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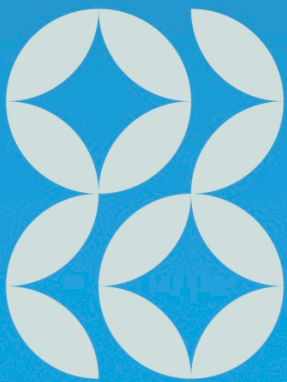
# Culture of peace

A comprehensive approach to  
building harmony

Dana Melina Rodríguez

Foro de Universidades for peace  
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# THE FOUP *Journal*



## ARTICLE

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## Author's note

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### FUNDING

This work and participation in the corresponding event were jointly funded through institutional financial support from the Universidad Católica de Santiago del Estero, funds provided by the Forum of Universities for Peace (FOUP) and the author's own resources.

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author expresses her special gratitude to Guillermo A. Álvarez and Martín N. Cejas, fellow students and members of the culture of peace forum of the Universidad Católica de Santiago del Estero, for their tireless work in building and sustaining this space.

Likewise, sincere thanks are extended to Dr. José A. Musso for his constant support, his guidance in our professional development and, above all, for placing his trust in us throughout this journey.

Finally, I thank my mother, Anabella S. Gómez, for her unconditional support in the decisions I made, granting me the freedom necessary to move forward on my educational path.

## Abstract

The project entitled “**Culture of peace: a comprehensive approach to building harmony**” arose within the framework of the Second Meeting of Law Students from Catholic and Catholic-Oriented Universities (Red UC-OC), held in October 2025 in the province of San Juan under the motto “Building a culture of peace”.

The fundamental purpose of this event was to foster dialogue, reflection and the commitment of future professionals to the values of justice, in keeping with the vocation of the participating universities to train lawyers committed to social transformation from an ethical, humanist perspective aligned with Christian thought.

From this genesis, the project was structured around the **general objective** of helping to raise greater awareness of care for the environment, the culture of peace and the human right to peace in the community it targets. To achieve this, it has the following **specific objectives**: 1) to promote the creation, within the Facultad de Ciencias Políticas, Sociales y Jurídicas of the Universidad Católica de Santiago del Estero (UCSE), of the Youth Forum for a Culture of Peace; 2) to carry out, through the Forum, activities related to the promotion of the right to a healthy environment, with the participation of students from the various UCSE degree programmes as well as secondary school students carrying out projects linked to the topic; 3) to organise, in collaboration with the Departamento de Deportes y Recreación of UCSE, activities aimed at addressing the importance of sport for peace and development; 4) to take part in awareness-raising activities that may be developed in the future Pope Francis Square in the city of La Banda, among other extracurricular activities.

The proposal is grounded in **the interdependence** between peace, development and the environment, and rests on the premise that education is the fundamental means of building a culture of peace, promoting a lifestyle that respects the environment and an integral ecology that recognises the inseparable connection between society and nature; it was drawn up taking into account the recommendations contained in the **encyclicals** mentioned, as well as the contributions of various international texts related to the topics addressed by the associated documents, including the international civil society draft declaration on the human right to peace.

The dissemination of the principles of the encyclicals **Laudato Si’** and **Laudate Deum** and **the promotion of the draft Universal Declaration on the Human Right to Peace (2023)**, prepared by the **Asociación Española para el Derecho Internacional de los Derechos Humanos (AEDIDH)** and endorsed by UCSE (Resolution No. 303/2024 of the Consejo Superior), are the intended results, together with fostering dialogue among students on the implications of the culture of peace, the environment and its care, human rights and the human right to peace in particular, as well as raising awareness of environmental problems, hate speech, violence, racism and discrimination, among other issues, as barriers that prevent the enjoyment of the fundamental rights of human beings.

The analysis carried out leads to the conclusion that the development of such a culture represents a challenge for educational institutions in general, and for the university in particular. Solidarity rights constitute a category of human rights whose realisation requires the joint effort of all: from individuals and States to public and private entities and bodies, as Karel Vasak (1997) maintains, listing among them the following rights: to development, to a healthy and ecologically balanced environment, to peace and to ownership of the common heritage of humankind.

For its part, Principle 25 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development (1992) states: "Peace, development and environmental protection are interdependent and indivisible".

On this basis, we will write an essay to analyse this link and lay the groundwork for a university extension project with the objectives outlined above.

## Culture of peace<sup>1</sup>

Under **UN Resolution 53/243** as a set of values, attitudes and ways of life that reject violence and promote human rights. Immediately afterwards, under the section **Triggering or motivational aspects**, several subheadings are set out that explore this subject in depth from a comprehensive perspective:

- a **Towards a new lifestyle.** It criticises the **compulsive consumerist mechanism** and proposes a personal transformation to overcome individualism, recovering social responsibility towards the environment and others.
- b **The throwaway culture, the climate as a common good and other issues.** It denounces how pollution and waste disproportionately affect the poor and calls for mitigating the human causes of global warming.
- c **The principle of the common good and justice between generations.** It holds that human ecology is inseparable from the common good and demands **intergenerational solidarity**, understanding the earth as a loan received for future generations.
- d **An interdependent world and national and local policies.** It advocates global solutions and common projects that transcend national interests, underlining the importance of political transparency.
- e **The contributions of *Laudate Deum*.** It warns of the unusual acceleration of climate change and criticises the **technocratic paradigm**, in which technology is used to increase human power without ethical limits.

1. The theoretical materials presented in this section were previously structured within the institutional academic setting, which is supported and complemented by the original project entitled "Culture of peace: a comprehensive approach to building harmony". This work was designed, developed and presented jointly by the author, Dr. José Antonio Musso and the members of the Youth Forum for a Culture of Peace. The full project document and its institutional guidelines are available for consultation at the following link: [drive.google.com/file/d/1VnHrWMWRNaCDIIQCrGpKrRizgXT8CZMtN](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1VnHrWMWRNaCDIIQCrGpKrRizgXT8CZMtN)

- f** **Peace and development.** It defines peace as a dynamic process that requires the **absence of economic, social and cultural violence**, linking development to the dignity of the poor.
- g** **Culture of encounter and culture of peace.** It proposes the “art of encounter” to integrate differences and build an “**artisanal peace**” that involves every individual in their daily life.
- h** **Culture of peace and the human right to peace.** It explores international efforts to codify peace as a fundamental human right and the importance of comprehensive education in this field.
- i** **Right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment.** It recognises this right as a human right linked to peace, stressing that **environmental education** is key to generating real habits of care.

### ***Laudato Si'* (2015) and the axiom of Integral Ecology**

This encyclical letter introduces a paradigm shift by holding that human beings are indissolubly interwoven with nature. There are not two separate crises — one environmental and the other social — but a single, complex socio-environmental crisis. Solutions, therefore, require comprehensive approaches that assess the interaction between natural and social systems. Hence the need to defend *cultural ecology*, which recognises that, alongside the natural heritage, there is a pre-existing historical, artistic and community heritage that is constitutive of the identity of peoples. The text severely denounces “anthropocentric excess”, a phenomenon in which man places himself at an absolute centre, rendering everything else relative to his immediate market interests, which exponentially accelerates environmental degradation and social exclusion through the so-called “throwaway culture”.

### ***Fratelli Tutti* (2020) and the Craftsmanship of Peace**

It proposes the establishment of a *Culture of Encounter*, conceived as a way of life in which differences coexist, complementing and enriching one another and integrating, as a priority, the geographical and existential peripheries. Here the magisterium establishes that peace is not merely an institutional “architecture” or a treaty between nations, but a daily “craftsmanship” that calls upon the individual responsibility of every citizen in their everyday life. It likewise introduces a categorical and definitive rejection of war, arguing that the destructive power of modern weaponry (nuclear, biological and technological) means that the risks always outweigh any hypothetical benefit, concluding with the historic cry “Never again war!” It also warns of the “shameless aggressiveness” that manifests itself on digital devices, where consumerist isolation coexists with hate speech that systematically destroys otherness.

### ***Laudate Deum* (2023) and the critique of the Technocratic Paradigm**

Published as a follow-up apostolic exhortation, it denounces the unusual acceleration of climate change, demonstrating that current transformations are no longer the result of slow geological cycles but of anthropogenic warming verifiable within a single generation. The text carries out a structural critique of the technocratic paradigm, that ideology which assumes the human being to be a limitless entity whose capacities can expand infinitely through technology and artificial intelligence, reducing the

natural environment to a slave or exploitable resource in the service of financial power. It reminds us that not every increase in power means progress for humanity if it lacks an ethical regulatory framework.

## The Human Right to Peace and to a Sustainable Environment: An Interdependent Legal and Educational Approach

**Culture of peace and the human right to peace.** The idea of proclaiming the human right to peace was formulated in the January 1997 Declaration by the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) on that subject. The issue was examined at the meeting of experts held in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria in February 1997, and, at the request of its participants, a meeting organised by the Norwegian Institute of Human Rights in June 1997 drew up the Oslo Draft Declaration on the Human Right to Peace, which the Director-General sent to Heads of State and Government for their consideration. The replies received, as well as the deliberations of the 29th session of the UNESCO General Conference, gave rise to the Draft Declaration on the Human Right to Peace, the foundation of the Culture of Peace (Faleh Pérez, 2006), a revised version of that draft, which affirms that “the best way to respond to the challenges of today and tomorrow is the building of a culture of peace and, as a consequence, the recognition and realisation of the human right to peace”<sup>2</sup>.

Finally, the text adopted by the UNESCO General Conference, following the consultation of governmental experts held in Paris in March 1998, chose to state that the best way to respond to these challenges “is the construction of a culture of peace based on respect for all human rights”. The international civil society draft that we take as a reference recalls, in its preamble, that “the culture of peace and the education of humanity for peace, justice and freedom are indispensable to the dignity of human beings and constitute a duty that all nations must fulfil in international solidarity”.

That draft also affirms that “all persons and peoples have the right to a comprehensive education in peace and human rights, within the framework of the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace and dialogue among cultures” (art. 5.1). Resolution 55/17, adopted by the Human Rights Council on 4 April 2024, underlines that “the absence of peace increases the likelihood of human rights abuses and violations being committed and that the development of a culture of peace is linked to the realization of all human rights for all”. This implicitly includes the realisation of the human right to peace.

### Right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment

Resolution 76/300, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 28 July 2022, recognises “the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment as a human right”, noting that this right “is related to other rights and existing international law”<sup>3</sup>. One of those rights is the human right to peace. From the perspective of the draft declaration prepared by the AEDIDH, the right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment is part of the material content of that right, together with the right “to international action to mitigate the destruction of the environment, especially climate change” (art. 9.1).

2. Paragraph 8 of the preamble to the Draft Declaration on the Human Right to Peace, foundation of the Culture of Peace.

3. The resolution was adopted with 161 votes in favour, none against and only 8 abstentions.

States shall develop legislation and public policies for the protection of the environment, in accordance with the Framework Principles on Human Rights and the Environment proposed by the Special Rapporteur on the issue of human rights obligations relating to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment (art. 9.4 of the draft). If we compare the Framework Principles proposed by John Knox with *Laudato Si'*, we find many points in common. Thus, Framework Principle 6 posits that “States should provide for education and public awareness on environmental matters”, while the encyclical stresses that environmental education, called to create an “ecological awareness”, is sometimes limited to providing information and fails to get people to develop habits (n. 211). Furthermore, it specifies that:

*For a legal norm to produce significant and lasting effects, it is necessary that the majority of the members of society have accepted it on the basis of adequate motivations, and that they respond out of a personal transformation. Only on the basis of the development of sound virtues is self-giving in an ecological commitment possible. If a person, although their own finances allow them to consume and spend more, habitually wraps up a little instead of turning on the heating, it is assumed that they have incorporated convictions and feelings favourable to caring for the environment. It is very noble to assume the duty of caring for creation through small daily actions, and it is wonderful that education is capable of motivating them to the point of shaping a lifestyle. Education in environmental responsibility can encourage various behaviours that have a direct and significant impact on caring for the environment, such as avoiding the use of plastic and paper, reducing water consumption, separating waste, cooking only what can reasonably be eaten, treating other living beings with care, using public transport or sharing a single vehicle among several people, planting trees, turning off unnecessary lights. All of this is part of a generous and dignified creativity, which shows the best in human beings*

*Laudato Si', n. 211*

## Methodology

As awareness-raising proposals, this project envisages carrying out different activities throughout each academic year, some of them within the framework of United Nations commemorations and others as extracurricular activities held during the school year:

### Institutional Participation in the 5th Conference on the Human Right to Peace

24 September 2025

As part of the dissemination, academic exchange and socio-community outreach actions provided for in the project's methodological design, on 22 September we took part in the 5th Conference on the Human Right to Peace, organised by the Red de Facultades de Derecho por la Paz (ReFEPAZ) in memory of Federico Mayor Zaragoza. The meeting was structured around panel discussions and lecture sessions featuring individual contributions from Prof. Dr. Georgina Guardatti, Prof. Mg. María Teresa Barrios, Prof.

Mg. Eliana Martínez and Prof. Dr. Romina Bravo Suárez, as well as student representatives of the Forum, Guillermo Álvarez and the author, Dana M. Rodríguez. The event as a whole was moderated by Prof. Dr. José A. Musso. The day's activities formally closed with an artistic and cultural presentation by students of the Faculty, who performed the musical piece entitled "Paz", composed by Federico Mayor Zaragoza. This final activity fulfilled the methodological objective of consolidating a space for knowledge transfer, practical awareness-raising and collective reflection on human rights and the culture of peace within the university community.

### **Inter-institutional Engagement: Meeting with the Facultad de Ciencias Forestales of UNSE**

Within the framework of the joint outreach initiatives oriented towards integral ecology, on 27 March 2026 an official institutional visit was paid to the Facultad de Ciencias Forestales (FCF) of the Universidad Nacional de Santiago del Estero (UNSE). The academic meeting brought together representatives of the Youth Forum for a Culture of Peace of the Universidad Católica de Santiago del Estero (UCSE) and members of the Cátedra Libre por el Derecho Humano a la Paz of the Universidad Nacional de La Plata (UNLP). The delegation, made up of Dr. Antonio Musso and the students Dana Rodríguez, Guillermo Álvarez and Martín Cejas, was received by the authorities of the host academic unit, represented by the Vice-Dean, Dr. Miguel Sarmiento, and Eng. Rocío Carreras. During the working session, the delegates formalised their institutional endorsement of the "Concierto por los Bosques y la Paz" — an event organised by the FCF — highlighting the strategic value of this type of cultural intervention for promoting a culture of peace with a strictly environmental focus. Likewise, this space for reciprocal engagement made it possible to consolidate channels of cooperation in order to invite the FCF to take an active part in the subsequent commemorative events for International Mother Earth Day and World Environment Day, promoted in a coordinated manner by the participating institutions.

### **22 April, International Mother Earth Day**

In fulfilment of the project's specific objectives — particularly as regards institutional coordination and the promotion of the right to a healthy environment — an interdisciplinary roundtable discussion was held on Wednesday, 22 April. This activity was carried out in keeping with the theoretical framework linked to International Mother Earth Day, taking shape as an authentic space for dialogue and academic reflection aimed at addressing contemporary socio-environmental problems and at consolidating a culture of peace in a practical way.

The meeting brought together specialists from various disciplines, who presented their lines of research and experiences under the following thematic axes:

- **Forests and the care of the common home:** lecture delivered by Eng. Rocío Carrera.
- **The importance of birds and the ecosystem:** presentation given by Eng. María Cecilia de Laminat (agricultural producer and coordinator of Fundación PAYDA) together with student Santino Cejas, a member of the same foundation.
- **The continuing validity of international environmental law in the face of an apparent legal regression:** legal analysis presented by attorney Roberto Daives and licentiate Sebastián Banco.

- **Reflection and message on the culture of peace and its connection with the environment:** closing address by Dr. José A. Musso, together with members of the Youth Forum for a Culture of Peace, Martín Cejas and Dana M. Rodríguez.

For the Universidad Católica de Santiago del Estero, the official presentation of the Youth Forum for a Culture of Peace in this context represented a significant institutional milestone, reaffirming the university's commitment to creating legitimate academic spaces for the active building of peace and sustainable development.

## 5 June, World Environment Day

A group of students from different degree programmes at the Universidad Católica de Santiago del Estero was invited to suggest a site in the provincial capital or its surroundings in which to collect the waste found there, which was then deposited in the appropriate containers. The choice of site was agreed in advance of the commemoration date. This walk was carried out in cooperation with Renobarrio, an environmental organisation responsible for sorting waste and providing information about it.

To carry out this activity, participants were provided with gloves, bags and the other necessary items. After the collection, they gathered at the meeting point where the walk had begun to reflect and talk about various aspects related to the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment.

The waste collection was intended not only to leave a space clean, but also to foster a climate of interdisciplinary dialogue, consensus and reflection among the participating students and teachers, bearing in mind that dialogue is the only way towards peace and that there is only one socio-environmental crisis. In turn, some participants gave a talk at the end of the activity with the aim of teaching how to separate waste, instilling the habit of doing so as a daily practice. They also explained the problem of plastics and how they, like the rest of the waste, can be given a second life.

## Educational engagement: environmental training at the Colegio Secundario Cristo Rey

As part of the celebrations for 5 June, World Environment Day, the Youth Forum for a Culture of Peace extended its lines of action to the secondary-level educational community. To this end, a training day was coordinated and delivered at the Colegio Secundario Cristo Rey – the institution from which the author of this article graduated, a connection that provided a valuable channel for coordination and a sense of institutional belonging.

The activity was carried out in strategic cooperation with the environmental organisation Renobarrio, with the active participation and presentations of its members: Ignacio Luna, Valentina Bonahora, Valentina Pellene and Ignacio Creus. The central purpose of the meeting was to create a space for students to reflect critically on the contemporary socio-environmental crisis. The methodology implemented combined a theoretical-conceptual session with a closing hands-on classroom workshop. During this final segment, the pupils immediately applied the knowledge they had acquired through

waste-sorting exercises and the design of everyday recycling strategies, demonstrating the feasibility of replicating the principles of an integral ecology in their own school environments.

### September, Month of Peace at the Facultad de Ciencias Políticas, Sociales y Jurídicas (Faculty Council Provision No. 118/2024)

The Youth Forum for a Culture of Peace organised and carried out the *First UCSE Conference on Culture of Peace*, which took place over two consecutive days and structured its activities as follows:

On the **first day**, the activities were aimed especially at university students. The event began with the opening ceremony and a discussion session focused on defining the scope of the topic, formally presenting the forum and setting out the project's objectives. Subsequently, a panel discussion was organised with students from different degree programmes at the university, who – after a preparatory session – related the principles of the culture of peace to their future professional fields. The day concluded with sporting events and recreational activities aimed at fostering respect, non-discrimination and peaceful coexistence, with the collaboration of the Departamento de Deportes y Recreación of UCSE.

The **second day** focused on community engagement by inviting various civil associations, whose leaders and members shared their work experiences in relation to the themes of the discussion session. To close the event, a tree (an olive tree of peace) was planted on the UCSE campus. Building on this initiative, the forum promoted setting aside that physical space for future activities aimed at environmental education.

Finally, as a complement to this conference, the forum members arranged meetings with secondary school students on previously coordinated dates. The purpose of these interventions was to build spaces for dialogue and exchange on the topics and specific objectives outlined in the culture of peace project.

## Results

The results observed throughout the development of the experience were highly satisfactory and even exceeded the author's initial expectations. In a social context characterised by individualism, the fragmentation of bonds and a growing dehumanisation of interpersonal relationships, where gestures as simple as a hug, active listening or an empathetic gaze seem to become foreign to everyday life, the creation of a meeting space aimed at building a culture of peace proved to be a transformative tool.

One of the main achievements was the creation of a space of belonging for the young participants, where they could feel heard, valued and like active participants in a collective process. The opportunity to share experiences, express ideas freely and work collaboratively made it possible to strengthen bonds of trust, mutual respect and a sense of shared responsibility. This process fostered the development of skills related to dialogue, cooperation, the peaceful resolution of conflicts and commitment to caring for the environment, on the understanding that social peace and sustainability constitute inseparable dimensions of a single challenge.

In the early stages of the project, there was little participation and interest on the part of young people. This situation was mainly due to a lack of knowledge about the culture of peace and the absence of institutional spaces devoted to promoting it. Many participants stated that they had not previously had opportunities to reflect on these issues or to become involved in initiatives that would allow them to become active agents of social transformation.

However, as the activities unfolded, a significant change began to be observed in the participants' perception and commitment. The implementation of participatory proposals, interdisciplinary work and constant support made it possible to awaken a genuine interest in the topic. The young people understood that peace is not merely the absence of violence, nor a concept confined to the international sphere, but a daily practice that runs through all dimensions of social, institutional, educational, environmental and community life.

Likewise, one of the most relevant results was the coordination achieved with various civil society organisations, educational institutions and community actors. These partnerships made it possible to broaden the impact of the actions carried out, strengthen cooperation networks and demonstrate that building a culture of peace necessarily requires joint work among different sectors of the community. Inter-institutional participation made it possible to carry out joint projects, create spaces for dialogue and consolidate initiatives aimed at the common good.

The experience also showed that the culture of peace acts as a cross-cutting axis capable of being integrated into multiple areas of intervention. Regardless of the topic addressed — whether the environment, education, health, citizen participation or human rights — the principles of dialogue, solidarity, respect, inclusion and cooperation were present as the foundations of every activity carried out. In this sense, peace was consolidated not only as a goal, but also as a working methodology that facilitates the creation of participatory spaces and strengthens the social fabric.

Another significant aspect was the progressive incorporation of values associated with teamwork, discipline, responsibility and perseverance. Throughout the process, it became clear that cultural changes do not occur immediately, but require continuity, commitment and constancy. On numerous occasions, small steps forward had a significant impact on the consolidation of the group and on the internalisation of the values promoted. This reaffirms the importance of understanding that, in peacebuilding processes, every action, however small it may seem, represents a concrete step towards a broader social transformation.

Finally, the results allow us to state that the actions implemented helped make the culture of peace visible as a reality that is close at hand and attainable, distancing it from the perception that it is an abstract concept or one linked exclusively to international organisations. Participants began to recognise peace in their own everyday practices, in their interpersonal relationships and in the decisions they make within their communities. In this way, the activities carried out fostered the development of capacities for peaceful coexistence, the strengthening of youth participation and the building of a citizenry committed to dialogue, respect for diversity and sustainable development.

Consequently, the experience demonstrates that the training and leading role of young people are fundamental to consolidating a culture of peace at the local level. The results obtained show that, when spaces for genuine participation, guidance and collaborative learning are created, young people not only incorporate the values of peace, but also become multipliers capable of replicating them in their institutions, families and communities, fostering processes of social transformation with a sustained impact over time.

## Discussion

Regarding the problems detected at the provincial level, we have identified the following:

- Lack of sufficient awareness and reflection on the culture of peace in the different sectors of the student community and of society in general, and on how each person can contribute to building that culture.
- Absence of systematic inclusion of the concepts of culture of peace, environment, climate justice and human rights, especially the human right to peace, in the curricula of the various university degree programmes, except in the case of Law and the Bachelor's Degree in International Relations, as far as UCSE is concerned.
- Lack of interest in caring for the “common home” in urban areas — the everyday surroundings — and lack of awareness of the problem, as well as the steady increase in waste in public spaces, especially on vacant lots and at street corners.
- Insufficient knowledge of the concept of peace in its broad sense (positive peace), which encompasses the building of a more just society.
- There are situations of extreme injustice in which conflicts remain without a just or peaceful solution, since individual interests prevail over dialogue, objectivity and the pursuit of the greatest collective well-being.

A culture of peace can only develop fully if the members of a community become aware that living a life free from violence, in which dialogue, cooperation and understanding are the means of overcoming any conflict that may arise, is not something that depends exclusively on what the State does in this regard, but that each person can make a significant contribution as soon as they understand that certain attitudes, behaviours and lifestyles are necessary for living together in harmony and on the basis of solidarity, including harmony with nature. Taking into account the various degree programmes offered at UCSE, and before setting out awareness-raising proposals, we present the following table, which relates those programmes to the subject matter of interest to us:

**LAW**

Defence of human rights. Peaceful resolution of conflicts through dialogue.

**ARCHITECTURE**

Right to decent housing and a safe and healthy environment. Design of spaces that foster care for the environment and peaceful coexistence.

**COMPUTER ENGINEERING**

The use of technology and values, the right to enjoy technological advances, the prevention of hate speech and respect for privacy.

**PHYSIOTHERAPY**

Right to health, rehabilitation and physical well-being.

**BA IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SPORTS**

Sport as a means of promoting peace, the right to play.

**POLITICAL SCIENCE**

Design of public policies that guarantee fundamental rights, the promotion of dialogue and consensus.

**BA IN SOCIAL COMMUNICATION**

Freedom of expression and media plurality, dissemination of messages of tolerance, prevention of hate speech.

The results obtained support the conclusion that the implementation of youth participation spaces aimed at promoting a culture of peace is an effective strategy for strengthening the social fabric, developing active citizenship and fostering relationships based on dialogue, cooperation and respect for diversity. This experience shows that peace can be built at the local level through concrete, sustained and participatory actions, in line with the principles established by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 1995).

In this regard, the findings are consistent with the definition of a culture of peace promoted by UNESCO, according to which peace is no longer understood as the mere absence of violence but becomes an ongoing process of cultural transformation that requires education, citizen participation and collective commitment.

The results are also supported by the **Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace**, adopted by **United Nations General Assembly Resolution 53/243**, which establishes that building peaceful societies requires the active participation of governments, educational institutions, civil society organisations and, especially, young people as key agents of social change (United Nations General Assembly, 1999). This experience confirms that proposition, since the progressive involvement of young people made it possible to generate collaborative initiatives, strengthen institutional networks and promote concrete actions aimed at the common good.

Likewise, the results coincide with the theory of positive peace developed by the Spanish Asociación Civil, whose members hold that peace consists not only in the absence of direct violence, but also in the elimination of the structural and cultural forms of violence that generate inequality, exclusion and injustice. From this perspective, the activities implemented went beyond conflict prevention to focus on building capacities for dialogue, cooperation, leadership and community participation, essential elements for the consolidation of positive peace.

Likewise, conflict transformation constitutes an opportunity to strengthen human relationships and build fairer societies. The results obtained show that the creation of spaces for listening, collaborative work and active participation fostered processes of individual and collective transformation that had a positive impact on coexistence both within and beyond the university setting.

Another relevant aspect was the coordination achieved between the university, civil society organisations and public institutions. This interaction reaffirms that building a culture of peace requires intersectoral and interdisciplinary processes, in which academic knowledge engages in dialogue with the needs of the community in order to generate sustainable solutions. In this regard, education must be understood as a practice of freedom capable of forming critical, participatory individuals committed to the transformation of their social reality.

The evidence obtained demonstrates that education constitutes one of the fundamental pillars for consolidating peaceful societies. The change observed in participants' perceptions confirms that values education, collaborative learning and critical reflection foster the development of competencies related to empathy, solidarity, social responsibility and respect for diversity. Consequently, universities position themselves as strategic actors in promoting processes of comprehensive education that go beyond the acquisition of technical knowledge and strengthen the building of democratic citizenship.

Furthermore, the results show that many young people began the project with little knowledge of the culture of peace and finished it understanding that it permeates every dimension of daily life and that it must form people capable of understanding the complexity of the world, recognising the interdependence between social phenomena and assuming ethical responsibility in the face of global challenges.

Nevertheless, the research also made it possible to identify significant challenges. Among them are the limited initial dissemination of the subject, the absence of permanent training spaces on the culture of peace, and the need to strengthen public policies that incorporate this approach as a cross-cutting axis within educational and university systems. These challenges coincide with the recommendations formulated by the United Nations, which emphasise that consolidating a culture of peace requires sustained action, institutional cooperation and long-term political commitment (United Nations General Assembly, 1999).

Finally, it can be stated that the experience developed goes beyond the immediate results of the activities implemented. The creation of cooperation networks, the strengthening of youth leadership, inter-institutional coordination and the internalisation of values linked to positive peace constitute indicators of a process of cultural transformation with a long-term reach. In this sense, the university proves

to be a privileged space for educating citizens capable of promoting dialogue, inclusion, social justice and sustainable development.

Ultimately, the results obtained reaffirm that building a culture of peace does not depend exclusively on international initiatives or state decisions, but also on the everyday actions carried out at the local level. Every space for dialogue, every community project and every initiative driven by young people represents a concrete opportunity to strengthen democratic coexistence, prevent violence and promote fairer, more supportive and more sustainable societies, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda (United Nations, 2015).

## Conclusion

**“We are human, and peace is part of our most fundamental dignity.”**

The systematisation of the practical activities and the theoretical analysis developed throughout this article allow us to conclude, with absolute certainty, that building a culture of peace demands the construction of extremely solid institutional and social foundations, unshakeably grounded in the principles of cooperation, solidarity, interdisciplinarity and, above all, individual and collective co-responsibility. Peace can no longer be conceived as the exclusive preserve of state structures or as the task of a few specialised actors; peace is an everyday endeavour that calls upon all of us equally in our capacity as colleagues, professionals and citizens. Collective work stands as a tool of vital importance for establishing authentic spaces in which it is understood that all human beings are intrinsically important and have a legitimate place in the world.

However, for that place to be real, it is important to actively design, manage and sustain such spaces. In this scenario of transformation, youth must not be relegated to a mere promise of the future; youth is the present, the “today” that inhabits and leads an era of dizzying evolution. It is up to us, as young people, to grant ourselves and claim the necessary spaces in a world that is changing by leaps and bounds, taking on the challenge of including all social sectors in the discussion and defence of third-generation rights. Innovating, breaking with tradition and directing thought towards the common well-being is what allows individuals to find genuine personal fulfilment as they develop naturally in an environment that guarantees decent living conditions.

It is common knowledge that the nations of the world are going through a deep social, cultural and identity crisis, in which societies often lose their way and their sense of who they are. In the face of this reality, those of us who resolutely rise as specialists in peacebuilding must do so with the courage to face conflict head-on and to proclaim firmly: “We are human, and peace is part of our most fundamental dignity”. Upholding this stance in hostile environments often places us in a position of apparent opposition, turning us into the “black sheep” of systems structured according to the logic of confrontation.

On a personal level, I am filled with deep pride and happiness in knowing that the world has welcomed me on this side of history; a side where I feel responsible not only for my own destiny, but also for the well-being of my peers. The power to hold, understand and integrate the realities of others is an invaluable virtue that I am deeply grateful to be able to share with the world. Likewise, I acknowledge the immense privilege of having professionals and academics with long careers and extensive experience grant me a place by their side, offering me their best advice to guide me along this path.

Awakening in others an awareness, intellectual curiosity and a constant desire to learn is an achievement that makes me feel extremely fortunate and fulfilled.

Taking the path of peace is not, under any circumstances, an easy choice. It demands the constant effort of holding tensions and seeking effective alternatives that completely eradicate the use of violence. It is essential to demystify peace: it is not synonymous with weakness, passive neutrality or a failure to take a stand. On the contrary, peace is presence, it is firmness, it is intelligent and it is deeply strategic, because it meticulously assesses the fairest, most equitable and most effective solution to resolve conflict at its root. Defending a position through diplomacy and dialogue is a task that not everyone is willing to undertake, since it requires setting aside pride, ego and individual ambitions. Acknowledging one's own mistakes demands formidable mental strength and an emotional maturity that allows us to accept that we, too, may be the cause of conflict. Hence the importance of teaching technical-legal and human tools aimed at alternative dispute resolution, always guaranteeing equitable outcomes, for otherwise one would fall into the flagrant injustice of prioritising private interests. This implies accepting that the resolutions adopted will not always be entirely to the liking of the parties; they will not always be popular, but part of democratic growth lies in learning to bear and integrate, in the healthiest way possible, whatever makes us uncomfortable for the sake of the common good.

Finally, I extend an open and fervent invitation to the young people of the world, and most especially to law students and legal professionals, to become an active part of this transformative branch. The legal profession encompasses a far broader spectrum than traditional litigation in the courts and the rigid study of the laws written and enacted by Congress. We can be academics, mediators and social builders outside the courtroom. The central purpose of this movement is to grant freedom of choice to those of us who dream of humanist justice, giving priority to professing those fundamental principles that unite us as human beings and that are capable of building or destroying a nation. We must foster a profound awareness of the kind of legal practice we wish to pursue in the twenty-first century.

When a person comes before us with a case to litigate, we are not dealing with a mere client or a case file number; we are facing a human being with a history, a context and a vulnerability behind them, which we have an ethical obligation to take into account. Our duty is not limited to providing cold, technical and distant legal advice; it must become comprehensive counsel, a compassionate outlook, genuine accompaniment that tells the other: "I am here and I stand by your case to offer you the fairest solution". In genuine peaceful conflict management there are neither losers nor winners; there are two people caught in a clash of interests that they have been unable to resolve on their own. Our primary task is

to bring the parties closer together, invite them to listen to one another and conduct the dispute peacefully, understanding that different truths coexist and adopting solutions that are effective for both realities.

Let us be brave and build a more peaceful world with the tools within our reach; let us nourish our own being so that we are able to nourish our neighbour. Life is inevitably built with others. In a global context that is tending alarmingly towards dehumanisation, remembering that we are essentially social beings, fraternally united, is an act of resistance.

I am deeply grateful to you, dear reader, for having journeyed through these lines and reached this point; it is my heartfelt wish to have sown within you the hope of a better world and the certainty that you are not alone on this side of the path. On the other side, there are many of us thinking about how to transform reality, hoping to meet people like you so that, each day, more of us will dare to grow and to build peace.

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