

Planetary Emergency

The Paris Environmental Summit that will be held next December cannot fail to take urgent measures to safeguard the habitability of the earth.

Positive signs to be taken into account:

1. Pope Francis' Encyclica on Ecology.
2. President Obama's significant decision, with an emergency plan against climate change.
3. President Mikhail Gorbachev's speech at the International Climate Change Symposium in Rome, 27-29 May 2015.
4. The Agreement signed by the mayors of capitals and major cities under the direction of Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo.
5. President François Hollande's constant efforts to achieve a consensus on the specific measures to adopt at the Paris Summit.
6. Other relevant contributions of individuals and institutions of international renown, as well as the communications media.
7. Recommendations and willingness to participate on the part of the scientific, academic, artistic and intellectual communities.
8. A re-founding of the United Nations: faced with the need for immediate action in view of the potentially irreversible nature of ecological processes, the possibility of holding an Extraordinary Session of the United Nations General Assembly to adopt the necessary urgent measures and, in addition, to establish guidelines for the re-founding of a multilateral democratic system. This is warranted in view of the poor progress made toward fulfilling the Millennium Objectives (MOs) and, given the present lack of solidarity, increased social inequality and subordination to the dictates of commercial consortia, no one believes that the Sustainable Development Objectives (SDOs) to be adopted in September will actually be implemented.

1. Pope Francis' Ecology Encyclical

As did Pope Saint John XXIII in his Encyclical *Pacem In Terris* to the “entire Catholic world” and “to all men and women of good will”, Pope Francis has shown a special interest in entering into dialogue with all people concerning “our common home”.

He warns, as did Paul VI, that “every effort to protect and improve our world entails profound changes in lifestyles, models of production and consumption, and the established structures of power which today govern societies”... And he underscores the extent to which “concern for nature, justice for the poor, commitment to society and interior peace” are inseparable.

His “appeal” commences by underscoring that “The urgent challenge to protect our common home includes a concern to bring the whole human family together to seek sustainable and integral development, for we know that things can change”. And he adds, “Young people demand change. They wonder how anyone can claim to be building a better future without thinking of the environmental crisis and the sufferings of the excluded”.

“I urgently appeal, then, for a new dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet. We need a conversation which includes everyone, since the environmental challenge we are undergoing, and its human roots, concern and affect us all... We require a new and universal solidarity”.

He then emphasizes the importance of science and education: “...drawing on the results of the best scientific research available today, letting them touch us deeply and provide a concrete

foundation for the ethical and spiritual itinerary that follows...; change is impossible without motivation and a process of education”.

On specific points he provides a detailed analysis of the human activities that, in view of their present intensity, have a clear impact on environmental quality: “...a number of scientific studies indicate that most global warming in recent decades is due to the great concentration of greenhouse gases (carbon dioxide, methane, nitrogen oxides and others) released mainly as a result of human activity... the intensive use of fossil fuels... deforestation...”.

Pope Francis doesn't tiptoe around the issues: “If the present trends continue, this century may well witness extraordinary climate change and unprecedented destruction of ecosystems, with serious situations... a rise in the sea level. 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... There is an urgent need to develop policies so that, in the next few years, the emission of carbon dioxide and other highly polluting gases can be drastically reduced, for example, substituting fossil fuels and developing sources of renewable energy”.

He then refers to the need to ensure access to “fresh drinking water” as a basic fundamental and universal human right... To hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor..., because both everyday experience and scientific research show that the gravest effects of all attacks on the environment are suffered by the poorest”.

And, thus, the “foreign debt of poor countries has become a way of controlling them, yet this is not the case where ecological debt is concerned. In different ways, developing countries, where the most

important reserves of the biosphere are found, continue to fuel the development of richer countries at the cost of their own present and future. The developed countries ought to assist poorer countries to support policies and programmes of sustainable development".

"There is no room for the globalization of indifference",... and he deems it "indispensable" to establish a "legal framework which 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 freedom and justice".

"The natural environment is a collective good, the patrimony of all humanity and the responsibility of everyone...". And he concludes: "Ecological culture cannot be reduced to a series of urgent and partial responses to the immediate problems of pollution, environmental decay and the depletion of natural resources. There needs to be a distinctive way of looking at things, a way of thinking, policies, and educational programmes, a lifestyle and a spirituality which together generate resistance to the assault of the technocratic paradigm... All of this shows the urgent need for us to move forward in a bold cultural revolution".

Also noteworthy are the Pope's reflections concerning the special responsibilities of the Christian community and the need to be aware of and to take into account the customs, practices and traditions of indigenous peoples.

In the section in Chapter Four on "Justice Between Generations", he firmly states that these duties are not optional, but rather a matter of basic justice, since the earth that we have received also belongs to the generations to come.

Any potentially irreversible process requires immediate and effective action: “The effects of the present imbalance can only be reduced by our decisive action, here and now. We need to reflect on our accountability to those who will have to endure the dire consequences”.

And he insists that it is urgent to find effective solutions worldwide.

The Pope recalled the Summit held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, twenty years after the Stockholm Declaration, and underscored how little progress had been made when Rio+20 was held where a “wide-ranging but ineffectual outcome document” was issued. There are many international agreements that are never implemented. What is needed is an agreement on systems of governance for the whole range of so-called “global commons”... to reduce pollution and ensure the development of the poorer countries and regions.

Thus, it is urgent to achieve the re-founding of a multilateral democratic system to for once and for all replace the unacceptable shameful plutocratic groups (G6, G7, G8... G20) that have marginalized the United Nations with their neoliberal doctrines.

In conclusion, I find this statement in the Encyclical particularly relevant: “It is essential to devise stronger and more efficiently organized international institutions, with functionaries who are appointed fairly by agreement among national governments and empowered to impose sanctions”.

2. President Obama’s significant decision, with an emergency plan against climate change

President Obama is proving his ability to implement the ideals that may provide a solution to the most urgent challenges of today.

Despite the irrational resistance of the powerful Republican opposition, he has dared to fittingly face the serious problems besetting his country and the world in general.

He soon distanced himself from the neoliberal doctrines imposed by his predecessor while still in office at the end of 2008 (which the European monetary union obsessively followed and continues to do so), establishing through the Federal Reserve incentive funds for employment, public works and relocalization of production. Obama likewise implemented "*Medicare*", a democratic goal since 1946 He legalized the status of over five million immigrants in the United States, reached out to Muslims rather than declaring them part of the "axis of evil", and he has sought and achieved an excellent agreement with Iran rather than invading the country as Bush Jr. did in Iraq, accompanied inexplicably by Tony Blair and with the even more inexplicable cooperation of Jose María Aznar. Obama promotes the use of words rather than force... and a few days ago, as if that were not enough, he announced a significant change of course with respect to the environment. To do so he used his veto powers to paralyze a law approving the construction of the giant Keystone XL oil pipeline. And now, with his "Clean Power Plan", greenhouse gas emissions are to be limited in the second most polluting country on earth, after China.

The annual cost of reducing emissions until 2030 has been estimated to be 9 billion dollars... an amount that is quite "doable" if compared to military spending in the US, which President Obama has also reduced. In addition to this excellent and courageous decision concerning climate change, he has also recently established an initiative in high-performance computing -a million calculations per second- to be able to accurately predict climate change.

"We are the first generation to feel the effect of climate change and the last generation who can do something about it", said the President when presenting his program. And aware of the points of no return that mean that decisions of this nature cannot be

postponed, he added: "... when we deal with climate change the possibility of being too late must be not forgotten".

The United States has experienced the highest temperatures during the first fourteen years of this century, and 2014 beat all previous records. In contrast to the incredible reckless attitude of the Republican Party (and despite the fact that the Pentagon considers climate change as a US security threat), in his speech President Obama showed respect for and confidence in the recommendations of scientists: "Science tells us we have to do more if we want to protect our economy and our children's health." "Climate change is no longer just about the future...; it's about the reality that we're living with every day, right now".

China and the US are responsible for 45% of the world's CO₂ emissions. In a meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping last December an agreement was announced to reduce emissions in the US by 28% in 2025 and that China would cease to increase them in 2030. China emits 7.9 tons of carbon dioxide per capita, the US 16.4 tons and the EU 7.4 tons.

3. President Mikhail Gorbachev's speech at the International Climate Change Symposium in Rome, 27-29 May 2015

President Gorbachev, founder of the International Green Cross and the World Political Forum, delivered a speech in Rome that should certainly be taken into account in the preparation and implementation of the Paris accords: "In December 2015, world leaders will gather in Paris to negotiate a binding agreement to reduce global carbon emissions. It will be the twenty-first UN climate summit since 1992. Two decades of climate negotiations unfortunately have been accompanied by mounting emissions and rising temperatures. The World Meteorological Organization has pronounced 2014 as the warmest year on record for the planet.

Climate scientists say the window of opportunity for strong action on climate is rapidly closing, but that we can yet stabilize global atmospheric temperatures and put the world on a path to sustainable development. In fact, Paris is the last chance to stay below 2 degrees Celsius beyond the pre-industrial temperature”.

Political leaders have largely ignored processes that are transforming the biosphere, creating multiple crises –food water, energy, poverty, climate... In fact, we are facing a crisis of our present developmental model.

President Gorbachev also proposed urgent efforts to improve relations between the West and Russia through dialogue, consensus and serious improvements in international governance, to enable the implementation of a joint agenda addressing problems of security, energy, economic cooperation and sustainability.

4. The Agreement signed by the mayors of capitals and major cities under the leadership of Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo

City governments may be strong promoters of a culture of non-violence, solidarity and peace, including peace with the environment. Individual peace, peace in our towns, in the workplace, in schools and at home... Fundipau has devised an excellent program in Barcelona to enable city governments to promote peaceful conflict resolution based on mediation. Atyme is doing the same in Madrid.

The idea is to broaden and implement the already significant world network of Mayors for Peace.

Under the direction of Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo, a declaration has been prepared on “Climate Change: European Commitment and Local Solutions”. It is not only an excellent initiative but, in view of the Climate Summit to be held in Paris in December, a proposal that comes at an especially significant time.

The statement dated March 25, 2015 underscores that “If climate change is global, solutions are first and foremost local. Because large cities are at the crossroads of these two levels, they are at the forefront of the fight against climate change. This is why we, the European capitals and metropolises that represent more than 60 million inhabitants and have significant investment capacity have decided to join forces and strengthen the instruments that will lead us toward the energy and environmental transition”. In Paris, the immense strength that the synergy of municipal power may have will undoubtedly play a prominent role in ensuring the success of this important Conference.

In effect, the number of cities that are showing concern for environmental degradation is constantly growing, although the immense media powers of the “markets” have converted many citizens into passive and subjugated spectators.

But fortunately, today people can now express themselves and those who were previously silent and obedient subjects have become citizens capable of participating and mobilizing.

The Climate Change Declaration underscores that it is imperative to progressively replace present urban transport systems with more fuel-efficient ones (electric cars, cable cars, underground rail networks...) and heating and air conditioning that use renewable energy sources.

The EU, which has set so many bad examples in the last few years with its neoliberal harassment having reached incredible limits (to the point of appointing governments without elections in Italy and Greece, cradle of democracy) could now set good guidelines to be followed worldwide if it takes notice of the agreement reached by the European mayors, concisely outlined in the Declaration. And the United Nations, whose necessary participation is justly underscored in the text, could act as a catalyst for achieving global consensus. As a scientist and former Director General of UNESCO in Paris (an

institution that has worked so diligently since the 1950s on hydrological, geological, oceanographic and, in general, projects concerning the biosphere, including the leading Man & Biosphere program), I would like to express to Mayor Hidalgo, and to all of the mayors who have or will sign the Declaration, my warmest wishes for the success of their municipal governments' contribution to the Summit. They can't disappoint us this time. The inhabitants of the earth and future generations hope to be able to continue to experience the mystery of existence with dignity.

The forward-looking organization "Futuribles", also located in Paris, has expressed this with great clarity: "Cities will become the protagonists and the motor for change worldwide".

Pope Francis likewise underscored the crucial role of citizens in protecting the environment: "Unless citizens control political power –national, regional and municipal- it will not be possible to control damage to the environment. Local legislation can be more effective, too, if agreements exist between neighboring communities... I am referring to an ecological citizenship".

5. President François Hollande's constant efforts to achieve a consensus on the specific measures to adopt at the Paris Summit

In the last few months President François Hollande has intensified concerted activities to achieve a consensus at the Climate Summit. As an example, he obtained Parliament's approval of the Energy Transition Act.

In close collaboration with Minister of Ecology and Energy Segolène Royal and Minister of Foreign Affairs Laurent Fabius, Hollande has produced concrete proposals as to how to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the 49 countries (29 from the EU) responsible for 55% of those emissions. But the number of countries and objectives must still be increased... because temperatures must not exceed +2° Centigrade with respect to 1997. Time is of the essence and, as

underscored in Pope Francis and Obama's messages, it is essential to obtain specific commitments to protect the environment worldwide, to fulfill our responsibilities to future generations that can no longer be postponed.

6. Other relevant contributions of individuals and institutions of international renown, as well as the communications media

- INDIVIDUALS

-Former President Mario Soares, one of our most lucid contemporary figures and a tireless worker for peace and social justice, also underscored soon after the *Laudato Si* Encyclical was issued that it is essential to take immediate action, pointing to the Pope's valor and courage to denounce the "high cost for the poorest and the increase of privileges for the wealthiest".

-Roberto Savio, renowned journalist, political analyst and, above all, provider of solutions, offered some excellent recommendations for the great transitions on the horizon in his "Global Governance and Common Values: the Unavoidable Debate". Concerning the conference of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change he said: "It is known that some members of the Republican Party in the United States are financed by energy giants, and it goes without saying that they will do everything they can to boycott any deal on climate change that U.S. President Barack Obama may try to agree to... It is also known that a number of scientists dissent from the thinking of the more than 2,000 scientists whose work has contributed to presenting the link between human activity and deterioration of the climate. Of course the dissenting voices have received a disproportionate echo in conservative media. Moreover, in some cases, there is evidence that some of them have been receiving funds from the fossil fuel industry".

-In relation to the Papal Encyclical, Leonardo Boff just published an excellent article entitled “The Magna Carta of Integral Ecology: Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor”. Its excellent commentaries reflect the wisdom of the commentator: “The tender and fraternal spirit of St. Francis of Assisi is present through the entire text of the Encyclical *Laudato Si...*” And he ends with the final words of the Earth Charter that the Pope likewise quoted, “Let ours be a time remembered for the awakening of a new reverence for life, the firm resolve to achieve sustainability, the quickening of the struggle for justice and peace, and the joyful celebration of life”.

-Two years ago Professor Emilio Muñoz undertook to analyze four fundamental aspects required to adequately meet the challenges of our times: awareness of the environment, energy, lifestyles and values. In his proposals, which should form a part of the urgent matters to be addressed, he refers to the blatant disregard for ethical values vs. economic interests. There are two key words that should always inspire any recommendations: sharing and cooperation, solidarity and working together to be able to successfully complete such important and urgent tasks.

- INSTITUTIONS

-World Academy of Art and Science

In the last few years the contributions of Garry Jacobs and Ivo Slaus of the World Academy and World Universities Consortium have been particularly relevant in the conceptual design of a “new paradigm” that may provide a solution to the great challenges presently facing mankind.

The International Conference on Anticipation to be held in Trento on November 5-7 will make a significant contribution toward achieving the radical changes that present tendencies demand.

One of the distinctive abilities of the human species is the power to anticipate, to foresee and prevent. The WAAS has undoubtedly served as a watchtower, providing not only accurate diagnoses but also timely treatments, especially with respect to social and environmental processes that may reach a point of no return.

Studies carried out to-date address population growth; increased knowledge resulting from longevity; food, water and health requirements; gas and waste production; emigration; the new concept of employment in the digital age; new types of employment; mechanization; new means of transport and renewable energies; and natural disasters.

The education and empowerment of women are fundamental for achieving their effective participation and genuine democratic governance, an indispensable stage for the new era. Under the presidency of Heitor Gurgulino, the WUC supports the crucial role that institutions of higher education play in these moments of such radical change.

-International Peace Bureau

With headquarters in Geneva, the Nobel Peace Prize recipient IPB has for many years played a particularly significant role in seeking peaceful resolution for many types of conflicts. Under the direction of Ingeborg Breines, Colin Archer and Reiner Braun, it is conducting an excellent global campaign to limit military spending and for nuclear disarmament with a view not only of including both objectives in the UN Post-2015 Development Agenda, but to also to achieve significant funds (UN Green Climate Fund) from part of the huge investments currently being made in weapons and military spending (approximately 3 billion dollars daily). In September, 2016 a conference will be held in Berlin on “Disarmament for

Development” that could mark the beginning of the great transition from a neoliberal economy of speculation, delocalization of production and war to an economy based on knowledge for global sustainable and human development.

-Club of Rome

In 1970, the Club of Rome, with exemplary foresight (as was to be expected of Aurelio Peccei) had already established “The Limits to Growth” vs. unlimited intellectual capacity (“No Limits to Learning”, 1979).

This institution was one of the forerunners, with a far-reaching vision of how to proceed, and with foresight that has enabled it to carry out analyses and take timely action.

The speed of events that occur without any ethical regulation render foresight and prevention more difficult at present.

The Spanish Chapter of the Club of Rome, under the presidency of Isidro Fainé and aided by the experience of Honorary President Ricardo Díez Hotchleiner and Vice President José Manuel Morán, has performed the important task of warning of the urgency of adopting immediate measures, since otherwise the analyses and projections of so many institutions will have been to no avail. Given its prominence and popular appeal, the Club of Rome’s Spanish Chapter is presently a principal actor with respect to the planetary emergency to which we refer.

7. Recommendations and willingness to participate of the scientific, academic, artistic and intellectual communities

For the first time in history the time for silence is over: human beings, who until recently were confined intellectually and

physically to very limited spaces, may now express themselves freely.

As for the communications media, we must ensure that the public realizes that “information” is superior to “news” that, as the word “news” means, only reports unusual and extraordinary events. Knowledge of reality as a whole is essential to be able to transform it in depth.

The role of the artistic, scientific, educational, philosophical, i.e., intellectual communities is essential for citizen mobilization and participation.

Ensuring an acceptable legacy for the coming generations is the principal commitment of “We, the Peoples...”, and having been transformed from subjects to full citizens, they will rebel against a system that invests thousands of millions of dollars daily in weapons and military spending for the security of a few, while the majority of mankind lives in inhuman conditions.

Those who are accustomed to using foresight as an essential part of their daily activities –members of “creative communities”- should position themselves at the forefront of those assuming commitments and responsibilities. As Garry Jacobs and Roberto Poli from the WAAS have underscored, “multiple voices are needed to be raised in a resounding outcry to create and design their own future”.

The solution is life-long education for all. Not only in schools or homes, but in society as a whole and for society as a whole, commencing with political leaders and parliamentarians. The scientific community in particular has a mission that it often fails to fulfill: advising parliaments, municipal councils, etc. in specialized areas and, above all, providing them with foresight.

8. Re-founding of the United Nations

As indicated above, faced with the need for immediate action given the potentially irreversible nature of ecological processes, an *Extraordinary Session of the United Nations General Assembly* should be held to adopt the necessary urgent measures and, in addition, to set forth guidelines for the re-founding of a multilateral democratic system.

Several countries have asked that “global citizenship” be made the major focus of the Post-2015 Development Agenda. The speakers who at the 1995 Copenhagen Social Development Summit recalled that “the people should be placed at the center of development” had a great impact. I had the opportunity to participate actively in that summit and I must confess how disappointed I was at the almost immediate disregard of the “mercantilists” for the social context recommended there. Any new vision of social development is unthinkable without the direct participation of a duly reinforced United Nations.

In my brief introductory table of contents I mentioned the United Nations’ crucial role in correcting present tendencies. Much is said of the “welfare society” without immediately underscoring that 80% of mankind lives outside of the most prosperous neighborhood of our global village, surviving in progressive levels of poverty and neglect.

In 1979 the US Academy of Sciences indicated that not only were carbon dioxide emissions on the rise, but also that CO₂ re-uptake by the oceans –the earth’s lungs- was decreasing. The large oil companies led by Exxon Mobile immediately reacted, creating a foundation in 1981 that attempted to neutralize the Academy’s warnings, using the findings of hired pseudoscientists. Despite

Newsweek's publication ten years later of its article "The Truth of Denial", news of the criminal tactics of those whose greed prevents them from seeing beyond their immediate profit was, once again, relegated to the opaque dregs of irrelevant media sources. And, once again, what should never have been forgotten was forgotten.

Many of the first efforts to protect the environment originated in United Nations institutions. I have already made reference to some of UNESCO's activities carried out since the 1940s, but I should also mention the UNEP (United Nations Environmental Programme) as an entity devoted specifically to the prevention of damage to the environment.

In the anthropocene only a United Nations, with weighted votes and no veto measures, can rise to the occasion to responsibly adopt the measures that the whole of humanity demands. In a G7 meeting in Elmau (Germany) on June 8, 2015 the evident environmental damage was addressed, recommending reducing CO₂ emissions and the creation of a Green Climate Fund. But, once again, it is clear that this isn't the level at which problems of this nature, so relevant for the common destiny of humanity, will be solved. A re-founded United Nations could not only order the pertinent measures at the global level, but could also coordinate appropriate actions in the event of natural disasters.

CONCLUSION

It is time to take immediate action on a worldwide scale. The environment knows no borders. Nor does it recognize equal human dignity. It is clear that "politics must not be subject to the economy, nor should the economy be subject to the efficiency-driven paradigm of technocracy" (Pope Francis)... because it is now, not later –as President Obama underscored- that we must facilitate the

“new beginning” that the Earth Charter urges us to seek, guided by the “democratic principles” set forth in the Preamble of the UNESCO Constitution, for the historical transition from a culture of violence and war to a culture of conciliation and peace. From force to words.