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Final Draft Walk Within & Beyond Cultures (KUFS: WWBC Project)

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Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen assembled here on this commemorative occasion. I would like to take this opportunity to first pay my greatest appreciation to take part in this honorable occasion and to talk about our project in order to seek better ways to communicate to sustain world peace.

Kyoto University of Foreign Studies was founded in 1947 as a private university located in one of the old capitals of Japan, whose educational motto is *Pax Mundi Per Linguas*, World Peace through Languages, and our Chancellor is the president of Kyoto UNESCO Associations, Japan. I'd like to introduce our Walk Within & Beyond Cultures Project.

Issues concerning 'culture and identity' and the 'relationship between language and culture', and more specifically 'sustainable world peace', are certainly central concerns among people in today's global society, where people of different cultures have to meet together and communicate with each other, in order to discover better ways to understand what others have in mind.

Contrastive analysis techniques in linguistics and cross-cultural communications are certainly very useful means to see happenings around us in a contrastive way, but sometimes reveal differences rather than commonalities. On the other hand, INTER-national Relations studies which discuss issues in terms of the concept of 'inter-' rather than that of 'contra-' tend to find grounds for meeting in-between cultures rather than in one culture or the other. However, today, we all live in a global society, and we need to see the world around us from the perspectives quite different from those we have been used to.

As you'll watch it in the DVD produced by our project of Walk Within & Beyond Cultures in a few minutes, living on this blue planet, we have been so accustomed to seeing Sun Rise and Sun-Set. But today, we have had a new expression, "Earth Rise and Earth Set." The phrase is certainly the new symbol of today, just as "one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind" was in 1969.

As global citizens, we need to continuously seek better ways to communicate beyond our linguistic, cultural and national boundaries so that we can observe and understand the world around us, not as we would like it to be but as it actually is. I believe it's essential to compare and contrast the fundamental elements of our global society.

But more importantly, we hope that our aim in learning about the world's cultures is most constructive when we simply wish to find cultural characteristics that we can share in common, rather than to find differences that might justify self-assertiveness to the point of insisting that our own values and behavior are superior to those of other peoples. Based upon this awareness, our exploration of the world's cultures may lead us to appreciate the true value of diversity on this beautiful planet. This is the very reason that we have our project name, WWBC: "Walk Within & BEYOND Cultures."

It is very natural that ordinary citizens on this planet tend to think nature and culture are NOT directly related to each other, because they take nature for granted, and culture for granted; two separate entities. But, we want to see that they are mutually *intertwined*, shaping form and function with each other. Therefore, it may be more fundamental to ask ourselves, for instance, why we feel comfortable and easy living in the place we have chosen to live. I believe it's simply because the place we are raised is our basis, a very natural cradle, now called Habitat on earth. That's the reason why it gives people tremendous hardship and bitterness if they are "forced" to move or relocate their habitat by some other physical forces like natural disasters, such as hurricanes, typhoons, volcanic eruptions, tsunami and mega-quakes, to name a few. People all over the world have long suffered from the massive destruction from these natural disasters, and we are having more and more. Why, then, you may ask, do people continue suffering from conflicts, violence and wars caused by the same members of the global community?

As citizens in the global society today, therefore, all of us need to learn to generate and construct knowledge to respect each other and learn from others. That, I believe, is the concept behind 'sustainable world peace' because every one of us is very much at the mercy of this beautiful blue planet and cannot escape from it. Even if we have to face with conflicts and struggles more often than happiness and comfort, we need to sustain peace for our future generation to come. In other words, we need to educate ourselves to generate knowledge to continuously seek "global" humanism. This, I believe, must be the very basic principle governing any education in today's world.

Let me consider a simplified, a bit oversimplified, example to build global unity out of diversity, taking two of Japanese words, "Sushi" and "Tsunami", two of the most widely known Japanese originated *lingua franca* today. At first glance, these two words do not appear to be related in any respect, but the truth may be not:

When you take a look beyond beautiful coastlines of Japan, you will see many

complicated layers of plate-tectonic movements taking their unique and complex actions beneath the ocean bed, and at the same time, you will know it's the place where you witness the world-known beautiful and dynamic ocean currents, nurturing all varieties of fish, shells and even various kinds of sea weeds: all major ingredients to make fresh and delicious Sushi, the unique Japanese culture. And behind these beautiful coastlines, we will also see many beautiful patches of rice fields with a greater portion of forest and rivers that sustain the lives of its people and more significantly sustain the lives of the ocean.

But, such observations may only be sufficient if we can train ourselves to have the kind of imagination that people in different cultures might interpret those two words quite differently. Is it, therefore, rational for the Japanese to claim that the original features characteristic to the Sushi are only valid?, denying or remaining ignorant of the fact that there may be other possible interpretations according to cultures? The California avocado roll is fine with me; Sushi with a lot of mayonnaise may be acceptable. Chocolate sushi, which is not easy to imagine for a Japanese, is also a possibility.

But, what is most important is the human creation and the commonalities that we share to live in this planet and to share food and meals together, in order to stay healthy and safe. This, I think, must be the basic concept behind sustainability; to stay safe and healthy and gently interact with the peoples on this planet because, as I said, we cannot run away from it and should not force others or should not be forced by others to change our place to live.

The basic stance of the Walk Within & Beyond Cultures Project, therefore, is that we should like to find unity Within diversity, only if we are capable and willing to think beyond our own personal cultural constraints.

Culture education, therefore, is crucially important in creating in the learner's mind in two ways; one is to lead him to feel comfortable and natural, and thus to feel his own cultural norms fit well and therefore are sustainable. That's not sufficient enough, I would say: In today's global society, we need to take another responsibility to make every endeavor to generate and construct in the learner's mind the awareness that there are fundamentals common to all human cultures.

By the word, "fundamentals", I mean: "No matter what language one speaks all people have basically the same set of concepts and categories to describe the world."(Bialystok & Hakuta 1994:105-108)

And from the linguistic and communicative perspective, it is the awareness that says: "The symbol is not the thing symbolized: The map is not the territory:

The word is not the thing” To put it in other words, it is the awareness that says: “Citizens of a modern society need more than that ordinary “common sense” which was defined by Stuart Chase as that which tells you that the world is flat. . . . There is no necessary connection between the symbol and that which is symbolized. Symbols and things symbolized are independent of each other; nevertheless, all of us have a way of feeling as if, and sometimes acting as if there were necessary connections.” (S. I. Hayakawa 1963:25)

And lastly, I would like to raise a question again: Are we capable in seeing beyond our own cultural boundaries? Education may be the process of extending meanings BEYOND our nervous system so that we may be able to connect human networks of humanism

To implement the WWBC vision of encouraging better communication among the world’s peoples, we have begun our multi-lingual DVD project with themes connected to Mother Nature in eleven different languages, in which you’ll watch its English version. And I hope you can feel something connected to living in peace.

So, please enjoy watching the DVD produced by a voluntary group of teachers and students at Kyoto University of Foreign Studies, Japan. As you can notice you can listen to the story in eleven different languages. Thank you