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# A Dialogue for Change

by Clay Constantinou

In an address to the United Nations General Assembly in September 1998, President Mohammed Khatami of Iran put forth an urgent call for a “dialogue among civilizations,” with the hope that this endeavor would begin a process to replace hostility and confrontation with discourse and understanding.

Following President Khatami’s proposal, the General Assembly unanimously proclaimed 2001 as the UN Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. To further support this dialogue, Secretary-General Kofi Annan has invited an international panel of eminent persons to look closely at issues of identity, diversity, and intergroup relations, and has designated former chief United Nations hostage negotiator and under-secretary-general Giandomenico Picco as his personal representative to lead this effort.

Mr. Picco and the panel of eminent persons are working in close partnership with the School of Diplomacy and International Relations, which was designated as the Secretariat for this initiative. This process of research and international discourse will result in an important publication, which will be presented to Secretary-General Kofi Annan. The secretary-general will then convey this publication to the UN General Assembly at a special session on December 3 and 4, 2001. We are pleased to publish in this issue Mr. Picco’s reflections on the dialogue among civilizations as he leads this historic process forward.

The School of Diplomacy and International Relations is deeply honored to publish the contributions of the distinguished authors in our special section on Evolving Institutions and Transatlantic Relations. As influential and prominent government leaders of the European Union and the United States, they offer a unique insight into how cooperation can be achieved across the Atlantic.

This has been a truly extraordinary year for the School of Diplomacy. Our student body, representing more than forty countries and speaking more than thirty languages, has grown to nearly 250 strong. Whether serving as a forum for heads of state or working with the United Nations as an affiliated nongovernmental organization, our school has gained much prestige and recognition. We will continue to enhance our programs and to provide a high-quality and well-rounded learning environment for our students.

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Amb. Clay Constantinou (Ret.) is dean of the School of Diplomacy and International Relations at Seton Hall University.