

Caux, 23 July 2008



Interview with Dr Scilla Elworthy, Chair, Peace Direct, who was a panelist on the theme, ‘How can we understand better the underlying causes of armed conflict?’ **Philipp Thüler**, from the magazine *Caux Information*, met her during the Forum.

Philipp: Is it the first time in Caux for you? What did you expect?

Scilla: At my institute in Oxford we researched the most effective interventions to prevent or resolve conflict. Out of 250 that we analyzed, we picked 50 for a book of case studies. The only organisation that has two in that book was Caux. I knew about MRA from years ago but I had no idea of how hands-on this work was, and I was very very impressed. Paul van Tongeren recommended that I come. He does not waste his time and I thought if he recommends this, it won't waste my time.

For me to put aside six days – because I don't fly if I can help it – it has to be special. And it has completely met my expectations, in fact more. Often this kind of gathering can be a talkshow, going nowhere. But the way it is shaping up, it's going to lead to more concrete ways of making sure that human security becomes understood by governments, and that concrete actions are taken by governments in the human security area. I think what is unique about this group of people is two things: they recognize the need to combine the head and the heart, the intelligence and the spiritual side. Nearly all presentations that I've seen here have stressed that link without being heavy-handed about it. And you have a fantastic network throughout the world now, and 60 years or more of history. Anything that lasts that long and keeps growing must have authority. Your network has grown and grown, you have a lot of young people here and there's a culture of sharing and openness. My impression is that people here walk the talk, they behave in the manner that they are advocating.

P: One of the aims of this forum is to contribute towards changing the traditional logic of diplomacy... Do you think this is possible?

S: I think if the Forum wants to get into the public policy on human security, you need to have a lot more government officials but that's not difficult to do. I run the Oxford Research Group. We invited people who were policy makers on nuclear weapons – those who designed or paid for nuclear weapons or built them or strategized with them – to spend three days talking with their critics from Greenpeace and peace organisations. That's not exactly inviting. But word of mouth got around and people learned through their colleagues that it was non-confrontational and they learned a lot. So the word got around that it is worth going to. I'm sure that can be done here too.

P: What do you think about the IofC practice of quiet times?

I'm very relaxed with that. I do that a lot in my own meetings. If I'm making an hour speech, I think it's far too long for somebody to listen for an hour so, I break it up with silence or the possibility that everybody can talk with his or her neighbour...

P: Will you come back?

S: If I'm invited. I got quite a shock at the level of awareness particularly amongst the colleagues from

Africa, the sophistication of their analysis. I felt very humble in face of their knowledge and I was reminded once again that I have a lot to learn.

Dr. Scilla Elworthy

Dr. Scilla Elworthy founded the Oxford Research Group in 1982 to develop effective dialogue between nuclear weapons policy-makers worldwide and their critics. For this she was awarded the Niwano Peace Prize in 2003 and nominated three times for the Nobel Peace Prize. In 2003, she founded Peace Direct to fund, promote and learn from peace-builders in conflict areas. Peace Direct was named 'Best New Charity' at the Charity Awards 2005. Since 2005 she has been an adviser to The Elders initiative, and in 2007 was appointed a member of the World Future Council and of the International Task Force on Preventive Diplomacy. Her most recent book is *Making Terrorism History*, co-authored with Gabrielle Rifkind.