globe. It was chaired by **Prof. Agni Vlavianos Arvanitis, President and Founder of the Biopolitics International Organisation and 15 times nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize.**

In her opening address, **Prof. Agni Vlavianos Arvanitis** emphasized that peace begins with quality education, a powerful tool in transforming communities for global sustainability and prosperity. “Time is of the essence. Every minute is crucial in order to save life and preserve peace on our planet. We need to pass this gift on to the next generations and education is the tool than can make a difference. However, we need to inspire education with values that offer us not only facts, but also the chance to see the beauty and harmony in our world, the beauty and harmony of knowledge. The essence of *bios* – life – reflected in the fragile nature of the *microcosmos*, the world of the unseen. Each and every one of us need to be mobilized. Not only scientists, technocrats or decision-makers, but artists too, as well as every concerned citizen. When we launched the International University for the Bio-Environment in 1991, we had one goal in mind – to uplift the spirit of humanity and to reverse the crisis in values. Our goal remains to mobilize every citizen on the planet to cope with climate change, because it affects all of us, in every corner of the world. Resources are becoming scarcer, water and

food security are threatened, and hundreds of millions of our fellow citizens are forced to become environmental migrants. Education can mobilize citizens and influence leaders to think and act in a different way, inspiring conflict resolution and stimulating peace. With modern technology and education, we can reverse this dark trend of humanity, and international organizations such as the United Nations can bring to fruition, with sincerity and effectiveness, their true calling: the implementation of peace.”



**Aggeliki Pappa, Founder/President of 3DlexiaCosmos**, presented her vision for education for peace and for peace through sustainability and education. “The word has changed in fundamental and profound ways. It is crucial for the role of education to be ‘re-imagined’ to comply with the demands of the new global reality. Crucial insights from new scientific research in the field of neuroscience combined with the sub-atomic level mechanisms of the brain help to shape education for tomorrow, supporting pedagogy for conflict prevention and peace building. The creation of the holistic transformative 3dlexia paradigm is a manifestation of a new vision of running to adjust to the rapidly shifting reality, as highlighted in the Educational Forum founded in Geneva in 2010, and stressing the urgency of a pedagogy in human law, ethics and spirituality based on emotional and social intelligence in a world where injustice and fear of others threaten our sustainability. The cultivation of feelings and behaviors to initiate activities based on trust, appreciation, respect, empathy, forgiveness, compassion and enthusiasm for courageous actions to resolve conflict

and live in peace. The emotional aspect of learning is crucial in this new educational paradigm and should be encouraged. We should seek new dimensions in pedagogy that are not restricted by linear fragmentation and machine-like mind-narrowing that can harm our ability to see more globally and holistically. These facts are supported by the most updated brain research that links cognitive neuroscience with the quantum mechanics of the brain offering a new neuro-founded dimension in education for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It is high time to stress to universities, governments and policy makers that the pedagogy of compassion and love that are visibly manifested in positive efforts towards others and the climate is the only way to a peaceful, sustainable future.”

**Vasileios Boumpis**, a young student, took the floor and declared that the young have a unique role in shaping the future of society through courageous behavior. “Responsible youth are the mirror that reflects clearly what we have not been willing to see. We work hard to organize solutions that move the world forward. My message to the world is that I have the right to use my intelligence and deep desire to create solutions to global challenges by drawing from the human power I have been given since the day of my birth. I am capable of making all this possible, despite the fact that poor education and a corrupt system are blocking my way to working meaningfully and with an open heart for a world that we deserve. Allow me to express my sadness about the current formalistic, mechanical public education system in my country, Greece, and in many others, which deprives learners of their creativity, critical thinking, values and necessary life skills for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. People my age often feel afraid to face the future and search for a meaningful purpose in life due to their exposure to poor schooling that lacks the fundamental value of the notion of ‘know thyself’ that the ancient Greek philosophers invited us to reflect upon. The teachers outside the public education system, the teachers of ‘I love dyslexia’, came into my life as mentors, giving power to my voice, heart and mind to undertake my responsibilities in the light of global challenges, and to live a life of purpose in the service of others, by learning who I am, how to learn and how to use what I have learned effectively, both in school and in life. I managed to turn my dyslexia into an asset and managed to raise my voice as a global citizen.”

The next speaker to share their views was **Ali Rashidi, Director of the Department for International Cooperation at Folkuniversitetet in Uppsala**. He spoke about a concrete project concerning human rights that is currently being implemented in Sweden. “Sweden is considered by many people as a very peaceful, quiet, civilized nation. Lately, however, we have experienced some rather troublesome trends. We have noticed that some young people have left to fight in Syria, and this has created many problems. The main problem is marginalization and exclusion of certain young people and the feeling of not being part of mainstream society. On the other hand, we discovered the growth of political parties which are following and promoting ideologies and politics of the European 1930s. These two

extremes motivated us to initiate a project whose main objective was answering two questions: 1) Who am I and what are my rights? And 2) Why is it so important to protect other people's rights? The refugee crisis in Europe has driven many politicians and people to say that refugees need to learn the values of a country as if these values are better than other people's values. We decided that we need to inform and teach young people about global values, i.e., the UN values of respect for human rights. After a long time of research, we decided to develop a game like monopoly, but, instead of building hotels or factories, you receive a card with five questions but no answers. In order to get the answers, you have to reach out to people and organizations. The answers concern the right to life, right to safety, right to practicing any religion you want, right to education, right of choosing who you want to marry, etc, thus covering, from many angles, about 80 fundamental human rights. In the beginning of the game, young players were asked to leave out some rights that, in their opinion, were not essential. By the end of the game, it was evident that those who understood that no human right could be excluded were the ones who won. Today, in Sweden, more than 200 tutors and educational centers employ this game as special training for young people and it is also being used to teach new immigrants about their rights and obligations. This project has also been successfully implemented in another four EU countries.”

**Hellen Poulla, EFL State School Advisor for the Regional Directorate of Primary and Secondary Education in Crete,** presented a program themed “Educating for Peace” that helps EFL state school teachers in Crete, Greece, to develop inclusive curricula which will aid students in developing critical thinking. This is a yearlong volunteer project implemented in Greek public schools and incorporating the global citizenship holistic education system based on the innovative 3Dlexia paradigm designed by Aggeliki Pappa, as well as the UN's 17 goals for sustainable development. The project is implemented under the Regional Directorates of Primary and Secondary Education of Crete and is initiated by the state school advisors. The outputs of this project will also be presented in the English School Festival which is organized at the end of every school year in the towns of Heraclion and Rethymno. The lesson plans are diverse and include experience and learning activities, and group work. They are conducted daily in certain schools, and the basic subjects are art and human rights. Through this educational program, students are encouraged to understand their individuality as a synthesis of multiple cultural identities with a special focus on local, national, European, and global, and learn at least one of the international conventions on human rights, as well as learn how to defend and promote peace by behaving and acting as global citizens. They are expected to understand that each one of us is part of a system and belongs to, and interacts, shares and connects with everyone. The students are expected to be inspired by human rights and send messages of love, tolerance and solidarity, to unite the world in peace. Our motto is “My ME is a universe of Peace.”

**Costas Kadis, Minister of Education and Culture of Cyprus**, was not present at the event, but sent the following message, which was read by **Marios Epaminondas, Representative of the Ministry of Education and Culture**. “It’s a great pleasure for me to address this event today. I believe this is the right time to discuss the role of education in meeting the challenges of contemporary societies. We live in a Europe where extremists and nationalists are becoming more evident, and serious issues such as terrorism, the refugee crisis, economic austerity and the distrust of citizens in the political system continue to increase. In Cyprus, we have yet another problem to face – the violence exerted on our people who have been forced to live separately for more than 40 years. This has created conditions that have prevented contact, reinforced prejudice and reduced confidence among Cypriots of different communities. We know that education cannot be anything else than education for peace, and we need to turn this concept into practice. This event organized today will hopefully be a chance for dialog which will help us find answers to common challenges. I would like to congratulate the organizers of the event and I am making a commitment that my ministry supports and shall support such initiatives in the future.”

**Mr. Epaminondas** then proceeded to add that: “Cyprus is a troubled part of the world, as the negotiations concerning the Cypriot problem are continuous and have not yet concluded. The Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus asserts that education has a legal and moral obligation to create a learning environment that provides equal opportunities to all without discrimination and exclusion. Prejudice and xenophobia have no role in education. We believe that engagement should allow each person and community to develop their own identity while generating respect for diversity. For our local context it’s also important not to silence the traumas of the past but also not to let these traumas prevent the reunification of our society. The council of Europe, with the cooperation of NGOs and the Ministry of Education, has promoted, in Cyprus, teacher training workshops, and the writing and distribution of teaching materials on active citizenship, which have benefitted both educators and students. Furthermore, one of the most important initiatives in Cyprus is the Bi-Communal Technical Committee on Education. Three working groups have been set up on the basis of the Committee’s mandate in order to be more productive in promoting coordination and cooperation between the educational institutions of the bi-communal Cyprus Federation. This year, we are planning to continue with these initiatives, with more schools and students coming together and some hundreds of kids benefitting from these programs.”

The last speaker was **Stefanos Gialamas, President of the American Community Schools of Athens**, who discussed a very successful student-to-student initiative called “Youth to Youth.” “ACS Athens is an international school with 1000 students from 63 nationalities. About 13 years ago, we created the Global Morfosis Paradigm to prepare young people to

become tomorrow's citizens with Ethos to make the world a better place to live with peace and harmony for the benefit of all people. Morfosis is a Greek word which means ethical, social and intellectual shaping of the human character. Therefore a new educational philosophy, a pioneering teaching and learning delivery methodology and an innovative leadership guided by Ethos are the three interrelated, interconnected and inseparable elements required for such an educational paradigm. Ethos is very important. A person with many skills but without Ethos is a very dangerous person who can do a lot of damage. Look at the world's leaders today. We don't just have an economic crisis; we have an ethical crisis, we have problems with our ethics, we have problems with our principles. We believe in Aristeia in our educational paradigm. Aristeia is the Greek word for the pursuit of excellence under the guidance of Ethos. Its main component is to serve humanity and that's what we are teaching our children. If we don't serve humanity then why do we expect society to be good to us? If we don't give, why do we expect that someone else will give to us? One of the most amazing projects based on our principle of talking less and acting more is a student-to-student project that started 48 months ago. Forty-two unaccompanied children from Syria, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Africa were taught various subjects (English, Greek, Mathematics, Arts and Behavior) by our students. But this was not enough, so they created a Saturday program for children from refugee camps and shelters, while also providing them with clothes and books. Classes are now taught 3 evenings per week, while wi-fi has been installed in the shelters and 120 laptops have been distributed so they could create an e-class. This is how Morfosis, Ethos and Aristeia can make a difference in our society. These principles are the basis for creating a world of sustainability and peace."

The event concluded with a lively discussion with the audience as to the urgency of a new paradigm of global participation in climate change mitigation, in order to accelerate peace and build a society of hope.

The **Biopolitics International Organisation** has organized over 700 events for peace and the environment to date. Along with lectures and seminars at decision-making centers all over the world, they have resulted in great progress in environmental protection and have urged the development of policies for sustainability and climate change mitigation as a global priority. This meeting in Geneva was of crucial value in boosting efforts to bring about the needed change.

Additional information is available at: <http://biopolitics.gr/biowp/geneva-peace-week-november-2017/>