



International FORUM on Development Service
FORUM International du Volontariat pour le Développement

Keynote Speeches

from IVCO 2007

- **Michael Edwards**, Director, Governance and Civil Society Unit, Ford Foundation
- **Kumi Naidoo**, Secretary General and CEO, CIVICUS
- **Jacques Jobin**, Director - International Affairs Bureau, City of Montreal

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Full Speech, IVCO, Montreal, 18th September 2007

Michael Edwards: Director, Governance and Civil Society Unit, Ford Foundation

Arriving Where We Started – International Volunteering Cooperation and Global Civil Society

Thanks to Brian and the organisers for the invitation. I'm delighted to be here and to join you in these important conversations.

As some of you know, I do have some experience (some "previous as they say") of international volunteer cooperation, having worked for VSO in London in the early 1980s, which occurred sometime between the Jurassic and the Cretaceous eras in the evolution of development NGOs. Much has changed since then – we are much bigger, better known, more sophisticated, and more influential, though not necessarily commensurately more effective in pursuing our mission, a point I'll return to later on.

Despite being caught up myself in the rapid expansion and professionalisation of the international NGO sector over the last 25 years, I kind of liked the old days, and in preparing what I wanted to say today I went back to a book that some of you may have read called "Arriving Where We Started: 25 Years of Voluntary Service Overseas." Brian will certainly remember it, since like me; he was involved in its production back in 1983, along with the VSO Anniversary Cookbook that taught me how to make ice cream from condensed milk in Zambia a few years later. My copy is tattered and torn nowadays, having followed me across five continents and many more changes of home and job, but I still have a soft spot for it. For one thing it was the first book I ever edited, so it has a special place in my heart, but more importantly it carries a message that has travelled with me across the years and remains very relevant today.

When I re-read the book, many of the volunteer experiences it relates did seem a little raw or unsophisticated by current NGO standards, but these stories also come over as solid, authentic and unpretentious in a way that is not true, I think, for a lot of our more recent efforts at development cooperation, and underlying them is a much deeper truth that is captured in the title, "Arriving Where we Started," though when I first heard Dick Bird suggest this title, I thought he was nuts! Dick, who I'm sure you also know, was even higher in the Byzantine VSO hierarchy at the time than Brian, so I didn't contradict. But to me it was just too obscure, not because I was unfamiliar with the poem it came from – everyone knows "Little Gidding" by T.S.Eliot – but because I couldn't understand the connection with volunteering. "We shall not cease from exploration, and the end of all our exploring, will be to arrive where we started, and know the place for the first time." Er, okay...

Then, when I talked to Dick about it and we drafted the book's Introduction, I began to see what he was getting at. "Through living and working overseas", it says, "to arrive at a better understanding of the way we live, to re-examine old ideas and question accepted attitudes, to explore, to arrive where we started, and know the place for the first time." In other words, at root our work is not about foreign aid or development "over there", or technical assistance or capacity-building (North-South, South-South or even South-North), though no doubt it contains elements of all these things, it's about the commitment we *all* share to approach life in a particular spirit – a spirit of equality, solidarity, love, respect, and constant, unceasing,

self-questioning and mutual support, what I called a spirit of “critical friendship” on the last page of another book I once wrote called “Future Positive” – “the loving but forceful encounters between equals who journey together towards the land of the true and the beautiful.”

Volunteering is really a way of concretising our embrace of a radically different way of being, living and acting in the world, wherever we happen to live and work, and whatever position we occupy in society. And that’s why it’s so important for our collective future – it’s the very foundation for making progress in every other area, the heart and soul of what I would call a “global civil society” in the deepest and most meaningful sense of those words.

It’s instructive that this attitude of mind – described as “active citizenship” by sociologists and political scientists in their studies of democracy, or the “searchers” that the economist Bill Easterly contrasts with the less-helpful “planners” and “healers” in his book “The White Man’s Burden” – has now become a central theme in the critique and reconstruction of development cooperation, but I also fear that this message has been lost sight of somewhat in the rush for growth and influence that has dominated the NGO landscape over the last two decades. So I think we need to reclaim it as central to our work going forward, work that encompasses all three elements of your conference program – improving aid effectiveness, strengthening NGO accountability, and promoting global citizenship. To explain what I mean, I want to go back into recent history and retrace our steps a little so that we are clear we started as development NGOs, and where we are now, before closing with some conclusions about ways forward, next steps, and future challenges. And if some of what I have to say seems a littler abstract or distant from the day-to-day management challenges you face in your organisations, please bear with me. It’s very important, I think, to take advantage of these rare opportunities to stand back and enjoy a different kind of conversation with each-other about our work, one that is not driven solely by short-term imperatives.

When I started working with development NGOs in the early 1980s we were a pretty marginal force in world affairs, so understandably the theme of much early research and strategy was ‘scaling-up’ - how can NGOs progress from improving local situations on a small scale to influencing the wider systems that create and reinforce poverty, either through working with government, operational expansion, lobbying and advocacy, or what was called networking and ‘self-spreading’ among local initiatives. The trajectory of most NGOs became oriented towards capacity building and advocacy as the most effective and least costly forms of scaling-up, what Alan Fowler later called the ‘onion-skin’ strategy – a solid core of concrete practice (whether direct project implementation, volunteering, financial or technical support to other organisations), surrounded by successive and inter-related layers of research and evaluation, advocacy and campaigning, and public education. To varying extents, this strategy has become standard practice for development NGOs in the intervening years, including most of the organisations represented in the room today.

By the mid-1990s, NGOs had indeed ‘scaled-up’ in an environment in which they were seen as important vehicles to deliver the political and economic objectives of the policy agendas that were being adopted by official donor agencies at the time – deeper democratisation through the growth of ‘civil society’, and more cost-effective delivery of development-related services such as micro-credit, health and community-driven development. As a result, many NGO budgets were financed increasingly by government aid, raising critical questions about performance, accountability, and relations with funding sources. So the key questions turned to the effects of these trends: will NGOs be co-opted into this policy agenda as the favoured child or magic bullet for development, and if so, what would that do to NGO mission and

relationships? Will they become 'too close to the powerful, and too far from the powerless'? This was the start you'll remember of the debate over NGO accountability that still rages today, sowing the seeds of a more fundamental critique of our role in development and social change.

By 2000, a rapidly changing global landscape had reframed and reinforced these questions in the context of emerging debates about globalisation, which was reshaping patterns of poverty, inequality and insecurity and called for greater global integration of NGO strategies and more 'development work' of different kinds in the North. Foreign aid was no longer seen as the key driver of international cooperation; instead, new rules, standards and institutions became the focus of attention, implying greater NGO involvement in the processes and institutions of global governance and constituency-building, and challenging us to re-orient our work towards mobilizing a genuinely inclusive civil society at all levels of the world system (as opposed to a thin layer of elite NGOs operating internationally), holding other, more powerful organisations accountable for their actions (whether governments, corporations or international institutions), and ensuring that the promise of new global standards and agreements could be translated into concrete benefits at the grassroots – all of which imply a shift from what was called 'development as delivery, to development as leverage.'

On the positive side of the balance sheet, I think development NGOs *did* heed this advice and have definitely helped to do the following:

- Change the terms of the debate about globalisation, leading to the emergence of a new orthodoxy about the need to manage the downside of this process, level the playing field, and expand 'policy space' for developing countries so that they can integrate into the global economy on favourable terms.
- Cement an intellectual commitment to participation and human rights as basic principles of development and development assistance, even if incomplete and imperfectly-translated into decision-making, and:
- Keep the spotlight on the need for reforms in international institutions on issues such as unfair terms of trade and investment, global warming, Africa, and the kind of warped humanitarian intervention represented by the war in Iraq

These advances have not been enough to *stop* such interventions or make G8 leaders honour the promises they made at Gleneagles in 2005, for example, but they are not insignificant achievements, and they were based very clearly I think on the emergence of a more thoughtful and professional development NGO sector between 1980 and today.

However, we can't think of recent history without acknowledging the effects of what happened on September 11th 2001, and what has happened since. Those events have had many consequences, but the one on which I want to focus concerns their role in reversing what had become a pretty consistent trend towards deep reform in the foreign aid system, and its replacement by a different, healthier and more effective system of international cooperation in which the drivers of development and change would no longer be based around North-South transfers and foreign intervention. Aid flows have rebounded dramatically since 9/11, and there is renewed support for aid across the political spectrum. Is this a good or a bad thing? That may seem an odd question in a conference like this, but I do think we have to recognise that the perseverance of the traditional aid paradigm, even in its modified version of Millennium Challenge Accounts, Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, International Finance

Facilities and the rest of the current paraphernalia of aid reform, makes any kind of quantum leap in NGO roles and impact much more difficult to achieve because it weakens the incentives for deep innovation by providing a continued 'security blanket' for current practice.

Of course, one can read this as a much more positive story, particularly when calls for aid are coupled with serious action on debt relief and trade justice. And I don't mean to imply that investment in developing countries is irrelevant – simply that is difficult to detach the dysfunctional aspects of the traditional aid paradigm from the injection of ever-larger amounts of money by powerful national interests into societies with weak institutions and fragile systems of accountability.

The point I want to emphasise is that our current record as development NGOs is less impressive when one delves below the surface of increased budgets and numbers, to investigate what is happening to the deeper drivers of social transformation:

- the power relations for example that continue to permeate societies worldwide through the media of class, gender and race;
- the challenges of internal change (changes in personal attitudes, values and behaviour) that underpin new economic and political practices on a mass scale;
- our connections with social movements that are more embedded in the political processes that are essential to sustained change;
- the rise of religion as one of the most powerful forces for change in the world today, for good and ill;
- downward accountability and the importance of generating diverse, local sources of funds for partner organisations (a weakness that underpins many other problems including legitimacy and political threats to organisations perceived as 'pawns of foreign interests');
- our continued tendency to internalize functions that should be distributed across other organisations – like local fundraising by international NGOs inside Southern countries, franchising global brands instead of supporting authentic expressions of indigenous civil society, and crowding out Southern participation in knowledge creation and advocacy in order to increase our own voice and profile, as if we as intermediaries are the only people with anything useful to say about world development.

When one measures NGO commitment (rather than rhetoric) to 'levelling the playing field', diversifying representation in the international arena, empowering marginalised voices, building the capacity of actors in the South for independent action, helping them to sustain themselves through indigenous resources, 'handing over the stick', becoming more responsive to beneficiaries, building constituencies for changes in global consumption and production patterns, and injecting real accountability into the international system, the results, in most cases, are decidedly unimpressive, yet we will never achieve the impact we want to achieve if our leverage over the drivers of long-term change continues to be weak.

One can read this story under the conventional rubric of institutional inertia, defensiveness and the difficulties of raising money for new and unfamiliar roles. But I think something more fundamental is going on. Underlying this situation is a much broader struggle between two visions of the future – one that I call 'international development,' and the other 'global civil society', for want of a better phrase.

The 'international development' vision is predicated on continued North-South transfers of resources and ideas as its centrepiece, temporarily under the umbrella of US hegemony and

its drive to engineer terrorism out of the world, if necessary by refashioning whole societies in the image of liberal, free-market democracy. This vision requires the expansion of traditional NGO roles in humanitarian assistance, the provision of social safety-nets, and 'civil society building' (crudely translated as support to advocacy and service-delivery NGOs). The role of the North is to 'help' the less-fortunate South; if possible, to 'save it' from drifting ever-further away from modernity, defined according to liberal democratic norms (heaven forbid there is a viable alternative, like Islam); and if that fails, then at least to 'prevent it' from wreaking havoc on Northern societies. The 'war on terror' exacerbates all the worst elements of the traditional foreign aid paradigm.

The 'Global Civil Society' vision, and here I'm exaggerating to make a point, takes its cue from cosmopolitan articulations of an international system in which international law trumps national interests, and countries – with increasingly direct involvement by their citizens – negotiate solutions to global problems through democratic principles, the fair sharing of burdens, respect for local context and autonomy, and a recognition of the genuinely interlocking nature of causes and effects in the contemporary world. And *this* vision, to be successful, requires action in all of the areas in which development NGOs have been found wanting, namely building the capacities of others for independent action, building our own capacities to shape the international environment in ways that make this easier, and building *all* our capacities to live a successful life of *inter*-dependence.

Prior to 9/11 I think most NGOs would have said that they were engaged in a more-or-less smooth transition from 'international development' to 'global civil society', but now the situation is not so clear-cut. So what to do?

I think the first thing to do is to rid ourselves once and for all of the North/South paradigm and the political economy of foreign aid, and replace it with a different framework rooted in an analysis of the common and interlocking patterns that promote or retard social transformation at all levels of the world system. In this frame, we all become actors in a constantly-unfolding critical conversation about our competing visions of the "good society." This doesn't mean you can't work in Africa anymore, or be blind to the fact that certain problems are more acute in certain parts of the world, or among particular groups.

You don't have to abandon thoughts of progress, or positive social change, or subscribe to a particular political worldview. All you have to do is to recognise that problems and solutions are not bounded by artificial definitions of geography or economic condition, and re-position yourselves as equal-minded participants in a set of common endeavours. Equality, let's remember, is the heart and soul of all healthy and successful relationships. A shift away from conventional thinking would generate a better understanding of causes and solutions since they are increasingly integrated across these borders, and revolve around common if differently-experienced patterns of change and the capacity to control it.

Recent examples that struck me include the rapidly-expanding global conversation about climate change (well-represented also in your discussions this week), research that shows that HIV infection rates are as high among certain groups of African-American women in the US as in sub-Saharan Africa, and for similar reasons; the erosion of public spheres in Latin America that are vital for democracy but are linked to decisions made by media barons thousands of miles away in Italy, Australia and the US; the adoption of participatory budgeting by the UK government last month that will give voters new powers to decide on public spending at the local level, inspired by the success of Porto Alegre in Brazil; and the

increasingly differentiated interests within the larger and faster-growing countries of the South like China, India, Brazil, and South Africa, which have per capita incomes approaching those of parts of Ukraine, Belarus, Appalachia and the Mississippi delta in the United States.

These countries are already influential actors on the global stage; no longer can they be treated as 'recipients.' Instead of encouraging Southern countries to copy the inefficient growth patterns of the North, why not collaborate in inventing new and better ways of combining economic, social, political and environmental objectives through transnational organising for deep, systemic change?

That's an attractive vision, I think, but to fulfil it we need to address the missing link in much of our efforts to date and get to grips with the drivers of social transformation at the deepest level. We already have a framework to do this, though it has been much neglected during the last 25 years, and it revolves around what Martin Luther King called the "love that does justice", by which he meant the cultivation of mutually-reinforcing spirals of change that link personal transformation to the creation and expansion of new institutions and practices in society, politics and the economy. Here's a story from one of King's students, Rev. Jim LaRue, that makes the same point in his own terms:

"There are millions who have had a memorable moment with Dr. King. Mine occurred while a student at Bucknell University in the late 1950's. Having come from a small south-eastern Pennsylvania town, I had no experience that would allow me to fully appreciate what was happening to him as the civil rights struggle he was leading started finding its way into the headlines of newspapers in the north. My formative moment came when he described the difference between love as expressed in personal acts of kindness and love expressed through social justice, and that one assumes the other. Helping someone in need fix their shelter can be a personal act of kindness, but if we do not address the poverty that created the conditions forced upon this person, we are not facing the whole truth. But if I am fighting for social justice and do not treat individuals (especially the enemy) with the respect they deserve, my justice is hollow, and without heart. Our life mission as humans must be to find how we can translate love into justice structures."

Translating "love into justice structures" – what a magnificent phrase, signifying the creation of systems of politics, economics and international cooperation that both build on and reinforce the personal qualities that will sustain their expansion and integration into the mainstream over the next many years. "Without a revolution of the spirit", says Aung Sang Suu Kyi, "the forces which produced the iniquities of the old order would continue to be operative, posing a constant threat to the process of reform and regeneration." This is not, I'll admit, the frame we currently use to analyse our role as development NGOs, but when you do start to use it in very concrete circumstances, as King did in relation to economic structures in the United States and the prosecution of the Vietnam War just before he was killed, I believe it can offer profound insights that help to move us far beyond the limitations of our current ways of thinking. Marrying a rich inner life dedicated to the cultivation of loving kindness and compassion with the practice of new forms of politics, economics and public policy is the key to social transformation.

In some ways, international volunteer cooperation agencies have been ahead of the curve on these issues, though they are not usually regarded as especially innovative by other development agencies. When I read the excellent papers prepared for this Forum I found a high degree of overlap with the themes I'm presenting this morning – recognising and advocating a diversity of models and approaches, but focused around a common set of

challenges and aspirations for the future, as in the move from technical assistance to institutional development and relationship-building, (quote) “grounded in an understanding that the current world order must change, and that much of that change must happen in the North.” Your rejection of the North-South divide and the emergence of South-South and South-North exchanges, and your attention to what Robert Chambers calls “the primacy of the personal” through the modality of people-to-people contact and solidarity, places you, I think, in a potentially-advantageous position relative to agencies that disburse large amounts of money, or who see their role primarily as advocates which can all too easily morph into speaking on behalf of others, with all the negative power dynamics that that implies.

I’m not saying that you have resolved these questions in any final sense – as you know better than me, that is untrue – but I do think that volunteering has evolved considerably since the early 1980s. I would encourage you to keep evolving, away from some critics have called the “non-profit” model of volunteering (i.e. gap-filling using unpaid labour), and towards a civil society model (i.e. volunteers as activists for social change who undertake joint activities and address common problems together). Given current trends to encourage the role of the non-profit sector in service-provision in place of government and to discourage deeper forms of social and political action, this is especially important. Returning to the point I made about authenticity and solidity at the start of my remarks, it is interesting to note that recent research in both the UK and US (and I suspect the same is true for Canada) shows that members of the public rate “authenticity” higher than “professionalism” among the qualities they want to see in voluntary organisations, defined in terms of compassion and loyalty to other human values rather than simple technical or managerial efficiency.

And in case you are wondering how all this relates to the specific themes of this conference, what I’ve tried to lay out is, when you think about it, a model for global citizenship (not dependent on North-South thinking and foreign aid but on the rights and responsibilities we share in co-creating a better future based on love and justice, wherever we may live); NGO accountability (not or not only to donors and government regulators but also to those with whom we work, in a spirit of critical friendship, mutual learning, equality and solidarity); and aid effectiveness (using our position and resources to affect deep, systemic, social transformation, rather than to deal with the symptoms of problems in ways that rarely produce long-term, sustainable changes in institutions, values and relationships).

The key to all of this, as Dick Bird counselled all those years ago, is always to explore, to “arrive where we started, and know the place for the first time” – through all our wanderings and our struggles and our halting experiments, our mistakes and our u-turns and our frustrations, to come to, recognise and be willing to act on a deeper understanding of life’s connections, and the possibilities we are offered through our work to transform ourselves and the world around us in ways that lift the heart and celebrate the spirit of our common humanity.

Good advice indeed from a wise and caring man and something that I hope will support and inspire you on your own journeys into a true and liberating global future. Thank you for listening, and I wish you all the very best for the remainder of your conference.

Summary of speaking notes, IVCO, Montreal, 18th September 2007

Kumi Naidoo: Secretary General and CEO, CIVICUS

Global Citizenship and Aid Effectiveness

It is rapidly becoming a truism that the old notion of governance, one which suggested governance was the exclusive domain of governments, is breaking down in an era of globalisation and with the emergence of a deepening 'democracy deficit' in several local and national contexts, and certainly at the global level. Surveys reveal declining levels of citizen trust in political institutions. In many democratic systems 'form' has largely overtaken the 'substance' of democracy: elections may be held, but fewer and fewer people are choosing to vote and the meaningful interface between citizens and the elected are minimal between election periods. Affiliation with traditional political parties is on the decline as the parties themselves are characterised by a lack of internal democracy or fail to address issues that citizens believe are important. The influence of monied interests in many political systems is also turning citizens away from traditional engagement in favour of new forms of participation.

Although faith in traditional political institutions is waning, this should not be taken as a sign of citizen apathy. On the contrary, people are finding new and more direct ways to get involved in public life and decision-making – marking a shift from representative democracy to what is often called participatory democracy. Citizens are arguing for a new notion of governance that requires political leadership to engage with citizenry in ways that allow for ongoing input into decision-making and policy formation.

While the space for civic participation in the global policy-making environment is growing, however, the overall picture overwhelmingly remains one where citizen voices are marginalised or are belatedly solicited after key decisions have been taken. The constrained status of civil society engagement can be seen in the case of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Although hundreds of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) actively campaign around the issues that have been targeted in the MDGs, there was no significant role for civil society in the development of these goals. If the Millennium Goals are to be achieved, ordinary citizens around the world must feel a true sense of ownership and must be willing to campaign to hold their governments accountable to them. This can only happen if the MDGs are 'owned' by the people and not appropriated by elements of the international system.

During the 1980s many activists around the world embraced a simple but evocative slogan: "Think Globally Act Locally". The message: in acting at the local level, one needed to understand how global forces impacted local reality. In short, trying to tackle local issues without understanding the ever-increasing power of global processes, global discourses and global institutions was tactically inappropriate.

By the mid-1990s, activists, particularly from the global south, began to question this logic. Devaki Jain, for example, one of the founders of *Development Alternatives of Women in a New Era (DAWN)*, a grouping from the poor countries of the world, challenged this slogan.^[1] She asked whether this did not trap local activists solely in local interventions when in fact many of the causes being pursued locally now needed to be advanced in the range of global forums and processes that had become so influential. She argued that perhaps we need to turn this slogan on its head and instead to think locally and act globally.

Rajesh Tandon, the former chair of *CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation*, and I have recently suggested that social activists need to think “both locally and globally and act both locally and globally since the realities of globalisation now deprive us of the luxury of national parochialism.”^[2] Of course it must be conceded, that the original slogan is still confusing and is contested, since as Lisa Jordan and Peter van Tuijl note, “it suggests an inherent link between local actions and an aggregate global political clout of local actions which is far from evident”.^[3]

It is important therefore to recognise that civil society organisations are involved at the macro (governance), meso (policy) and micro (operational/delivery) levels in public life and specifically with regard to enhancing aid effectiveness. While most of civil society’s efforts are at the operational level, increasingly civil society organisations are offering citizens an opportunity to reflect on policy and try to shape it, in between election periods (where electoral democracy is in place) as well as trying to improve our very governance systems. The idea that democracy should be reduced to the singular act of voting is clearly flawed, as is the idea that all energy should be put into non-electoral politics.

^[1] I am grateful to Srilatha Batliwala for sharing with me her insights into discussions with DAWN circles.

^[2] Rajesh Tandon and Kumi Naidoo, Civil Society at the Millennium, (Kumarian Press, West Hartford, 1999), p.205

^[3] Peter van Tuijl and Lisa Jordan, “Political Responsibility in Transnational NGO Advocacy”, (Bank Information Centre, Washington, DC, 1999)

Full Speech, IVCO, Montreal, 18th September 2007

Jacques Jobin: Director, International Affairs Bureau,
City of Montréal

After Dinner Speech at the Archaeological Museum of Montréal

Mayor Tremblay has asked me to pass on his apologies. He is unable to be with us tonight, due to a commitment – made a long time ago – with the ICAO senior executives who are currently meeting here in Montreal. He would really have liked to meet and speak with all of you. We are very pleased and honoured that you have chosen Montreal as the host city for your meeting. On behalf of the mayor and myself, I wish to assure you of our friendship and our great admiration for the work you are doing.

As you are already aware, the city of Montreal is globally active with various international associations of municipalities as well as through joint activities with its twin cities, in particular Shanghai, China, and Port-au-Prince, Haiti. We are also actively involved in a *Leave for Change* program, through which our employees commit to short-term overseas missions, during which they share their expertise with their counterparts in other cities. We also work jointly with NGOs to facilitate access to missions of this nature for retirees in this city. It is our hope that we can, in this way, support the efforts of municipalities wishing to improve their management of both participative decision-making and service delivery. Responsible local governments that remain in touch with their citizens and deliver services competently are proof of an improved quality of life for their residents and represent a contribution to the States' political stability.

For the past few months, this city's mission has been put into a new context, defined by globalisation, that often goes hand in hand with a major trend to decentralisation, thus creating significant demand for expertise at the municipal level. We would like to target our practices more effectively and set up direct relationships between our employees and their counterparts, through the use of modern communication technologies.

The concept of overseas volunteer service has been around for a long time. It's more concrete development into its present form began in the mid-1960s, when young graduates were given opportunities to travel abroad. Our purpose, as we stated it at the time, was to travel to third-world countries in order to learn and to serve them. This area of cooperation has, without a doubt, grown to become one of the key players in international efforts to improve people's quality of life. In case some of the basic facts have been forgotten, however, I would like to highlight the results of voluntary action for most of those who offered their services during those early years:

- a sense of our economic differences often caused by unfair practices; this sense was accompanied by a profound conviction that all humans have the same basic needs;
- We know that the definition of development is often a reflection of our northern life styles as we promote our strengths and know-how and that is fine. On the other hand, by not always sharing our weaknesses we risk to see also included in this definition of development as we seem to have done:
 - o the right to abandon our elders,
 - o the right to see our children every so many weeks,

- o the right to create such solitudes that we accept unacceptable suicide rates,
- o the right to let a large proportions of the children in our countries to live under the poverty line;
- we know that no matter our colour or ethnicity, we all feel pain the same way and dying young is not acceptable;
- we know that our fellow citizens in our respective countries in the North are not always aware of the profound misery caused by our policies. Therefore shouldn't volunteer contracts upon returning, include public education activities;

But this is already known to you, and you are also aware that, faced with the highly lamentable situation in which many citizens of the world find themselves, we have a responsibility to continue to serve and to learn. We know that our volunteers must be warned that:

- rather than directing projects, they should be supporting local efforts they should understand and accept different modes of operation and behaviour, while adapting to the local population's work pace
- they must accept failure and see it as a learning opportunity
- they must take an interest in, respect and try to understand local culture
- they should encourage the selection of a counterpart for the duration of their volunteer service, to whom they can pass on their knowledge and experience in a concrete way.

Those are things we did not know in the sixties and even later and thus we are not arriving where we started from as was the title of one of the conferences. Because this short list of lessons learned contains the essence of success in international volunteer service; because in that field all is in the way the relation is built...tout est dans la manière as we said in SUCO at the end of the sixties. The technical skills needed to serve as a volunteer may have become greater but humans have remained the same and empathy, respect and commitment are essential ingredients in the success of a volunteer even to-day..

I would like to comment on the theme of your meeting, *Global Citizenship and Effective Aid*.

Those of us gathered in this room are often faced with the reality of global citizenship. We have been able to bridge distances and we know that the world is small enough that it can be circled if you sit in a plane long enough. This has helped us feel that we know the world and are global citizens. Moreover, citizens of the northern hemisphere spend a good part of the day watching television, and this sometimes leads them to believe that they know the rest of the world. Meanwhile, in many countries of the southern hemisphere where we work, their people either have no television and are occupied with merely surviving, or they do have television and try, through their imagination, to bridge the gap between their actual life experience and what they see on the screen.

Despite this impression – which I believe to be false, however – that globalisation makes us all citizens of the world, I would like to relate to you a short anecdote that nonetheless demonstrates the possibilities of a world that has now become accessible.

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Arriving Where We Started – International Volunteering Cooperation and Global Civil Society

Thanks to Brian and the organisers for the invitation. I'm delighted to be here and to join you in these important conversations.

As some of you know, I do have some experience (some "previous as they say") of international volunteer cooperation, having worked for VSO in London in the early 1980s, which occurred sometime between the Jurassic and the Cretaceous eras in the evolution of development NGOs. Much has changed since then – we are much bigger, better known, more sophisticated, and more influential, though not necessarily commensurately more effective in pursuing our mission, a point I'll return to later on.

Despite being caught up myself in the rapid expansion and professionalisation of the international NGO sector over the last 25 years, I kind of liked the old days, and in preparing what I wanted to say today I went back to a book that some of you may have read called "Arriving Where We Started: 25 Years of Voluntary Service Overseas." Brian will certainly remember it, since like me; he was involved in its production back in 1983, along with the VSO Anniversary Cookbook that taught me how to make ice cream from condensed milk in Zambia a few years later. My copy is tattered and torn nowadays, having followed me across five continents and many more changes of home and job, but I still have a soft spot for it. For one thing it was the first book I ever edited, so it has a special place in my heart, but more importantly it carries a message that has travelled with me across the years and remains very relevant today.

When I re-read the book, many of the volunteer experiences it relates did seem a little raw or unsophisticated by current NGO standards, but these stories also come over as solid, authentic and unpretentious in a way that is not true, I think, for a lot of our more recent efforts at development cooperation, and underlying them is a much deeper truth that is captured in the title, "Arriving Where we Started," though when I first heard Dick Bird suggest this title, I thought he was nuts! Dick, who I'm sure you also know, was even higher in the Byzantine VSO hierarchy at the time than Brian, so I didn't contradict. But to me it was just too obscure, not because I was unfamiliar with the poem it came from – everyone knows "Little Gidding" by T.S.Eliot – but because I couldn't understand the connection with volunteering. "We shall not cease from exploration, and the end of all our exploring, will be to arrive where we started, and know the place for the first time." Er, okay...

Then, when I talked to Dick about it and we drafted the book's Introduction, I began to see what he was getting at. "Through living and working overseas", it says, "to arrive at a better understanding of the way we live, to re-examine old ideas and question accepted attitudes, to explore, to arrive where we started, and know the place for the first time." In other words, at root our work is not about foreign aid or development "over there", or technical assistance or capacity-building (North-South, South-South or even South-North), though no doubt it contains elements of all these things, it's about the commitment we *all* share to approach life in a particular spirit – a spirit of equality, solidarity, love, respect, and constant, unceasing,

self-questioning and mutual support, what I called a spirit of “critical friendship” on the last page of another book I once wrote called “Future Positive” – “the loving but forceful encounters between equals who journey together towards the land of the true and the beautiful.”

Volunteering is really a way of concretising our embrace of a radically different way of being, living and acting in the world, wherever we happen to live and work, and whatever position we occupy in society. And that’s why it’s so important for our collective future – it’s the very foundation for making progress in every other area, the heart and soul of what I would call a “global civil society” in the deepest and most meaningful sense of those words.

It’s instructive that this attitude of mind – described as “active citizenship” by sociologists and political scientists in their studies of democracy, or the “searchers” that the economist Bill Easterly contrasts with the less-helpful “planners” and “healers” in his book “The White Man’s Burden” – has now become a central theme in the critique and reconstruction of development cooperation, but I also fear that this message has been lost sight of somewhat in the rush for growth and influence that has dominated the NGO landscape over the last two decades. So I think we need to reclaim it as central to our work going forward, work that encompasses all three elements of your conference program – improving aid effectiveness, strengthening NGO accountability, and promoting global citizenship. To explain what I mean, I want to go back into recent history and retrace our steps a little so that we are clear we started as development NGOs, and where we are now, before closing with some conclusions about ways forward, next steps, and future challenges. And if some of what I have to say seems a littler abstract or distant from the day-to-day management challenges you face in your organisations, please bear with me. It’s very important, I think, to take advantage of these rare opportunities to stand back and enjoy a different kind of conversation with each-other about our work, one that is not driven solely by short-term imperatives.

When I started working with development NGOs in the early 1980s we were a pretty marginal force in world affairs, so understandably the theme of much early research and strategy was ‘scaling-up’ - how can NGOs progress from improving local situations on a small scale to influencing the wider systems that create and reinforce poverty, either through working with government, operational expansion, lobbying and advocacy, or what was called networking and ‘self-spreading’ among local initiatives. The trajectory of most NGOs became oriented towards capacity building and advocacy as the most effective and least costly forms of scaling-up, what Alan Fowler later called the ‘onion-skin’ strategy – a solid core of concrete practice (whether direct project implementation, volunteering, financial or technical support to other organisations), surrounded by successive and inter-related layers of research and evaluation, advocacy and campaigning, and public education. To varying extents, this strategy has become standard practice for development NGOs in the intervening years, including most of the organisations represented in the room today.

By the mid-1990s, NGOs had indeed ‘scaled-up’ in an environment in which they were seen as important vehicles to deliver the political and economic objectives of the policy agendas that were being adopted by official donor agencies at the time – deeper democratisation through the growth of ‘civil society’, and more cost-effective delivery of development-related services such as micro-credit, health and community-driven development. As a result, many NGO budgets were financed increasingly by government aid, raising critical questions about performance, accountability, and relations with funding sources. So the key questions turned to the effects of these trends: will NGOs be co-opted into this policy agenda as the favoured child or magic bullet for development, and if so, what would that do to NGO mission and

relationships? Will they become 'too close to the powerful, and too far from the powerless'? This was the start you'll remember of the debate over NGO accountability that still rages today, sowing the seeds of a more fundamental critique of our role in development and social change.

By 2000, a rapidly changing global landscape had reframed and reinforced these questions in the context of emerging debates about globalisation, which was reshaping patterns of poverty, inequality and insecurity and called for greater global integration of NGO strategies and more 'development work' of different kinds in the North. Foreign aid was no longer seen as the key driver of international cooperation; instead, new rules, standards and institutions became the focus of attention, implying greater NGO involvement in the processes and institutions of global governance and constituency-building, and challenging us to re-orient our work towards mobilizing a genuinely inclusive civil society at all levels of the world system (as opposed to a thin layer of elite NGOs operating internationally), holding other, more powerful organisations accountable for their actions (whether governments, corporations or international institutions), and ensuring that the promise of new global standards and agreements could be translated into concrete benefits at the grassroots – all of which imply a shift from what was called 'development as delivery, to development as leverage.'

On the positive side of the balance sheet, I think development NGOs *did* heed this advice and have definitely helped to do the following:

- Change the terms of the debate about globalisation, leading to the emergence of a new orthodoxy about the need to manage the downside of this process, level the playing field, and expand 'policy space' for developing countries so that they can integrate into the global economy on favourable terms.
- Cement an intellectual commitment to participation and human rights as basic principles of development and development assistance, even if incomplete and imperfectly-translated into decision-making, and:
- Keep the spotlight on the need for reforms in international institutions on issues such as unfair terms of trade and investment, global warming, Africa, and the kind of warped humanitarian intervention represented by the war in Iraq

These advances have not been enough to *stop* such interventions or make G8 leaders honour the promises they made at Gleneagles in 2005, for example, but they are not insignificant achievements, and they were based very clearly I think on the emergence of a more thoughtful and professional development NGO sector between 1980 and today.

However, we can't think of recent history without acknowledging the effects of what happened on September 11th 2001, and what has happened since. Those events have had many consequences, but the one on which I want to focus concerns their role in reversing what had become a pretty consistent trend towards deep reform in the foreign aid system, and its replacement by a different, healthier and more effective system of international cooperation in which the drivers of development and change would no longer be based around North-South transfers and foreign intervention. Aid flows have rebounded dramatically since 9/11, and there is renewed support for aid across the political spectrum. Is this a good or a bad thing? That may seem an odd question in a conference like this, but I do think we have to recognise that the perseverance of the traditional aid paradigm, even in its modified version of Millennium Challenge Accounts, Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, International Finance

Facilities and the rest of the current paraphernalia of aid reform, makes any kind of quantum leap in NGO roles and impact much more difficult to achieve because it weakens the incentives for deep innovation by providing a continued 'security blanket' for current practice.

Of course, one can read this as a much more positive story, particularly when calls for aid are coupled with serious action on debt relief and trade justice. And I don't mean to imply that investment in developing countries is irrelevant – simply that is difficult to detach the dysfunctional aspects of the traditional aid paradigm from the injection of ever-larger amounts of money by powerful national interests into societies with weak institutions and fragile systems of accountability.

The point I want to emphasise is that our current record as development NGOs is less impressive when one delves below the surface of increased budgets and numbers, to investigate what is happening to the deeper drivers of social transformation:

- the power relations for example that continue to permeate societies worldwide through the media of class, gender and race;
- the challenges of internal change (changes in personal attitudes, values and behaviour) that underpin new economic and political practices on a mass scale;
- our connections with social movements that are more embedded in the political processes that are essential to sustained change;
- the rise of religion as one of the most powerful forces for change in the world today, for good and ill;
- downward accountability and the importance of generating diverse, local sources of funds for partner organisations (a weakness that underpins many other problems including legitimacy and political threats to organisations perceived as 'pawns of foreign interests');
- our continued tendency to internalize functions that should be distributed across other organisations – like local fundraising by international NGOs inside Southern countries, franchising global brands instead of supporting authentic expressions of indigenous civil society, and crowding out Southern participation in knowledge creation and advocacy in order to increase our own voice and profile, as if we as intermediaries are the only people with anything useful to say about world development.

When one measures NGO commitment (rather than rhetoric) to 'levelling the playing field', diversifying representation in the international arena, empowering marginalised voices, building the capacity of actors in the South for independent action, helping them to sustain themselves through indigenous resources, 'handing over the stick', becoming more responsive to beneficiaries, building constituencies for changes in global consumption and production patterns, and injecting real accountability into the international system, the results, in most cases, are decidedly unimpressive, yet we will never achieve the impact we want to achieve if our leverage over the drivers of long-term change continues to be weak.

One can read this story under the conventional rubric of institutional inertia, defensiveness and the difficulties of raising money for new and unfamiliar roles. But I think something more fundamental is going on. Underlying this situation is a much broader struggle between two visions of the future – one that I call 'international development,' and the other 'global civil society', for want of a better phrase.

The 'international development' vision is predicated on continued North-South transfers of resources and ideas as its centrepiece, temporarily under the umbrella of US hegemony and

its drive to engineer terrorism out of the world, if necessary by refashioning whole societies in the image of liberal, free-market democracy. This vision requires the expansion of traditional NGO roles in humanitarian assistance, the provision of social safety-nets, and 'civil society building' (crudely translated as support to advocacy and service-delivery NGOs). The role of the North is to 'help' the less-fortunate South; if possible, to 'save it' from drifting ever-further away from modernity, defined according to liberal democratic norms (heaven forbid there is a viable alternative, like Islam); and if that fails, then at least to 'prevent it' from wreaking havoc on Northern societies. The 'war on terror' exacerbates all the worst elements of the traditional foreign aid paradigm.

The 'Global Civil Society' vision, and here I'm exaggerating to make a point, takes its cue from cosmopolitan articulations of an international system in which international law trumps national interests, and countries – with increasingly direct involvement by their citizens – negotiate solutions to global problems through democratic principles, the fair sharing of burdens, respect for local context and autonomy, and a recognition of the genuinely interlocking nature of causes and effects in the contemporary world. And *this* vision, to be successful, requires action in all of the areas in which development NGOs have been found wanting, namely building the capacities of others for independent action, building our own capacities to shape the international environment in ways that make this easier, and building *all* our capacities to live a successful life of *inter*-dependence.

Prior to 9/11 I think most NGOs would have said that they were engaged in a more-or-less smooth transition from 'international development' to 'global civil society', but now the situation is not so clear-cut. So what to do?

I think the first thing to do is to rid ourselves once and for all of the North/South paradigm and the political economy of foreign aid, and replace it with a different framework rooted in an analysis of the common and interlocking patterns that promote or retard social transformation at all levels of the world system. In this frame, we all become actors in a constantly-unfolding critical conversation about our competing visions of the "good society." This doesn't mean you can't work in Africa anymore, or be blind to the fact that certain problems are more acute in certain parts of the world, or among particular groups.

You don't have to abandon thoughts of progress, or positive social change, or subscribe to a particular political worldview. All you have to do is to recognise that problems and solutions are not bounded by artificial definitions of geography or economic condition, and re-position yourselves as equal-minded participants in a set of common endeavours. Equality, let's remember, is the heart and soul of all healthy and successful relationships. A shift away from conventional thinking would generate a better understanding of causes and solutions since they are increasingly integrated across these borders, and revolve around common if differently-experienced patterns of change and the capacity to control it.

Recent examples that struck me include the rapidly-expanding global conversation about climate change (well-represented also in your discussions this week), research that shows that HIV infection rates are as high among certain groups of African-American women in the US as in sub-Saharan Africa, and for similar reasons; the erosion of public spheres in Latin America that are vital for democracy but are linked to decisions made by media barons thousands of miles away in Italy, Australia and the US; the adoption of participatory budgeting by the UK government last month that will give voters new powers to decide on public spending at the local level, inspired by the success of Porto Alegre in Brazil; and the

increasingly differentiated interests within the larger and faster-growing countries of the South like China, India, Brazil, and South Africa, which have per capita incomes approaching those of parts of Ukraine, Belarus, Appalachia and the Mississippi delta in the United States.

These countries are already influential actors on the global stage; no longer can they be treated as 'recipients.' Instead of encouraging Southern countries to copy the inefficient growth patterns of the North, why not collaborate in inventing new and better ways of combining economic, social, political and environmental objectives through transnational organising for deep, systemic change?

That's an attractive vision, I think, but to fulfil it we need to address the missing link in much of our efforts to date and get to grips with the drivers of social transformation at the deepest level. We already have a framework to do this, though it has been much neglected during the last 25 years, and it revolves around what Martin Luther King called the "love that does justice", by which he meant the cultivation of mutually-reinforcing spirals of change that link personal transformation to the creation and expansion of new institutions and practices in society, politics and the economy. Here's a story from one of King's students, Rev. Jim LaRue, that makes the same point in his own terms:

"There are millions who have had a memorable moment with Dr. King. Mine occurred while a student at Bucknell University in the late 1950's. Having come from a small south-eastern Pennsylvania town, I had no experience that would allow me to fully appreciate what was happening to him as the civil rights struggle he was leading started finding its way into the headlines of newspapers in the north. My formative moment came when he described the difference between love as expressed in personal acts of kindness and love expressed through social justice, and that one assumes the other. Helping someone in need fix their shelter can be a personal act of kindness, but if we do not address the poverty that created the conditions forced upon this person, we are not facing the whole truth. But if I am fighting for social justice and do not treat individuals (especially the enemy) with the respect they deserve, my justice is hollow, and without heart. Our life mission as humans must be to find how we can translate love into justice structures."

Translating "love into justice structures" – what a magnificent phrase, signifying the creation of systems of politics, economics and international cooperation that both build on and reinforce the personal qualities that will sustain their expansion and integration into the mainstream over the next many years. "Without a revolution of the spirit", says Aung Sang Suu Kyi, "the forces which produced the iniquities of the old order would continue to be operative, posing a constant threat to the process of reform and regeneration." This is not, I'll admit, the frame we currently use to analyse our role as development NGOs, but when you do start to use it in very concrete circumstances, as King did in relation to economic structures in the United States and the prosecution of the Vietnam War just before he was killed, I believe it can offer profound insights that help to move us far beyond the limitations of our current ways of thinking. Marrying a rich inner life dedicated to the cultivation of loving kindness and compassion with the practice of new forms of politics, economics and public policy is the key to social transformation.

In some ways, international volunteer cooperation agencies have been ahead of the curve on these issues, though they are not usually regarded as especially innovative by other development agencies. When I read the excellent papers prepared for this Forum I found a high degree of overlap with the themes I'm presenting this morning – recognising and advocating a diversity of models and approaches, but focused around a common set of

challenges and aspirations for the future, as in the move from technical assistance to institutional development and relationship-building, (quote) “grounded in an understanding that the current world order must change, and that much of that change must happen in the North.” Your rejection of the North-South divide and the emergence of South-South and South-North exchanges, and your attention to what Robert Chambers calls “the primacy of the personal” through the modality of people-to-people contact and solidarity, places you, I think, in a potentially-advantageous position relative to agencies that disburse large amounts of money, or who see their role primarily as advocates which can all too easily morph into speaking on behalf of others, with all the negative power dynamics that that implies.

I’m not saying that you have resolved these questions in any final sense – as you know better than me, that is untrue – but I do think that volunteering has evolved considerably since the early 1980s. I would encourage you to keep evolving, away from some critics have called the “non-profit” model of volunteering (i.e. gap-filling using unpaid labour), and towards a civil society model (i.e. volunteers as activists for social change who undertake joint activities and address common problems together). Given current trends to encourage the role of the non-profit sector in service-provision in place of government and to discourage deeper forms of social and political action, this is especially important. Returning to the point I made about authenticity and solidity at the start of my remarks, it is interesting to note that recent research in both the UK and US (and I suspect the same is true for Canada) shows that members of the public rate “authenticity” higher than “professionalism” among the qualities they want to see in voluntary organisations, defined in terms of compassion and loyalty to other human values rather than simple technical or managerial efficiency.

And in case you are wondering how all this relates to the specific themes of this conference, what I’ve tried to lay out is, when you think about it, a model for global citizenship (not dependent on North-South thinking and foreign aid but on the rights and responsibilities we share in co-creating a better future based on love and justice, wherever we may live); NGO accountability (not or not only to donors and government regulators but also to those with whom we work, in a spirit of critical friendship, mutual learning, equality and solidarity); and aid effectiveness (using our position and resources to affect deep, systemic, social transformation, rather than to deal with the symptoms of problems in ways that rarely produce long-term, sustainable changes in institutions, values and relationships).

The key to all of this, as Dick Bird counselled all those years ago, is always to explore, to “arrive where we started, and know the place for the first time” – through all our wanderings and our struggles and our halting experiments, our mistakes and our u-turns and our frustrations, to come to, recognise and be willing to act on a deeper understanding of life’s connections, and the possibilities we are offered through our work to transform ourselves and the world around us in ways that lift the heart and celebrate the spirit of our common humanity.

Good advice indeed from a wise and caring man and something that I hope will support and inspire you on your own journeys into a true and liberating global future. Thank you for listening, and I wish you all the very best for the remainder of your conference.

Summary of speaking notes, IVCO, Montreal, 18th September 2007

Kumi Naidoo: Secretary General and CEO, CIVICUS

Global Citizenship and Aid Effectiveness

It is rapidly becoming a truism that the old notion of governance, one which suggested governance was the exclusive domain of governments, is breaking down in an era of globalisation and with the emergence of a deepening 'democracy deficit' in several local and national contexts, and certainly at the global level. Surveys reveal declining levels of citizen trust in political institutions. In many democratic systems 'form' has largely overtaken the 'substance' of democracy: elections may be held, but fewer and fewer people are choosing to vote and the meaningful interface between citizens and the elected are minimal between election periods. Affiliation with traditional political parties is on the decline as the parties themselves are characterised by a lack of internal democracy or fail to address issues that citizens believe are important. The influence of monied interests in many political systems is also turning citizens away from traditional engagement in favour of new forms of participation.

Although faith in traditional political institutions is waning, this should not be taken as a sign of citizen apathy. On the contrary, people are finding new and more direct ways to get involved in public life and decision-making – marking a shift from representative democracy to what is often called participatory democracy. Citizens are arguing for a new notion of governance that requires political leadership to engage with citizenry in ways that allow for ongoing input into decision-making and policy formation.

While the space for civic participation in the global policy-making environment is growing, however, the overall picture overwhelmingly remains one where citizen voices are marginalised or are belatedly solicited after key decisions have been taken. The constrained status of civil society engagement can be seen in the case of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Although hundreds of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) actively campaign around the issues that have been targeted in the MDGs, there was no significant role for civil society in the development of these goals. If the Millennium Goals are to be achieved, ordinary citizens around the world must feel a true sense of ownership and must be willing to campaign to hold their governments accountable to them. This can only happen if the MDGs are 'owned' by the people and not appropriated by elements of the international system.

During the 1980s many activists around the world embraced a simple but evocative slogan: "Think Globally Act Locally". The message: in acting at the local level, one needed to understand how global forces impacted local reality. In short, trying to tackle local issues without understanding the ever-increasing power of global processes, global discourses and global institutions was tactically inappropriate.

By the mid-1990s, activists, particularly from the global south, began to question this logic. Devaki Jain, for example, one of the founders of *Development Alternatives of Women in a New Era (DAWN)*, a grouping from the poor countries of the world, challenged this slogan.^[1] She asked whether this did not trap local activists solely in local interventions when in fact many of the causes being pursued locally now needed to be advanced in the range of global forums and processes that had become so influential. She argued that perhaps we need to turn this slogan on its head and instead to think locally and act globally.

Rajesh Tandon, the former chair of *CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation*, and I have recently suggested that social activists need to think “both locally and globally and act both locally and globally since the realities of globalisation now deprive us of the luxury of national parochialism.”^[2] Of course it must be conceded, that the original slogan is still confusing and is contested, since as Lisa Jordan and Peter van Tuijl note, “it suggests an inherent link between local actions and an aggregate global political clout of local actions which is far from evident”.^[3]

It is important therefore to recognise that civil society organisations are involved at the macro (governance), meso (policy) and micro (operational/delivery) levels in public life and specifically with regard to enhancing aid effectiveness. While most of civil society’s efforts are at the operational level, increasingly civil society organisations are offering citizens an opportunity to reflect on policy and try to shape it, in between election periods (where electoral democracy is in place) as well as trying to improve our very governance systems. The idea that democracy should be reduced to the singular act of voting is clearly flawed, as is the idea that all energy should be put into non-electoral politics.

^[1] I am grateful to Srilatha Batliwala for sharing with me her insights into discussions with DAWN circles.

^[2] Rajesh Tandon and Kumi Naidoo, Civil Society at the Millennium, (Kumarian Press, West Hartford, 1999), p.205

^[3] Peter van Tuijl and Lisa Jordan, “Political Responsibility in Transnational NGO Advocacy”, (Bank Information Centre, Washington, DC, 1999)

Full Speech, IVCO, Montreal, 18th September 2007

Jacques Jobin: Director, International Affairs Bureau,
City of Montréal

After Dinner Speech at the Archaeological Museum of Montréal

Mayor Tremblay has asked me to pass on his apologies. He is unable to be with us tonight, due to a commitment – made a long time ago – with the ICAO senior executives who are currently meeting here in Montreal. He would really have liked to meet and speak with all of you. We are very pleased and honoured that you have chosen Montreal as the host city for your meeting. On behalf of the mayor and myself, I wish to assure you of our friendship and our great admiration for the work you are doing.

As you are already aware, the city of Montreal is globally active with various international associations of municipalities as well as through joint activities with its twin cities, in particular Shanghai, China, and Port-au-Prince, Haiti. We are also actively involved in a *Leave for Change* program, through which our employees commit to short-term overseas missions, during which they share their expertise with their counterparts in other cities. We also work jointly with NGOs to facilitate access to missions of this nature for retirees in this city. It is our hope that we can, in this way, support the efforts of municipalities wishing to improve their management of both participative decision-making and service delivery. Responsible local governments that remain in touch with their citizens and deliver services competently are proof of an improved quality of life for their residents and represent a contribution to the States' political stability.

For the past few months, this city's mission has been put into a new context, defined by globalisation, that often goes hand in hand with a major trend to decentralisation, thus creating significant demand for expertise at the municipal level. We would like to target our practices more effectively and set up direct relationships between our employees and their counterparts, through the use of modern communication technologies.

The concept of overseas volunteer service has been around for a long time. It's more concrete development into its present form began in the mid-1960s, when young graduates were given opportunities to travel abroad. Our purpose, as we stated it at the time, was to travel to third-world countries in order to learn and to serve them. This area of cooperation has, without a doubt, grown to become one of the key players in international efforts to improve people's quality of life. In case some of the basic facts have been forgotten, however, I would like to highlight the results of voluntary action for most of those who offered their services during those early years:

- a sense of our economic differences often caused by unfair practices; this sense was accompanied by a profound conviction that all humans have the same basic needs;
- We know that the definition of development is often a reflection of our northern life styles as we promote our strengths and know-how and that is fine. On the other hand, by not always sharing our weaknesses we risk to see also included in this definition of development as we seem to have done:
 - o the right to abandon our elders,
 - o the right to see our children every so many weeks,

- o the right to create such solitudes that we accept unacceptable suicide rates,
 - o the right to let a large proportions of the children in our countries to live under the poverty line;
- we know that no matter our colour or ethnicity, we all feel pain the same way and dying young is not acceptable;
- we know that our fellow citizens in our respective countries in the North are not always aware of the profound misery caused by our policies. Therefore shouldn't volunteer contracts upon returning, include public education activities;

But this is already known to you, and you are also aware that, faced with the highly lamentable situation in which many citizens of the world find themselves, we have a responsibility to continue to serve and to learn. We know that our volunteers must be warned that:

- rather than directing projects, they should be supporting local efforts they should understand and accept different modes of operation and behaviour, while adapting to the local population's work pace
- they must accept failure and see it as a learning opportunity
- they must take an interest in, respect and try to understand local culture
- they should encourage the selection of a counterpart for the duration of their volunteer service, to whom they can pass on their knowledge and experience in a concrete way.

Those are things we did not know in the sixties and even later and thus we are not arriving where we started from as was the title of one of the conferences. Because this short list of lessons learned contains the essence of success in international volunteer service; because in that field all is in the way the relation is built...tout est dans la manière as we said in SUCO at the end of the sixties. The technical skills needed to serve as a volunteer may have become greater but humans have remained the same and empathy, respect and commitment are essential ingredients in the success of a volunteer even to-day..

I would like to comment on the theme of your meeting, *Global Citizenship and Effective Aid*.

Those of us gathered in this room are often faced with the reality of global citizenship. We have been able to bridge distances and we know that the world is small enough that it can be circled if you sit in a plane long enough. This has helped us feel that we know the world and are global citizens. Moreover, citizens of the northern hemisphere spend a good part of the day watching television, and this sometimes leads them to believe that they know the rest of the world. Meanwhile, in many countries of the southern hemisphere where we work, their people either have no television and are occupied with merely surviving, or they do have television and try, through their imagination, to bridge the gap between their actual life experience and what they see on the screen.