

## OBJECTIVES OF THE MILLENNIUM (II)

### The 21<sup>st</sup> Century: The Peoples' Century?

On July 22 the United Nations published a draft document containing the resolutions to be adopted at the high-level plenary session of the General Assembly on September 14-16, 2005, concerning the Millennium Objectives five years after their proclamation. It reaffirms the essential importance of multilateralism and the commitment to achieving effective cooperation in the face of transnational threats, as well as approaching the causes of present-day dangers and challenges. Respect for human rights provides the basis for development and security –which are also interactive– and is one of the fundamental concepts in the document. It likewise affirms that all cultures and civilizations can contribute to enriching humanity, together with an understanding of religious and cultural diversity throughout the world, especially through dialogue and cooperation. The document proposes adopting specific measures in four principal areas: development, peace and collective security, human rights and the rule of law, and strengthening the United Nations.

The section on development includes financing (the Monterrey Consensus), debt relief, south-south cooperation, rural and agricultural development, fighting AIDS and other health crises, reinforcing the role of women, emigration, science and technology, the specific needs of Africa... .

The chapter on peace and collective security underscores the need to provide special protection to children and to finally incorporate women in processes of conflict prevention and resolution; to maintain a peace that

unifies –one of the most relevant aspects of this text– building peace by setting up a special intergovernmental advisory commission, which will present its annual report to General Assembly. Other points of great importance include disarmament and nonproliferation, particularly with regard to nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, in accordance with the corresponding treaties and conventions, actions to be taken against terrorism and transnational crime... .

With respect to human rights and the rule of law, the document proposes reinforcing all of the United Nations’ mechanisms in that regard, and implementing the Special Program for Education in Human Rights; the protection of refugees; the International Court of Justice; democracy –“we reaffirm that democracy is a universal value”...-; human security; a culture of peace, and initiatives toward achieving a dialogue between cultures and civilizations- ...” promoting a culture of peace and of dialogue at eh national, regional and international level... .

And, with regard to the United Nations, the document underscores “the commitment to strengthen the United Nations to increase its authority and efficiency, reaffirming the prominent role that the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Commission that should, among other functions, “focus on the relations between peace and development”...; and, very significantly, as a subsidiary body of the General Assembly the document creates a Human Rights Council with a very specific mandate... .

The important document to which I am referring with such sentiments of hope also includes reforms of UN management, of the Secretariat, for greater “coherence of the United Nations’ system” as a whole. And lastly, I believe it is particularly relevant to emphasize the cooperation that it

foresees between the United Nations and the Interparliamentary Union, as well as nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), civil society and the private sector.

The Preamble of one of the most brilliant documents of our era, the Constitution of the UNESCO, which was created in London in 1945 to “construct peace in the minds of men”, states that “peace based exclusively upon the political and economic arrangements of governments would not be a peace which could secure the unanimous, lasting and sincere support of the peoples of the world, and peace must therefore be founded, if it is not to fail, upon the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind”.

If we take a careful look at the past, it is evident that until now people have never been featured on center stage. We have been subjects, each playing totally separate roles, frequently fighting for opposite causes. But the time has now come to participate, to be taken into account, to exercise full citizenship. The time has come for solidarity, promoted and exercised by civil society, based on the fraternity proclaimed in Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.” Different –each human being is unique– but radically equal, without preferences of any nature, united by essential values that are accepted by all. The UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001) proclaims that “respect for the diversity of cultures, tolerance, dialogue and cooperation in a climate of mutual trust and understanding are among the best guarantees of international peace and security.” Nevertheless, frequently, even in democratic systems, citizens have been counted in

elections or in opinion polls, but their opinions haven't been taken into account.

**[It was at the end of a world war, which was particularly horrendous given the abominable extermination, genocide, number of victims and depth of suffering, when the United Nations Charter send the world a message from San Francisco in 1945, a great message of hope: “We, the people, have determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war. And I wish to underscore that this was a preventive measure, adopted by all, taking future generations as their point of reference. To achieve this goal, which is essential for making the dream come true, the deepest desire of people from the beginning of time, it is necessary to learn to look forward, to build bastions of peace, to move from an age-old culture of imposition, dominion, force and violence toward a culture of dialogue, conciliation and peace.] *This paragraph may be deleted if necessary.***

But to raise our voices, to participate, and to contribute to the establishment of true democracies requires an educational system capable of instilling attitudes of understanding, willingness to listen, and love. Education as “personal sovereignty.” Education that will eradicate forever the perverse adage “if you want peace, prepare for war,” promoting in its place the building of peace. **[If you want peace, work for it with your individual efforts each day. If you want peace, practice the solidarity of sharing, giving part of your time, resources and knowledge.] *May be deleted if necessary.***

Having replaced all peoples with just a few, international democracy with plutocracy, moral principles with the market, the world is experiencing

what Antonio Machado meant with his ingenious warning: “It is mindless to confuse value with price.” Faced with so many broken promises, those who had lost hope but still expected outstretched hands rather than hands raised against them, and finding themselves alienated and deceived, have often fallen into a progressive spiral of frustration, radicalization, hostility, resentment..., eventually joining, as is common in such breeding grounds, great emigrant waves of desperate people, and even resulting to demonstrations of violence and aggression.

With the new communications technologies, in addition to its undeniably prominent role in providing aid, civil society now has the possibility not only of making itself heard, but also of finally being taken into account. In order to fulfill the millennium objectives, to eradicate poverty, to be able to fall asleep without dreaming of our brothers who lack the minimum resources for subsistence, so that the voice that we owe our young people will be heard and will make a difference. The time is coming in which people will count, the time of real democracy. The 21<sup>st</sup> century may at last be the century of the people. Our century. The century of all people.

As a scientist I must underscore that it is necessary to understand the nature of reality in order to be able to transform it. And it is clear that civil society will progressively acquire the mechanisms to quickly identify the lies, excuses and efforts to demonstrate, amid much publicity, the undemonstratable. We cannot tolerate Western efforts to analyze the perversity of Islamic fundamentalist teachings when for decades we have permitted –including in audiovisual media– unlimited violence and insult, after having accepted as “irremediable” the fact that thousands die daily of neglect and indifference. Extremism of any nature is equally destructive. We must be aware of the reality of the “teachings” of beliefs that promptly

convert people into individuals. Religious sentiments that isolate, that fill converts with fear and superstition... . On the one hand, they seek to convert us into mere spectators of what is happening around us. And on the other, multiple efforts to proselytize oppress rather than liberate.

Even in Western society we continue to accept ideas that today are inadmissible. Silence reigns and a “curfew” has been imposed on our conscience. But now, in contrast, during the century of the people the word “indisputable” will cease to exist. Solidarity will give wings to so many citizens who, little by little, will have dared to fly high and wide, through dialogue, through thought, that distinctive characteristic of the human species. “It is through fraternity that liberty is saved”, wrote Victor Hugo several centuries ago. It is through that sentiment that we cease to be individuals and become people, citizens capable of persuading all others that knowledge of reality, anticipation, the evolution of rules and criteria are fundamental elements if we are to sail to other ports and change our present course. **[Bearing in mind, as I indicated previously, that our youth and what they represent, the future, must constantly remain at the center of our concerns. We judge the behavior of our youth, instead of realizing the lifestyles, interests, gestures and likes to which we subject them.]** *May be deleted if necessary.* A truce will be necessary if we are to progress from a culture of force to a culture of dialogue and peace, from the inertia and resistance to change that can provoke rupture and disorder in our presently chaotic existence to the world that we dream of for our children. The first thing that all of us must do is to agree to stop and exercise our duty to remember –our past and future memory- and to think, listen, join forces and assume commitments toward a new era of history. During this truce, and it will only take a few hours, we should above all reread texts that were written at exceptionally critical moments, which

reflect the insight with which these basic questions were approached: “the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people.” (Preamble to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, December 10, 1948). Isn’t this exactly the first conclusion to which we should return sixty years later?

“The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government.” (Article 21 of the Universal Declaration). Thus, it is the people who should ultimately decide what investments should be made, and what should be the priorities of a new government. Priorities should be established by first taking into account the victims: victims of our lack of solidarity, thousands who die from hunger each day; victims of terror and violence; those who suffer from still-incurable diseases; those who live in fear; children who are victims of a system that is so unjust as to turn them into soldiers as they enter adolescence or to push them into isolation. These are the priorities, whether the huge war machine and those who control it wish to recognize it or not. There are 10,000 nuclear warheads in existence sixty years after Hiroshima. How can we live and thrive in this radical reality faced with a threat of such magnitude? These are the priorities of the immense majority who have lived for centuries accepting the dictates of the powerful. We must now change from exclusive uniformity to inclusive diversity. From unilateralism to multilateralism, to participative pluralism. From the history of power to the history of the people.

In “Hago saber”, Enrique Bardosa wrote these lines: “With the authority vested in me as a person... / who bears a name that is simple and forgettable”. With this authority, the people will cease to comply with decisions that do not emanate from a truly democratic system at the local

and global level. Just as we each need time to think, to talk with others and, especially with those around us, the moment has come to pause and reflect, so that all can understand that it will benefit of the immense majority if a transformation, a change of this presently-stagnant situation takes place. Time to reflect and time to read. The April 7, 1936 edition of “La Voz” published the following declarations of Federico Garcia Lorca: “... the world come to a standstill faced with the hunger that ravages the peoples. As long as there is economic inequality, the world cannot think... . The day that hunger disappears, the world will be rocked with the largest spiritual explosion that humanity has ever known. No one can imagine the joy that will erupt on the day of the Great Revolution.”