

Monique Seefried's introduction
2008 Peterson Lecture

Your Highness the Aga Khan; Members of the Consular Corps; representatives of the Ismaili community and the government of Georgia; representatives of universities and IB World Schools worldwide; attendees of the Global Language Convention viewing this Lecture via simulcast; teachers and students of North Atlanta High School, the hosts of this special meeting, members of the Georgia Association of World Schools, IB Board and staff members, ladies and gentlemen, friends and colleagues, my warmest welcome to this 2008 Peterson Lecture.

The fact that this year's Peterson Lecture is being held in Atlanta, and in an IB World School at that, is of special significance, both to me personally and to the IB.

My adopted city of Atlanta, as many of you know, is where my children were raised and educated, where I have for many years been engaged with Emory University and the Carlos Museum, the Atlanta International School, and where I founded the Center for the Advancement and Study of International Education (CASIE) here to promote multi-language programmes and international

understanding in K-12 schools in the United States. Over the years I have been witness to the growth of the IB in Atlanta and Georgia as more and more students of different ages and backgrounds have gained access to the quality and values of IB programmes. For those of you who are unfamiliar with the nearby schools, I invite you to visit the exhibition of student work later on during the reception, and talk to some of the students who have come along.

In previous years of course we have held the Peterson Lecture in some historic locations; including the Château de Coppet and the International Conference Centre in Geneva; but hosting it on this occasion in an IB World School, and an IB World School in Atlanta, is a valuable reminder of what the IB is really all about: IB students and the impact that they are making, the impact they will make, on the world around them.

Looking at the banners and publications around you, you will have realized that this year, 2008, is also the 40th anniversary of the creation of the IB Diploma Programme. We are honoured to have here with us today various pioneers and contributors to the IB, in the early years when it started out as the “diploma project” and

was taught in a handful of schools, and then growing and expanding through the years to a point where we have three programmes covering K-12 being taught to over half a million students in over 2,200 schools in 126 countries around the world; I offer a special word of welcome to the former director general Roger Peel and president of the Council of Foundation Greg Crafter here present, as well as former members of governance, management and heads of schools who have travelled considerable distances to be here with us to celebrate this important event. I would also like to give a very special thank you to North Atlanta High School, its staff as well as its IB and ROTC students for hosting us here today as well as the Georgia Association of IB World Schools, and the 40 schools that have turned this event into a real celebration and have prepared an exhibition for us all to see what an IB education can inspire them to do.

Since this is the fortieth anniversary of the IB, and we are in Atlanta, let us travel back to the city in 1968. The United States, the world, is witnessing the turmoil of friction and unrest while looking to an uncertain future. Atlanta is a segregated city in a

segregated country. Most entrenched of all is the segregation of education—the unjust law that kept young people separate from one another in schools. And along comes Atlanta-born Martin Luther King, Jr., the harbinger of hope for millions of Americans. 1968 is the year he was assassinated, but not before he changed the face of the world. Martin Luther King's philosophy of non-violence was partly influenced by the work of Mahatma Gandhi; and he was also interested in Gandhi's theories about the need for education to be based on the fundamental assumption of the goodness of human beings and an awareness of the impact of all actions on oneself, society and nature. Education was so important in Dr. King's life. He showed a lifelong love of learning through formal education, entering Morehouse College at the young age of fifteen and culminating in his doctoral studies at Boston University where he became a Doctor of Philosophy; and informally starting with the values instilled in him by his father and close family, and through the influences of key figures such as Howard Thurman.

1968 is the year that the IB is founded; by a small group of resolute, forward-looking men and women searching for

international peace, searching for the means to educate young people to become the next harbingers of hope. Men and women who had lived through the world wars and knew that children were the only hope. People of vision.

Thanks to their vision we can offer young people today the gift of a high quality IB education; an education that derives its quality from its values as well as from its high standards, high standards that can be reached by anyone who is motivated. We all know that motivation may be intrinsic, but so often it comes from motivated teachers, teachers who love what they teach, care so much for their students that they are able to transmit to them the love of what they teach, the love of learning. IB teachers are at the core of the IB's success, they are the ones instilling in our students the knowledge and the values that will allow them to build tomorrow's world and to transmit the message of peace and understanding that is so paramount in an IB education.

One of the ways in which they can already begin to build this future is through the IB community theme of "sharing our humanity". Not only do students in IB World Schools learn from one another in

their classrooms—as an example of school practice—but also from fellow students located in any of 126 countries around the world through the IB community theme website; learning and collaborating on topics such as global poverty, peace and conflict and the digital divide.

Among those IB students, we already have and will have soon many more motivated students from a network of Aga Khan Academies, world-class schools spread across part of the developing world. These day and boarding schools, 18 are in the pipeline right now, are welcoming students of all backgrounds and faiths, regardless of their financial abilities in South and Central Asia, Africa and the Middle East. At the head of this remarkable initiative is His Highness the Aga Khan, our esteemed Peterson Lecture speaker today.

I feel so extremely honoured to welcome His Highness to speak at this 2008 Peterson Lecture, during a visit to the USA that commemorates His Golden Jubilee Year. To have him find the time to speak to us today speaks so highly about his commitment

to education and his respect for the IB. Before he comes to the podium, allow me to introduce Him to you.

His Highness the Aga Khan became Imam of the Shia Ismaili Muslims on July 11, 1957 at the age of 20, succeeding his grandfather, Sir Sultan Mahomed Shah Aga Khan. He is the 49th hereditary Imam of the Shia Ismaili Muslims and a direct descendant of the Prophet Muhammad (God's peace be his) through his cousin and son-in-law, Ali, the first Imam, and his wife Fatima, the Prophet's daughter. The Aga Khan was born on December 13, 1936, in Geneva and spent his early childhood in Nairobi, Kenya, and then attended for nine years Le Rosey School in Switzerland. Le Rosey is now an IB school and its headmaster, Michael Robert Gray, is with us via simulcast from the Global Language Conference where he just finished, very appropriately, presenting a session entitled: Boarding School Babel: A Model for a Multilingual International Learning Environment. After studying at le Rosey, His Highness graduated from Harvard University in 1959 with a BA Honors Degree in Islamic history.

Like his grandfather Sir Sultan Mahomed Shah Aga Khan before him, the Aga Khan has, since assuming the office of Imam in 1957, been concerned about the well-being of all Muslims, particularly in the face of the challenges of rapid historical changes. Today, the Ismailis live in some 25 countries, mainly in South and Central Asia, Africa and the Middle East, as well as in North America and Western Europe. Over the four decades since the present Aga Khan became Imam, there have been major political and economic changes in most of these areas. He has adapted the complex system of administering the Ismaili Community, pioneered by his grandfather during the colonial era, to a new world of nation-states, which has grown in size and complexity following the independence of the Central Asian Republics of the former Soviet Union.

The Aga Khan has emphasized the view of Islam as a thinking, spiritual faith: one that teaches compassion and tolerance and that upholds the dignity of man, God's noblest creation. In the Shia tradition of Islam, it is the mandate of the Imam to safeguard the individual's right to personal intellectual search and to give practical expression to the ethical vision of society that the Islamic

message inspires. In following the wisdom of God's final Prophet in seeking new solutions for problems, which could not be solved by traditional methods, Muslims should be guided to conceive a truly modern and dynamic society, without affecting the fundamental concepts of Islam.

It is for me not only as chairman of the IB board but also personally an incredible honour to be able to introduce His Highness to you. As some of you may know, I was born in Carthage and as a child I spent many summers in Tunisia in the care of the Ben Romdane family. Dr Ben Romdane called me his third daughter, I thought of him as my adoptive father. He took me often to visit Madhia, the first capital of the Fatimid dynasty, from where the ancestors of the Aga Khan started to rule over the Maghreb, Egypt and part of the Middle East for several centuries. It is in Egypt that they founded the oldest university in the world, the university of Al Azhar. There, the Muslim world preserved the acquisitions of the Greek and Roman world and gave it back to the West that had lost much of it during the Dark Ages following the Barbarian invasions. Growing up, I also recall learning about the accomplishments of the Ismaili community in many charitable hospitals and schools in Eastern

Africa under the leadership of His Highness' grandfather, who, years before, as President of the League of Nations had an early connection with the International School of Geneva and the ideals that gave birth to the International Baccalaureate. Much later, during my professional life as a university professor and museum curator, I witnessed and admired the remarkable work the present Aga Khan instigated in architecture conservation and in the study and conservation of Islamic art through generous grants.

Now as chairman of the IB Board of Governors, I am in the fortunate position of being able to support an important initiative to widen access to IB programmes among students in developing countries who might not normally have the possibility of attending an IB World School. This is happening thanks to the personal commitment of his Highness the Aga Khan.

Driven by the conviction that home-grown intellectual leadership of exceptional calibre is the best driver of society's future development, and that many developing-country education systems are too engulfed by poverty and numbers to develop their talented young people, He has founded the Aga Khan Academies, the first of which opened in Mombasa, Kenya, in 2003; all

Academies are to be located in countries in Africa, South and Central Asia, and the Middle East and as I told you before, they are open to all youngsters who care to apply themselves, regardless of their religious or financial background. The Aga Khan Academies will be an integrated network of residential schools offering girls and boys an international standard of education from pre-primary to secondary levels with a rigorous academic and leadership-development experience. The Aga Khan Academies education is built on the framework of our IB programmes which align with the values of the Aga Khan Development Network in that they are intended to foster an ethical and public-minded approach and give emphasis to the concepts of meritocracy, pluralism, and civil society. This collaboration between the Aga Khan Academies and the IB will benefit both organizations and therefore all IB students. While we celebrate our 40th anniversary, it is very important for the IB to encompass all cultures and to be proud of its international name. While we strive to instil our programs with international mindedness and literacy, we are still seen as a very Western education system. I am so happy that at a stage when the IB reaches its full maturity, it is working together with the Aga Khan Academies, and will benefit

from the education resources of the Universities, case studies in development and the cultural assets of the Aga Khan Development Network, allowing it to embrace a global and pluralistic humanism that can only contribute to a stronger influence of our ideals the world over.

Through this partnership with the Aga Khan Development Network we can see clearly the potential for this work to carry on the work of our founders and work in partnership to build a better future. As we build on the work of those who had vision, we, in turn, hope that our vision, our work will lead to the understanding that, “other people, with their differences, can be right”.

Thank you.