

Global Emergencies, Urgent Challenges

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“We stand at a critical moment in the Earth’s history, a time when humanity must choose its future”.

Earth Charter (2000)

It is urgent to take timely measures to halt the progressive damage to the habitability of the Earth and the conditions of life for the majority of all human beings. Otherwise, we may reach a point of no return that will irreversibly affect our present generation’s legacy to future generations.

For the first time in history the activities of our species –capable of thinking, imagining, anticipating, creating!– may irreversibly affect our environment. Whether the stubborn ignorant and shortsighted are willing to recognize it or not, we are now in the Anthropocene: the formidable natural treasure in which we live is in danger. We must take immediate action.

The lives of so many men, women and children are at serious risk due to the obstinate and inadmissible lack of solidarity of the haughty and privileged who count and recount the deaths of their loved ones, but who couldn't care less about the losses of others. Thousands of people live and die in conditions of extreme poverty.

And nevertheless, there are no funds to contribute to the sustainable and sustained development of the underprivileged countries. Neoliberalism has replaced cooperation with exploitation, aid with loans, ethical values with the laws of the stock market, and the United Nations with plutocratic groups (G7, G8, G20). How can seven, eight or twenty of the wealthiest countries expect to govern the remaining 190 states? And yet, this is deemed acceptable. Just as in the European monetary union it was deemed acceptable for the "markets" without elections to directly appoint the governments of Italy and Greece, the cradle of democracy.

An economy based on speculation, outsourcing of production and war continues to increase social inequalities and to stifle any attempt to embrace emerging alternative systems. If the risk premium – accompanied by increased insecurity – continues to be the guiding principle for the economy rather than the democratic principles so lucidly set forth in the UNESCO Constitution, large business conglomerates will continue to grow and set the rules for a system that, commencing in the 1980's, alienated democratic multilateralism and now, faced with imminent irreversible situations, must be urgently replaced.

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Potential Irreversibility

We cannot compromise the future of the upcoming generations. In 1997, the General Conference of UNESCO unanimously approved the Declaration of the Responsibilities of the Present Generation Toward the Future Generations (UNESCO, 1997).

It would be a historic irresponsibility to permit the habitability of the earth to deteriorate. And to fail to remedy the human drama of refugees and immigrants. And to fail to stop the madness known as the Islamic State. And the war in Syria. And the hunger that I repeatedly underscore causes the death of thousands of persons daily, while at the same time 3,000 million dollars are being invested in weapons and military spending. It would suffice to reasonably reduce this wasteful war expenditure to be able to address the urgent needs of humanity, especially those that are potentially irreversible. We must take immediate action, applying our present knowledge in order to halt and reverse the present tendencies.

Multiple Ignored Warnings

Since the end of World War II many institutions such as the United Nations have warned about the risks for humanity if certain changes are not implemented on time. These warnings have not only often been ignored, but rather conscientiously neutralized, an attitude that is reprehensible and should not be tolerated. In that regard, in 1979 the United States' Academy of Sciences warned of the fact that not only were carbon dioxide emissions increasing, but also there was a progressive decrease of recapture in the oceans, the true "lungs" of Earth, due to the death of phytoplankton resulting from the toxic effects of oil tanker washings in the open seas rather than in the appropriate port installations. Instead of taking positive action, the Exxon-Mobil oil company promptly created a foundation with immediate support of the Gulf states, which hired pseudo-scientists to make just the opposite claims. For several years greed once again prevented those who should have taken action from doing so. It took over two decades for an excellent article published in *Newsweek* "The Truth about Denial" (*Newsweek*, 13/08/2007) to finally elicit the appropriate action.

Through economic educational institutions that promote *having* rather than *being*, neoliberalism has alienated or silenced significant referents that could have served to clarify the panorama. Among them we could cite the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations General Assembly, 1948); World Plan of Action for Education on Human Rights and Democracy (Montreal, 1993); the Vienna World Conference on Human Rights (Vienna, 1993); Agreements of the Copenhagen Summit for Social Development (1995); Declaration of Principles on Tolerance (UNESCO General Conference, 1995); International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World (2001–2010) (GA-UN, 1998); European Union Charter of Fundamental rights (EU, 2000); Earth Charter (2000); Alliance of Civilizations (UN, 2004)...

At the 15th World Summit of Nobel Laureates held in Barcelona on November 13–15, –with the participation of ten Peace Prize recipients including Oscar Arias, Mijail

¹ <http://www.cinu.org.mx/temas/desarrollo/dessocial/cumbre/copenhage.htm>

² http://www.europarl.europa.eu/charter/pdf/text_es.pdf

Gorbachev, Tawakkul Karmán, Shirin Ebadi, Mairead Maguirre and Betty Williams, among others– an urgent plea was made to immediately work toward resolving major challenges that may soon reach a point of no return. But the communications media, political leaders and parliamentarians didn't publicize this significant crucial petition.

It is incomprehensible that this warning is going unheeded. The immense biased power of the media has silenced their wise and timely recommendations. Despite the fact that time is running out, they want us to remain mere passive spectators, serving as their anonymous accomplices. I consider particularly relevant the following from the summit's final Declaration:

"We collectively raise our voices in compassion for the millions of refugees who have been forced to leave their homes. We affirm that the manner in which we honor and protect their inherent dignity and human rights is a measure of our own humanity.

We are particularly concerned about the plight of women and children whose lives have been devastated by conflict, repression and deprivation. We must and can eliminate the conditions that compel people to leave their homes.

The refugee and migration crisis does not exist in isolation. It is a symptom of the broader problems that confront humanity, including:

- ongoing conflict in many countries;
- the consequences of militarism, extreme nationalism and the use of force and proxy wars by global powers in pursuit of strategic, financial and ideological interests;
- distorted religious beliefs that lead to horrific acts of violence;
- the failure of governments, characterized by rampant corruption, persecution and the absence of democracy, basic human rights and the rule of law;
- the gross inequalities in opportunities and in economic and social well-being between and within the so-called developed and developing countries;
- the failure to accommodate, tolerate and appreciate the value of religious, cultural and ethical diversity;
- the growing impact of climate change that will increasingly threaten food security and disrupt the lives of hundreds of millions of people in the most vulnerable societies; and
- the criminal exploitation of refugees by human smugglers."

The manner in which we honor and protect the dignity of refugees is a measure of our own humanity

The Declaration continues with goals for sustainable development, nuclear disarmament and climate change in which it first underscores how human intervention increasingly affects climate and, secondly, the importance of taking rapid and decisive action to progressively prevent those destructive effects and, thirdly, underscoring that we have the means to limit climate change and to building a better future. The report explicitly addresses the consequences of climate change with respect to human security, including migration, displacement and violent conflicts.

“We, the Peoples” must immediately take action. We cannot prolong the present situation that may irreversibly affect the whole of mankind. We must heed the warning to “change our ship’s course,” as José Luis Sampedro so wisely recommended.

In the Anthropocene, Radical Changes in Current Trends

An economy based on exclusion, short-term interests, speculation, outsourcing of production and preparing for war has resulted in an extraordinarily complicated situation involving potentially irreversible processes that requires adopting urgent measures capable of correcting the current tendencies. The present status may be summarized as follows: 3,000 million dollars are invested daily in military spending and weapons; according to OXFAM, 85 people own the wealth of half of humanity (3,300 million people); the so-called “welfare state” is enjoyed by only 20% of the earth’s inhabitants who live in the most prosperous neighborhoods of our global village; in progressive levels of impoverishment 80% of humanity lives in unbearable circumstances, 1,000 million of whom subsist in extreme poverty; although “sharing” was a keyword in the United Nations system in the 1950s and 1960s, cooperation for development has progressively been reduced instead of strengthening the most needy nations with integral, endogenous sustainable and human development; the nation-state has been weakened, progressively transferring resources and power to giant multinational conglomerates; the inexistence of fully active and respected international courts of justice has resulted in total impunity at the supranational level, so that trafficking in arms, drugs, persons and even the horrific trafficking in human organs is likewise carried out with total impunity.

It is urgent to achieve a re-founding of the United Nations System, with weighted votes but without vetoes

In consequence, it is urgent to achieve a re-founding of the United Nations system, with weighted votes and without vetoes, in which not only individual countries, but also as proclaimed in the Charter, “the Peoples” are represented, so that as soon as possible scientific progress can enable all of earth’s inhabitants to lead a decent life, with an economy based on well-established priorities in order to achieve human and ecologically sustainable development.

These priorities include: food (agriculture, aquaculture and biotechnology); universal access to clean water (water harvesting; management; desalinization...); medical services; environmental protection; education for peace. Education that provides us with a global conscience. This is a crucial aspect: our fellow man may be near or distant. And environmental protection that is not limited to our own horizons, but that includes the entire planet, since this is our common heritage. In that regard it’s worth repeating a story told by the journalist and founder of the *Inter Press Service* Roberto Savio, who said that when he was very young he visited China during the time of Chu En Lai: “With great emotion I approached that mythical leader with his large eyebrows and characteristic features. As I shook his hand, I said, “What a marvelous country! It is a pity that it is so far away...” Chu stared at me and after a long pause asked “So far away from where?”. Today our consciences no longer accept physical distances.

Julian Marías once remarked that it is difficult to actually observe what we see each day. Today we can contemplate the whole world, but we must also observe it so that our daily routines don’t include accepting what is unacceptable or considering that the “collateral effects” of our present system are irremediable. The genocide of neglect and hunger occurring each day and the manner with which we treat those who attempt to reach the developed countries, because they are dying of hunger in their own countries, must be rejected with a popular outcry prompted by the ever-increasing influence of internet. In the digital era we will be capable of applying Mario Benedetti’s fantastic adaptation of the well-known saying “It all depends on the pain you’re looking through”. And the first thing we have to do is to admit that the gross domestic product may reflect the macroeconomic situation, but not that of the immense majority of citizens.

In the Digital Era, Finally, the Voice of the People

“As never before in history, common destiny beacons us to seek a new beginning”, concludes the *Earth Charter*. The future has yet to be written and it is possible and essential to invent the future.

The voice of the peoples to invent the future with increased participation from citizens all over the world, capable of knowing and meeting each other on increasingly important virtual social networks and with the capacity for mobilization, who will propose solutions to our present problems and will become a part of the democratic process at both the local and global levels.

The voice of the peoples for political, economic and social innovation. Immediate eradication of tax evasion and corruption, likewise implementing alternative sources of financing, such as financial transaction taxes; contributions strictly linked to income; conceptual and practical review of work and employment, characteristic of the digital era.

The voice of the peoples to adequately share profits obtained from exploiting natural resources between those who possess the technology and the inhabitants of the areas where the resources are located.

Clinging to their pretexts and privileges, the most powerful attempt to postpone the now unstoppable historical transition from subjects to citizens, from spectators to protagonists. For centuries, silent, obedient, fearful. And now, suddenly, profound changes are at last feasible.

In the digital era freedom of expression will promote the progressive participation of all citizens in decision making, thus strengthening democratic systems. During elections citizens are counted, but later they are rarely taken into account in the decisions made by their governments, as they should be in a genuine democracy. But now, the powers-that-be will not only hear, but will also permanently listen to the opinions of their citizens.

“Free and responsible”, that is how Article 1 of the UNESCO Constitution describes educated people. In the Anthropocene, guaranteeing the habitability of the earth and a decent life for all human beings constitutes an essential responsibility, because the basis of all human rights is equal dignity for all, no matter their gender, the color of their skin, their beliefs, ideology or age.

When we contemplate the world as a whole we realize that, with praiseworthy exceptions, ambitions of supremacy have created a situation in which force prevails over reason, despite the excellent plans for world governance based on the United Nations System conceived by President Roosevelt in 1944 and 1945.

Democratic President Obama has wisely avoided the financial collapse prompted by high-risk funds, but in Europe we are constantly monitoring changes in the risk premium while those who control the major sources of (political, financial, military, energy, media...) power distract the people's attention, converting a majority of citizens into spectator "fans" whose fanatical allegiances obscure the true challenges, such as those that affect the environment, health, etc. And we look on passively while the markets harass the less favored political parties and bewilder citizens.

And nevertheless, for the first time in history radical changes are now feasible thanks to three favorable circumstances:

1. Knowledge of what is actually happening in the world, increasing our sense of solidarity (material and "intellectual and moral", in the words of the Preamble of the UNESCO Constitution);
2. Larger numbers of women in decision-making positions, acting by virtue of their inherent powers;
3. The possibility of distant participation, thanks to modern communications and information technologies.

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In the European Union (a mere monetary union, we must remember) the "great (financial, military and media) dominion" prevails, and in the United States, with its unsupportive and ultraconservative Republican Party, it is very difficult to imagine any large-scale mobilization. Although if we take into consideration the whole world and not only the West, it is possible that innumerable peaceful uprisings may yield new "springs", providing opportunities for taking action.

Aware of what is happening all over the globe, citizens will progressively become citizens of the world. And they will evolve from distracted spectators to diligent protagonists.

But the communications media cannot continue to be, as many are, "their master's voice". They can't continue to disregard news of the high levels of pollution in cities such as Milan, Beijing or Madrid, without sounding an alarm as they should. Nor, as we have already indicated, can they continue to ignore the serious and urgent recommendations issued only a few weeks ago by the Nobel Peace Prize Laureates in Barcelona.

Let us all demand that 2016 mark the beginning of the end of the armament craze in favor of the sanity of development. Yes, it crucial to raise our voices and change our present course before it is too late. It would be an unforgivable historical error to forget the great challenges presently facing the majority of people and that will soon affect us all, allowing ourselves to be overcome by the trinkets and ruckus of consumerism, without realizing its negative effects, with frequently biased communications media that promote herd mentality and ignorance of what really matters.

The voice of “We, the Peoples...” of the Preamble of the United Nations Charter, which thanks to their numbers, strength and good sense are capable of ensuring global compliance with the minimum conditions for commencing that “new beginning” proclaimed in the *Earth Charter*.

With the irreplaceable support of all types of communications media, the voice of the peoples could finally prevail over the multi-millionaire business conglomerates, so that the interests of mankind may be taken into account; so that at last processes that darken the horizons of the future generations may be halted; and so that the conditions for a decent life on earth may no longer be placed in jeopardy. All of this is unthinkable without the undaunted and diligent contribution of the omnipresent and all-powerful information and communications media. To a great extent they will determine whether in the next few years there is a shift from our present alarming course of governance in conceptual and structural chaos, with no direction, to global citizens capable of fully exercising their human rights. To fulfill our intergenerational duties and not leave our descendants a ramshackle world, it is essential to “facilitate the supreme transition from force to words”.

Inspired by the timely publications of Stephane Hessel and José Luis Sampedro—“Time for Outrage”, “Take Action”—, in 2012 I published a short work entitled *Crime of Silence*. It ends with a poem that I wrote in 1994 that says “*Crime of silence / We must become the voice / of those who have been / silenced. / May all of those who can / join their voices / in this outcry.*”

Recent Global Proposals

During 2015 three especially relevant proposals were made that must now be taken into account in order to ensure that they are put into practice.

a) Conflict Prevention

In September, 2015 the Secretary General of the United Nations presented an extremely relevant report concerning conflict prevention. A “collective recommitment” preceded a series of proposals based on an analysis of the new global situation and “early warning”. It is essential that the United Nations system not only be called upon to maintain peace or resolve critical situations, but that it likewise be given the capacity whenever possible to prevent situations that may result in conflict. And, above all, to avoid unilateral actions, which are inadmissible from an ethical or from any point of view, such as the invasion of Iraq that was based on simulation and lies.

Dialogue-Centered Conflict Prevention and Resolution Will Be Actively Promoted in the African Continent

“Preventive diplomacy” and mediation are essential for peace building to prevail and, in the words of the preamble of the United Nations Charter, “to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war.” The Secretary General underscored that it is necessary work “through the United Nations System” to resolve a series of conflicts originating in several countries’ unilateral action and that are extremely difficult to resolve (the present intervention of Saudi Arabia in Yemen, the origin and evolution of the war in Libya, etc).

It is essential to re-found the United Nations and indispensable to implement the Secretary General’s proposed measures as soon as possible.

b) Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)

The United Nations Summit on Sustainable Development Goals for 2030 increased the eight goals established for the period between 2000 and 2015 to seventeen. The final Declaration encourages member states to implement them in such a way as to actually transform present society, so that the word “sharing” that was so important in the early years of the creation of the United Nations System can once again serve as a guideline for the future and to prevent our current humanly intolerable inequalities.

The International Peace Bureau, Nobel Peace Prize recipient in 1910, has declared 2016 as the year of “Disarmament for Development”, with a view to being able to finance the adopted resolutions. In emergency situations it is essential to overcome the distrust generated by the reiterated incapacity to implement the development plans established in the 1960s, 1970s and in 2000, being an essential and indispensable aspect for achieving the required radical change of course. In effect, for years the General Assembly debated the nature of development and concluded that it must be “comprehensive” (that is, not only economic, but also social and cultural development), endogenous, sustainable and, finally in 1989, Deputy Director of UNICEF Richard Jolly suggested, “human”.

But instead of increasing aid for development, it has progressively decreased. For that reason, this initiative must be supported. The time has come for making popular demands, either in person or through cyberspace.

It is important to note that the African Union recently adopted an *Agenda 2063* to achieve the social and economic transformation of Africa within the next 50 years. This Agenda includes seven principal African “aspirations” that “reflect our desire for shared prosperity and well-being, for unity and integration, for a continent of free citizens and expanded horizons, where the full potential of women and youth are realized, and with freedom from fear, disease and want. The mechanisms for peaceful resolution of conflicts will be functional at all levels. As a first step, conflict prevention and resolution based on dialogue will be promoted so that by 2020 all guns will be silent. A culture of peace and tolerance shall be

nurtured in Africa's children and youth through peace education”.

We live in an economy based on exclusion, short-term interests, speculation, outsourcing of production and preparation for war that has created an extraordinarily complex situation that requires us to adopt urgent measures to rectify the present tendencies, particularly focusing on processes that are potentially irreversible. The so-called “welfare society” is only enjoyed by 20% of the world's inhabitants who live in the most prosperous neighborhoods of our global village. In progressive degrees of poverty, 80% of humanity subsists in extremely unbearable circumstances. And we mustn't allow this to be exacerbated by the historical intergenerational offense of allowing the quality of life of future generations to deteriorate, without any possibility of subsequent improvement.

As noted previously, “sharing”, which was a keyword in the United Nations System in the 1950s and 1960s, has progressively lost its prominence and instead of strengthening the most needy countries with comprehensive, endogenous sustainable and human development, development aid has been reduced to contemptuous levels. The World Bank for Reconstruction and Development “lost” its last name and has become a tool in the hands of the large financial institutions, weakening the nation-state, and progressively transferring resources and power to the giant multinationals. Only then will it be possible to finally imagine a summit on the environment capable of enabling all countries to act rapidly and intelligently when faced with actual emergency situations.

c) *Global Agreement on the Climate*

This was preceded by documents of extraordinary interest that I would like to mention here:

1. Obama’s significant decision with an emergency plan against climate change in which he emphasized that “we are the first generation to feel the effect of climate change and the last generation who can do something about it”.
2. Pope Francis in his encyclical on ecology *Laudato Si* expressed special interest in conversing with all people concerning “our common home”. His appeal commences by underscoring that “the urgent challenge to protect our common home includes the desire to bring the whole human family together to seek sustainable and integral development, for we know that things can change”. And he adds that “we require a new and universal solidarity”... and that “climate change is a global problem with grave implications: environmental, social, economic, political and for the distribution of goods. It represents one of the principal challenges facing humanity in our day”. He then refers to the need to ensure “fresh drinking water” as a basic fundamental and universal human right and underscores that the “foreign debt of poor countries has become a way of controlling them, yet this is not the case where ecological debt is concerned”. “There is no room for the globalization of indifference”, and he deems it “indispensable” to “establish a legal framework that can set clear boundaries and ensure the protection of ecosystems; otherwise, the new power structures based on the techno-economic paradigm may overwhelm not only our politics but also our freedom and justice”.

Little has been said about the real force for change: the citizens from all over the world who have taken action and occupied public space to demand that governments act before it is too late

3. President Mikhail Gorbachev's speech at the International Climate Change Symposium in Rome, 27–29 de Mayo de 2015,³ in which he indicated that the Paris Summit was the last chance to limit global temperature increases to 2° Celsius above the current average temperature.

They all lent their support to ensure the success of the Paris Summit. But it is now necessary to implement its conclusions. This time we can't fail, since this is our greatest intergenerational duty and failure to fulfill it would be a historical error that would affect humanity as a whole.

In an excellent article entitled *Of Democracy and Climate: Two Lessons from Paris* the journalist Roberto Savio draws our attention to the problem for mankind of ignoring the serious challenges that we are presently facing. "Little has been said about the real force for change: the citizens from all over the world who have taken action and occupied public space to demand that governments act before it is too late. All this citizen action started with the Limit to Growth Declaration of the Club of Rome in 1972. It has taken nearly 45 years to bring political leaders to accept that the problem exists" (Savio, 2015).

It should likewise be noted here that shortly after its creation in 1945, UNESCO had already launched its International Geological Program (IGP), International Hydrological Program (IHP), Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC), and the great environmental project "Man and Biosphere", as well as contributing to the creation of the International Union for Conservation of Nature. It is essential to consider all of the work done to-date so that mankind can realize that it is still possible to prevent further loss of quality of life on earth. As the UNESCO Director General so correctly observed last December, the numerous contributions to COP 21 were made under the maxim "Changing Minds, Not the Climate".

If we are able to put the United Nations Agenda for Sustainable Development 2030 and the Paris Agreements into practice, our current horizons will undoubtedly be brighter.

We must recognize that during the Obama Administration the United States has facilitated the adoption of agreements and, above all, certain commitments that are indispensable for their implementation. However, we must once again underscore and seek worldwide rejection of the Republican Party that has clearly indicated that if they come to power, they will immediately cease to cooperate in a matter that they consider "irrelevant".

³ http://www.romasymposium.org/images/area-stampa/Symposium_Agenda_eng.pdf

Just as they believe, as McCain as Republican candidate indicated in a televised debate against Barack Obama in 2008, that if there were Americans living in poverty and without access to health services, it was because they deserved it!" Yes, this is one of the greatest incongruencies today that mankind must no longer tolerate. "We, the Peoples..." must unanimously reject the permanent attitude of the fanatical, dogmatic Republican Party that believes that by force the United States must prevail over any other power and rule the world (Krugman, 2015).

The International Agenda of the United Nations in 2016

The election of the Secretary General of the United Nations provides an opportunity to support equal rights by appointing a woman

In addition to an important political agenda –elections in the United States, Iran, Peru, Philippines, Mexico, Russia, Holland, Tunisia, Nicaragua and the Democratic Republic of the Congo– the last day of March is the last day that the US President will preside at the Nuclear Security Summit, which will focus on several critical matters concerning nuclear proliferation. It is essential that progress be made in that regard, particularly since to-date the Republican Party in the United States has prevented the total elimination of this danger, this sword of Damocles, as President Gorbachev sought to do with President Reagan in the 1986 Reykjavik Summit. When President Reagan informed Gorbachev that he could not sign an agreement to totally suppress nuclear weapons, Gorbachev responded:

"It's clear that the President of the United States is subject to the immense power of the US military-industrial complex". He was merely repeating what President Eisenhower whispered in the ear of President John F. Kennedy at his 1961 inauguration: "You, Mr. President, are now the most powerful person on earth... with the exception of the United States' military-industrial complex".

On April 19 the United Nations General Assembly will hold a special session in New York to analyze the world's drug problem, and at which it would be advisable to change the focus from a problem of security to a matter of health, as is the case with alcohol and tobacco, thus eliminating the present terrible drug trafficking.

In Istanbul a World Humanitarian Summit will be held in May, focusing on the serious refugee crisis for which the United Nations is seeking aid in the amount of 20,000 million dollars.

In October the Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) will be held in Quito, being extremely important, given the increasing impact of urban life in all aspects.

In November Morocco will host the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 22) as a follow-up to the Paris Agreements reached in late 2015.

And in December on the last day of the year, United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon's term in office will come to an end. Replacing him with a woman would signal support for equality in the exercise of responsibilities at the highest level.

Together with these programmed events, there will be meetings of the G7 and G20 that are fortunately less and less effective, and which it is clear should urgently be replaced by a democratic multilateral system, by a United Nations endowed with the human, technical, military and financial resources to make the UN the maximum authority with respect to the radical changes that are now urgent and indispensable.

Proposals on Matters that Cannot be Postponed

Before it is too late, it is essential to take action to reform the United Nations System. Let's look into the eyes of our descendants, children and the underprivileged and firmly take action against those who, in the present chaos of political and economic irresponsibility, are leading humanity into a situation that is inadmissible from any viewpoint. Both Pope Francis and President Obama have warned of the risks and future prospects and have urged us to adopt urgent measures. What is transpiring at the global level (lack of aid for Haiti and Nepal, neglect of the refugees and immigrants, reduced aid for development, the nuclear menace, international impunity for all types of trafficking); the wars in Syria, Yemen and Somalia; the situation in Ukraine, reaction

to the so-called Islamic State that requires forceful concerted action instead of murky policies –aiding terrorists for “intrareligious” motives– are all absolutely untenable situations. In that regard, an efficient United Nations and adequate monitoring would have resulted in an “Arab spring” that would have been quite different from what actually transpired.

The United Nations has debated and on several occasions approved international strategies for reducing natural disasters (1989, 1994, 1999, 2005, 2012...); these have prompted analyses and discussions, but the recommendations made have fallen on the deaf ears of market-driven society. In that regard, between 2002 and 2011 a total of 4,130 natural disasters were recorded worldwide in which 1,117,527 people lost their lives.

Professor Juan Antonio Carrillo, a firm defender of International Law and whose works continue to guide the paths that we must urgently follow, warned in 1998 that:

“... it is essential to contribute to achieving an international order based on equality, solidarity and the notion of international community. These goals, reminiscent of those expressed in Article I of the United Nations Charter, may seem naïve and utopian. But they are the basis for my firm conviction that each human being and each human community has the positive obligation to be his brother’s keeper in this unjust, chaotic and convulsive world in which we are destined to live. The historical realization of these ideals obviously requires an institution embracing the international community as a whole, that is, the transition from an international order based on the independence of sovereign states to one of interdependence based on the *totus orbis* of the international community”.

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It’s clear that there is no lack of models to follow. There has been no lack of lucid warnings, initiatives and proposals. But to-date the “peoples” have remained silent. Now they can speak and they are going to do so. Radical changes are on the horizon.

Joint Declaration: Social and Environmental Emergency

In July, 2015 I sent a letter to President Barack Obama in which I expressed my conviction that, jointly with Pope Francis,

a rapid global movement could be launched in support of holding an extraordinary session of the United Nations Assembly to adopt the necessary measures to avoid reaching points of no return, both in environmental as well as in social processes. In that same session a roadmap would be approved to immediately “re-found democratic



multilateralism”, a United Nations that could make the “We, the Peoples” principle of the Charter a reality, with a General Assembly in which 50% of the delegates would represent the states and 50% institutions of civil society, likewise adding a Socioeconomic Council and an Environmental Council to the present Security Council. The system of veto votes would be replaced by weighted votes. In specialized matters, scientific opinion would be taken into account. Thus, environmental matters would be submitted to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

At present, together with several prestigious institutions and with the support of the artistic, scientific, educational and university communities as well as strong popular support, we are proceeding to draft a proposal to implement a United Nations System capable of ensuring world governance and meeting the present challenges.

This Joint Declaration has been signed by several well-known persons and urges all who agree to support it with a view to contributing to the adoption of measures related to the environment, social inequality and extreme poverty and the elimination of nuclear threat via disarmament for development. This is the only means for not only achieving these solutions with the absolutely indispensable haste required at this time, but also the only way to assert the imperative necessity of re-founding the United Nations System. Otherwise, we run the risk of it being too late. We run the risk of being the only generation that was ultimately incapable of meeting the great global challenges at this crucial moment in history.

Europe, without a political and economic union, with no chartered course, whose citizens have historically been welcomed in other countries, is now rejecting refugees and immigrants with an inadmissible lack of solidarity, having drastically reduced aid for development while embracing an economy that is totally dependent on the markets. Instead of being a symbol of democracy and imaginative initiatives, today neoliberal Europe is an area of conceptual and political confusion.

⁴ <https://declaracionconjunta.wordpress.com/primeros-firmantes/>

The problems presently arising worldwide, and especially those that may shortly reach points of no return are undoubtedly different from the problems existing when the United Nations was founded on October 24, 1945. Since then the number of member states has quadrupled and multiple non-governmental actors have appeared on the world stage, some of whom are terrorists, but the majority of whom are peaceful and willing to collaborate, but all of whom conform a totally different scenario. The United Nations has certainly had a significant influence in preventing world wars, but it is equally certain that after being weakened and ceding world governance to other international entities, the present ethical, social and political debacle now rapidly requires an urgent re-founding of efficient democratic multilateralism before it is too late, and once again I am referring to potentially irreversible situations.

Emigrants and Refugees

It is essential to adopt short and medium-term emergency measures to ensure a decent life for those fleeing from violence

The incredible reluctance of certain European countries to receive refugees, contravening the right to asylum is coupled with a manifest lack of solidarity that deprives them of the minimum conditions for a decent life in their countries of origin, forcing so many human beings to attempt to reach the “coasts of abundance”. Thus, it is essential to adopt categorical measures to fight racism and xenophobia, since it is untenable that only three months ago over 20,000 citizens of Dresden were demanding the “immediate massive deportation” of refugees. Likewise, in Switzerland the far right is now the Confederation’s major political force, supporting the rapid reduction of the number of immigrants (obviously excluding those who silently enter the country to deposit their funds in the vast network of bank vaults).

In this matter half-measures or excuses won’t do. All human beings are equal in dignity. Let’s cease to refer to the “welfare society” that comprises less than 18–20% of mankind, and express the solidarity that is so essential for those who receive it and, certainly benefits those who put it into practice.

It is now essential to adopt urgent measures while simultaneously implementing those with the greatest impact, particularly by significantly increasing aid to development and international cooperation with a view to ensuring a life of dignity for all persons in their countries of origin.

Education, science and conscience

It is particularly urgent to take action on education at all levels, to raise awareness of our current responsibilities, to cease to be subjects and become full citizens, to exercise the foresight enabled by digital technology, and to achieve total gender equality. This should be the important mission assigned to the United Nations through UNESCO: to provide our schools, parliaments, town councils and governments with “educated” people, that is people who are “free and responsible”, as set forth in Article I of the UNESCO Constitution. Education to *be*, education to learn *to be*, *rather than to have*, as we are urged to be in reports such as the PISA surveys, which are produced by strictly economic and commercial organizations. We must be guided by the ideas of Paulo Freire or Edgar Morin, among others, which promote self-esteem, creativity, and the full exercise of the distinctive talents of the human species.

Education for democracy. Education at all levels, cornerstone of the new era on the horizon. Education to fully exercise the exclusive and distinctive capabilities of the human species. Each human being is unique, capable of creating, our hope for the future, both personally and collectively.

At the exact point dividing certainty from doubt is where freedom lies. That great gift of the human species enables us at any moment to tip the balance without lifting a finger. Each one unique, unrepeatable, endowed with the immense and inexplicable powers of creation. Wrapped in perfect, temporal and perishable biological structures –I felt this many years ago and I repeat it frequently– in contrast to their physical limitations, human beings are endowed with an infinite spiritual dimension.

Here is the great dilemma, the great perplexity of human existence, a miracle perhaps, but a mystery in any case: we have the power to think, to imagine, to invent and to foresee the future.

Our conscience allows us to progressively discover what we are like, what we are composed of and how that is reflected in “health”, and in mental stability (physiopathology). Researching, researching incessantly to uncover the realities of all living beings; and of the planet we inhabit; and of the infinite universe. Contemplating and reflecting on the cosmos, on the galaxies, on their colossal dimensions and doing so as well with the smallest particles, the elements that comprise the minimum parts of matter. From the most distant stars to quarks, our curiosity and desire for increased knowledge knows no bounds.

Science and conscience in order to firmly and boldly rectify present tendencies and establish the basis for a different future of equal human dignity, providing all people access to the means for freely developing their individual abilities.

“Knowledge for foresight, foresight for prevention” is the adage that the scientific community must constantly bear in mind. Foresight, the capacity to avoid points of no return in potentially irreversible processes, is undoubtedly one of the fundamental abilities that scientists must continually exercise.

Scientists have frequently assumed an attitude that is excessively reactive instead of acting on their own initiatives and at the vanguard of popular representation, since there are many areas of local, regional and international government that require the broad knowledge that only the most experienced scientists have and can offer.

We now have the means and know the course to be taken. But we lack the conscience. We lack the personal resolution and the will at all levels to act without delay to invent the future

It is logical that parliamentarians aren't the ones who should address and propose solutions to matters of a scientific nature (for example, transgenics, diseases derived from pandemics, risks from different types of energy sources or recapturing carbon dioxide). Never subjected to political power but, when matters of this nature must be addressed, scientists must remain close by so as to ensure that political leaders adopt the best solutions for the well-being of individuals, groups and the environment.

As I have previously underscored, we require a strong multilateral institution to constantly ensure that preventive knowledge is applied knowledgeably and with foresight. Priorities that require immediate attention must be addressed with close multidisciplinary cooperation.

It is scientists who have progressively enabled rapid communication between great distances, who have facilitated the transportation of goods and persons, who have gradually provided the means to combat the pandemics that decimated the earth's inhabitants in the past ...

If today we are experiencing a fascinating moment for change in these tendencies, which from time immemorial have so limited or prevented personal development, it is due to the availability of communications and information technologies that enable us for the first time to have a *global conscience*, so that we not only know how the inhabitants of distant places live and die, but are now aware of the needs of others and can better appreciate the things we have.

It is our global conscience that awakens our sense of solidarity and mutual aid, and which clearly shows us the path that science should take down the road toward tomorrow.

At last, science and conscience, hand in hand, to ensure the sustainability of the planet. At last, science and conscience united to prevent the exploitation of scientific progress for the benefit of a privileged few who have subjected the rest of the world's citizens to their will. At last, science and conscience for the transition from a culture of domination, imposition and violence to a culture of dialogue, conciliation and peace. That great historical turning point from force to words will be accompanied by the inseparable pairing of science and conscience.

At last, “We the Peoples”

This can only be achieved by “the Peoples” if there is adequate mobilization, if they cease to be passive spectators to become tireless protagonists working for the urgently needed transformation, enlightening today's bleak horizons and commencing a new era. It is clear that only democratic multilateralism can provide efficient governance at a moment when, as Amin Maalouf has so lucidly indicated, unprecedented situations require unprecedented solutions”.

James A. Paul, founder of the NGO Working Group on the Security Council, recently wrote an article concerning the United Nations' 70th anniversary underscoring that the time has come for mankind to take energetic action and that, rather than waiting for the disasters that the lack of good world governance will engender, citizens should “demand now a functional, effective and strong world body, democratic and proactive, that will protect the environment, ensure adequate conflict resolution and improve the circumstances of the world as a whole”.

The final text of a Universal Declaration of Democracy, the only context in which the full exercise of human rights is possible and equal dignity can be achieved, would be submitted for approval at that General Assembly. This would be a legacy for future generations so that the horrible bloody images of men, women and children abandoned to their fates will never be repeated. A world in which the conditions of habitability would

provide a decent life in which cooperation rather than confrontation would be the norm. This would be a means for celebrating seventy years with a historic transition from “si vis pacem, para bellum” to “si vis pacem, para *verbum*”.

Democracy is the solution. But only genuine democracy in which all voices may be raised and heard, eliminating the present situation in which citizens only count when they cast their votes, but are never taken into account in decision-making processes. For that reason, together with well-known figures such as Karel Vasak, Juan Antonio Carrillo Salcedo, Mario Soares, Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, Edgar Morin..., we drafted a Universal Declaration of Democracy, in the belief that this is the only context in which the full exercise of human rights can be exercised and equal dignity for all can be achieved.

We now have the means and know the course to be taken. But we lack the conscience. We lack the personal resolution and the will at all levels to act without delay to invent the future.

Addressing the youth of Latin America, José Martí prophetically observed that “the solution is to create.” This is the profound message that we must communicate to the world to be able to diligently and efficiently face the great challenges of our times.

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