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UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER TO BE WORLD LEADER IN CONFLICT RESOLUTION

It has been announced that the University of Ulster has signed a major agreement with the Tokyo based United Nations University to establish phase one of a unique centre in Northern Ireland for the study of worldwide ethnic conflict.

UU Vice-Chancellor Professor Trevor Smith and UNU Rector Professor Heitor Gurgulino de Souza were joint signatories to the agreement which outlines a series of events to take place in Northern Ireland in 1993 funded to a total of $500,000.

Professor Smith said: "The creation of a major international centre for training and research into the management and resolution of ethnic conflict is of paramount importance. As Secretary-General, Boutros Ghali, has recognised it is the most important issue on the current agenda of the United Nations. Given our strong track record in this area the University of Ulster is well suited to establish the centre, while its ultimate location in Londonderry at our Magee College campus is equally appropriate."

Professor Smith travelled to Japan with Professor John Darby, Director of the Ethnic Studies Network at UU to copperfasten phase one of the long term project which will start life in the University's Coleraine campus but will eventually be sited at the Magee College campus, Londonderry. Professor Darby will be director of the joint programme on conflict resolution and ethnicity, and will also be responsible for the UNU's programmes on conflict resolution and governance from 1993.

"We are excited and honoured with this engagement with the United Nations University which will greatly enhance the work of the University of Ulster in the fields of conflict research and resolution.

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"This agreement gives us an international mandate to bring together experts in ethnic conflict from every continent. The issue is a particularly contentious one and among the questions we will be asking is how people should be trained to deal with this," said Professor Darby.

The activities planned for 1993 include:

(a) An international workshop on "Approaches to training in conflict resolution" bringing together invited international experts in the field of training to develop training approaches to conflict resolution and ethnicity.

(b) An international workshop on "Research needs in conflict studies" bringing together international experts on conflict research to draw up an international research programme.

(c) Two books to be published jointly by UU and UNU
The first will be called "Conflict and Change" and will comprise selected and edited papers from the first conference of the Ethnic Studies Network, held in Coleraine in June 1992.

The second "Training and Research provision on conflict and conflict resolution" will bring together ethnic conflict research in Latin America, Northern Africa, India, South Asia and the countries of the old Soviet Union

(d) A joint venture on conflict resolution and governance involving the Barcelona based UNU group

(e) Research into preparations for United Nations Peace Keeping operations to be carried out in collaboration with the Department of Peace Studies, Limerick.

The $500,000 funding agreed so far is provided by the two universities and external funding bodies. Negotiations have already started with funding bodies to secure support for the second phase which should be cemented in 1993.

The project will be formally presented for approval to the Council of United Nations University at its February 1993 meeting in Tokyo.

-ENDS-

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Notes:

The agreement follows an earlier meeting at the University of Ulster's Magee College campus of 24 experts from a variety of countries experiencing ethnic or racial problems, including Croatia, Great Britain, India, Israel, Mexico, Russia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka and the United States. The meeting, which was attended by three members of the UNU senior staff, approved a feasibility study outlining the programme. The programme will coordinate the United Nations University's existing work on ethnic conflict and provide a focus for training and research into ethnicity. The two universities confirmed their willingness to locate a major programme on Conflict Resolution and Ethnicity (CORE) in Northern Ireland.

The feasibility study report, commissioned by the United Nations University, which has its headquarters in Tokyo, was carried out from the Centre for the Study of Conflict at the University of Ulster. The feasibility study was written by an international Planning Study Team comprising:

Professor John Darby, University of Ulster (Chair)
Professor Seamus Dunn, University of Ulster
Professor Enda McDonagh, Maynooth University, Irish Republic;
Dr Peter Shikhirev, Academy of Sciences, Moscow
Dr Rodolfo Stavenhagen, Colegio De Mexico, Mexico
Dr Anjoo Upadhyaya, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, India

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A view of the development of the UU/UNU programme

Ethnic conflict and its resolution is at the top of the agenda of Secretary-General Dr. Boutros Ghali and the United Nations Organisation. The increasing outbreaks of civil disturbance, often based on ethnic division, means that there is likely to be in excess of 100 million refugees in the world by the year 2000 AD. These developments are putting an enormous strain on the work of the United Nations not just in economic and personnel terms (the raising of Peace Keeping Operations forces) but also in how to respond to them in a more cost-effective (i.e. preventive) way. It is timely therefore that the UU/UNU programme is being developed.

The joint programme between UU and UNU is not only timely it is also very appropriate. UU, through the development of its Centre for the Study of Conflict and its International Ethnic Studies Network has the academic and local creditability to underpin the programme: the UNU provides the global mandate. The complementarity is obvious. The general location for the main Centre in Northern Ireland is also highly appropriate given the long term nature of its own divided society; the ultimate location close to the Magee College campus of the University in Derry City adds a specific poignancy of its own.

The joint UU/UNU programme is for six years starting in 1993. The first year will be by way of preparation: this will take the form of a series of conferences and seminars involving international experts from all quarters of the globe which will determine the appropriate research programmes to be undertaken and how best to provide practical training to those involved in the prevention, containment and resolution of ethnic conflict. This year will also see the start of two new projects: one, in collaboration with the University of Limerick and the UNU, on United Nations Peacekeeping Operations; the other, a joint project with the new UNU Centre on Governance in Barcelona, on comparative methodology. Although the global problems of ethnic conflict are very pressing there is no quick-fix. It will be necessary to call upon existing expertise, to analyse and where necessary adapt existing techniques, and to develop new mechanisms for dealing with the problem; in particular a priority will be for the identification of early warning signs and concomitant preventative measures to ideally prevent or at least contain new outbreaks of conflagration. The aim of this introductory period will be to prepare adequately a combined programme of research and training for the following

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five years. It will also be a period when UU, with the assistance of UNU, will seek the necessary funding for the next phase.

The second phase will see the development of a Centre in Derry City close to the Magee College campus. It is intended that this will provide training for initially three cohorts per year of thirty participants. They will come for a period of between two and three months where they will be taught by and interact with a series of permanent and visiting faculty all of whom will be leading experts in the subject. It is intended that the Centre at Derry will facilitate the establishment of three or four satellite Centres based in Eastern Europe, Southern Africa, Asia and Latin America. In the fullness of time these Centres will act as regional partners with the UU Centre at Derry. It is envisaged that those attending the UU Centre will on "passing out" continue their association through these other regional Centres in due course. Training materials will include distance learning packages and in this regard it is hoped to engage the expertise of the Open University which in effect with become the technical satellite of what will be a worldwide network.

It is proposed to create an international advisory committee of experts to oversee and advise on the development of both the research and training programmes. Eminent statesmen, former commanders of UNO PKOs and academics will be invited to join the committee.

One feature of the programme which will make it distinct from other such activities will be the inclusion of the role that economic regeneration can play in dealing with ethnic conflict. Certainly the UU/UNU Centre will be looking at developing the techniques for the early warning, containment and resolution of ethnic conflict but included within this will be an economic and industrial element. The role of agricultural and industrial cooperatives (e.g. Mondragon) will be examined together with the role of para-state agencies which mediate the interface between the private and public sectors (and here the island of Ireland has a considerable experience). Academically speaking this is a relatively uncharted area and accordingly would be part of the focus of attention in the preliminary stage to see how the economic and industrial element can be progressed as part of the whole repertoire of tools and techniques in containment and resolution strategies.

Funding: the UU/UNU programme will require funding from both governmental, inter-governmental and foundation sources. Already in

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principle Derry City Council has indicated a willingness to consider handing over Aberfoyle House to accommodate the Centre in Derry. This is next door to the Magee College campus. Over the next two years UU will be seeking both core funding and project funding from a variety of sources. Money has already been obtained for the first year of the preliminary phase and it is expected that other sources will be identified to pay for the second year of that phase. The second phase covering the following five years will require an overall budget of some $40m. Given the magnitude of the problems to be addressed this is a relatively small sum (it does not include money for the setting up of the four regional centres). A fully costed and detailed budget is currently being drawn up. It is envisaged that fifty per cent of funding will come from government and intergovernmental agencies, and fifty per cent from trusts, foundations and private sector sponsors.

PROFESSOR TREVOR SMITH
Vice-Chancellor
University of Ulster

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