

## **Welcome Address**

Ignaz Bender, President of ICHE  
Chancellor em. of the University of Trier, Germany

Excellency, ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to welcome you on behalf of the ICHE Steering Committee to the 24<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Higher Education here in the famous University Club New York – a club dedicated, according to its charter, “to promote literature and art”, important elements of humanistic education, our conference topic.

Thanks to Ali Dogramaci, son of the renowned Ihsan Dogramaci, the founder of our Conference decades ago, we have the chance to meet again and to welcome outstanding participants.

My first welcome goes to the Minister of Justice of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, his Excellency Sinan Çelebi. We are happy to have you here. It gives us the chance to hear your views and to exchange experiences with you. We express our respect for how your people and your country are creating a civil society under difficult political conditions and among unfriendly neighbors. We admire the courage, the energy and the endurance in your fight against the terroristic “Islamic State (IS)”.

Higher Education people all over the world are shocked at how IS is imposing a horrible university system. Departments are closed in philosophy, in liberal arts, in history, in languages, in psychology, in political sciences, economics, business management. Grounds and buildings are transformed into barracks. Professors and students who oppose are whipped or executed. In your presence, Excellency, we express our solidarity with all those who contribute to end this hell for the universities.

Please allow me in this context to make a general remark. Our traditional tools to stop terrorism and war are no longer suitable and helpful. Every day we hear of new humiliations of man’s dignity. If we do not want to live the next hundred years in fear we must enable mankind to overcome its global weaknesses: weakness in the face of terrorism, weakness in the face of civil and international wars, weakness in the face of the increasing production of weapons, helplessness against the expulsion and flight of millions of people, the widespread poverty and joblessness (the reason why many youngsters leave their homes), the helplessness against illiteracy of millions, particularly of girls, and the hopelessness of children and their parents to have a better life one day.

What is needed is a global constitutional change. The 195 sovereign states must give up a minimum of sovereignty to enable a minimum of world order. We need a legitimate and controlled world authority to stop the violence, the oppression of human rights and human dignity by sovereign states or terroristic groups, an authority based on principles like the rule of law, free elections, subsidiarity and global solidarity. A final point of power must be

guaranteed by an independent world constitutional court. A vision – yes – but I hope it can be realized one day.

Back to our conference.

This Conference is meeting for the third time in North America: 1992 in Washington DC, 1995 in Halifax (Canada) and now 2015 here in New York. The Halifax meeting debated questions of “Balancing Teaching and Research”, the conference in Washington the problems of “Funding in Higher Education”. With pride we remember the success of the Washington meeting. The results were printed as a book comparing various international forms of university financing. Both editors of this publication *The Funding of Higher Education* (Garland, New York, 1993) are today here with us. Welcome, Phil Altbach and Bruce Johnstone, with many thanks for your tremendous editorial work to keep the outcomes of our Conference alive. In one of our panels here in New York we will come back to this topic and debate questions of cost sharing and different sources of university funding.

The Conference of this year will concentrate on special aspects of education under the title “Quality of Undergraduate Education”. As we live in a time of widespread specialization, students in engineering, technology, computer science, biology, physics, chemistry, and medicine, but also in psychology and business management, often show lacks in general education. The problem is not new. Let me give an example.

After World War II British and American scientists demanded more liberal arts education at the German Institutes of Technology in Berlin, Aachen, Hannover, Munich, Stuttgart, etc. The German engineers who supported the Nazi War with their technological knowledge were considered intellectually unscrupulous elements without respect for human personality and dignity. The result of the debate was that the Institutes of Technology received chairs for philosophy, history, political science. Never again should students be educated without philosophical or historical background.

Let me now at the beginning of our New York meeting express my thanks to all who contributed to make this New York Conference a reality, namely Ali Dogramaci and Phyllis Erdogan. They worked for months to prepare a good meeting in this splendid setting, and to attract prominent participants like Nobel Laureate Harold Varmus. A warm welcome to Harold in particular.

Welcome to all of you, coming from near and far. May our coming together bring good contributions, debates and a fruitful exchange of views and experiences. Thank you.