

## **Citizens of the World**

### **Preface**

by Eduardo Missoni

Secretary General of the World Organization of the Scout Movement

Since that day of 1st August 1907, when Baden-Powell started the great adventure of Scouting, hundreds of millions of boys and girls who joined the Movement have solemnly promised on their honour to do their best to do their duty to “my country”. At the same time they have pledged to observe the Scout Law which includes: “A Scout is a friend to all and a brother/sister to every other Scout”.

B.-P. was surprised at the immediate spreading of Scouting beyond the borders of the British Empire, and soon came to see the Movement as a fundamental agent for the building and maintenance of peace. Even in the most difficult circumstances, as true “citizens of the world”, Scouts would be able to combine the commitment to serve their own local and national communities with a solidarity without borders which would avoid any nationalistic and divisive deviation.

After having experienced the horrors of the Great War, B.-P. felt even more strongly the need for a peace education of the new generations – an education that had to be guided, first of all, “by an absolute sense of justice”. This conviction never abandoned him, even as the world was devastated by the Second World War – a war whose end B.-P. would not see. The war prevented the carrying out of Jamborees and Peace Cruises – the most spectacular events of the international dimension of Scouting – but there was still that most important part of the programme: “the quiet, regular instilling into our boys by example and practice of the habits of goodwill, toleration and understanding of others”.

Even as mankind was undergoing one of the darkest times of its history, B.-P. harboured no doubts: “good Scouts have never been so much needed in the world as they are to-day”, he wrote in 1940 to Scout leaders, “and those of you who are turning them out may rest content that you are making to the future of the world a valuable contribution”.

A year later, in what was probably one of his last writings, while regretting to “lie idle, watching others doing my work, without lifting a finger to help them”, he took some solace in seeing that those were young, keen and energetic leaders, capable of steering the Movement through the difficult circumstances of a continuing world conflict, and having a wide outlook which would enable them to grasp the opportunities which would come to make the Movement of yet greater national and international value in the organisation of Peace after the war. To those young leaders he entrusted the Movement he had founded, and his hope was not betrayed. At the end of the Second World War, Scouting flourished again in Europe and in the rest of the world, and those who continued to engage in it made it the widespread, respected Movement that it is today, still committed to creating a better world.

As the globalisation process accelerates, today, more than ever, the “country” of every Scout becomes the world. Today, more than ever, solidarity and co-operation are necessary in a world beset by competition and abuse. Thoughts and conscious deeds must proceed together both at local and at global levels in order to tackle new challenges such as the growing social and economic inequalities, the environmental degradation resulting from unsustainable models of development,

persisting gender inequalities, the HIV/AIDS epidemic, the iniquitous diffusion of preventable illnesses, cultural, ethnic, religious and political intolerance, and all kinds of discriminations. In this context, the peculiarity of the Scout method as an education for both local and global citizenship provides the Movement with new opportunities to involve present-day boys and girls in an exciting adventure for the creation of a different world. Scout leaders and those who guide the Movement at whatever level will have to be able to seize those opportunities responsibly. To this end rediscovering, thanks to Mario Sica's accurate survey of the Founder's vision, a culture of Peace as the constant theme of Scouting may turn out to be greatly stimulating, and surely a source of inspiration.