



The Ethics of Time in the Face of Global Challenges: The Time has come for Action

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Abstract

Taking into account potentially irreversible processes, it is our common responsibility to bear in mind “the ethics of time”. We should act in a way that will prevent us from taking a path that allows no return. We have to specifically take into account next generations: our legacy cannot condemn them to have the worst standard of living and prevent them from fully exercising their distinctive capacities. The past has already been written. It must now be accurately described. We must learn from the lessons of the past to be able to invent the future. To be able to provide all required rights to each and every human being so we can all have a dignified life. The time has come to raise our voices with both serenity and resolution. The time has come for the emancipation of citizenship, for “We, the peoples...”, as stated in the UN Charter. We need peace within each human being, peace at home, peace in the villages, in the cities... worldwide peace. Therefore, the time has come for a great mobilization at the global scale so that peoples at last take control of their own common destiny. Words are our only “mass construction weapons”. Enough! The time has now come to “rescue” the citizens and, to that end, we must make a quick and courageous shift from an economy of war to an economy of global and sustainable development. The time has come for action!

“Tomorrow might be too late”.

1. Introduction

Human beings are the sole species who are able to anticipate, to use knowledge to foresee, to use foresight to prevent. Today, at the dawn of the 21st century and the beginning of the third millennium, this prospective capacity has become more relevant than ever because, for the first time in history, mankind must face global challenges that could lead to points of no-return if they are not dealt with in due time. All inhabitants of the Earth must be held responsible for this potential irreversibility. Scientists, academicians, artists and intellectuals should, in particular, place themselves at the forefront of an overall mobilization against big powers that are exclusively driven by short term interests, and remain blind and ignorant when faced with a situation that puts at risk the habitability of our own planet. Not only do these powers maintain their hegemonic ambitions, they also make use of the huge media power to turn most citizens into a passive and indifferent audience.

It is, therefore, time for action. Many diagnoses have been provided, but it is now crucial to take action before it is too late. Under these circumstances, the ethics of time should be one of the main foundations for our daily behaviour at all levels, if we want to prevent what would represent a true intergenerational and historical irresponsibility.

2. Awareness

It is essential to be vigilant. We can no longer be a passive audience, we must behave as committed actors and be fully aware that we are, as rightly mentioned by President Obama, the first generation confronted with this challenge—climate change—and the last one that can cope with it. It is essential, said Pope Francis in his ecological encyclical *Laudato si*, to fight against the “globalization of indifference”, an expression later developed by Monsignor Marcelo Sánchez Sorondo, Chancellor of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences.

We need to be aware of what has happened, to learn lessons from the past: Aware of the current situation and, above all, memory of the future¹, memory that will show us how to behave today because the future is yet to be built. Our responsibility and our hope both lie on the unique capacity of human beings to be creative. Constant awareness of the equal value of all human beings. We need constant awareness that there are no first class citizens of the world: all human beings are equal in dignity! Awareness of future generations. Awareness of the Earth as a whole. Awareness, every time we wake up, of those who are excluded, who emigrate, who die unattended. Awareness of the gigantic work done by mankind and, above all, awareness of each human being, each and every one, because this is the greatest and most unwavering world heritage that must be protected. Awareness, each and every moment, of “others”, of “we-the-others”! Awareness, above all things, of how much we need to love one another, something we too often forget. Awareness of the critical role of intellectuals, scientists, teachers, artists... as leaders of the mobilization of all peoples, the clamour, the long expected voice, the voice of life...arising from so many people that have been forced to remain silent, fearful, submissive...*. Awareness of the actions that cannot be postponed. The ethics of time.

3. Prevention

The first essay I wrote was entitled “*Tomorrow is always too late*”[†], and my aim was to convey my deep concern at a time I had started to work on the early detection of metabolic disorders in neonates. These were “infrequent” diseases associated with severe mental deterioration and they could be avoided if they were rapidly detected once the child was born. If these genetic impairments are not detected and addressed in due time—because they are counterbalanced by the mother during pregnancy and go unnoticed until the child becomes an autonomous living creature—they become a severe pathology that will have no cure later on. Prevention is no doubt a great victory. But it is not easy to persuade people, let alone authorities concerned with the benefits of prevention, because results “are not visible”.

* F. Mayor, Blog del 31.11.15: “Memoria para saber lo que acontece. Memoria para inventar el porvenir”.

† F. Mayor, “Mañana siempre es tarde”. Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 1987; Barcelona: Circulo de Lectores, 1988. Blog del 05/03/12: <http://federicomayor.blogspot.com.es/search/label/Ma%C3%B1ana%20puede%20ser%20tarde>

We need to compare images from “before” and “after”. But “before” cannot be seen because “after” has been avoided with the appropriate treatment administered in due time! This is why it is of the utmost importance for society as a whole and, in particular, for mass media to be able to stress how important prevention is, though it is invisible.

“Liberty and the capacity to create will prevent us from slipping into determinism, into believing that “there is no remedy”.”

4. Education Aimed at Teaching How To Be

An educated human being is a “free and responsible” individual, as clearly stated in Article 1 of the UNESCO’s Constitution. The report on *Education for the 21st Century* was published in 1992 when Jacques Delors was President of the European Economic Community, thanks to the work of a great Commission comprising teachers of all levels from fields such as Pedagogy, Sociology, Philosophy, etc. Four main “paths” of the teaching procedure were identified: learning to be; learning to acknowledge; learning to make; learning to live together. Among all these paths, “learning to be” should be especially stressed. Francisco Giner de los Ríos said a century ago that education is in the ability to judiciously command one’s own life. We should learn how to use our unique and extraordinary capacities: thinking, imagining, anticipating, creating! I added a new “path” to those already identified by the Jacques Delors Commission: “learning to undertake”. I’ve mentioned that many times after a long tenure in the Biochemistry Department at Oxford University, whose county motto is “*Sapere aude*” (dare to know!), I thought—upon my return to Spain—that we should certainly *dare to know*, but we should also *learn how to dare*, because risk without knowledge is dangerous, but knowledge without risk is useless.

We must always bear in mind that education and training are not the same. Training radically changes sometimes because progress depends on the acquisition of new knowledge. But education is not about cultivating abilities but rather attitudes, that is, adjusting one’s own behaviour to a few immovable principles that stem from the unique capacities of human beings.

5. Liberty and Responsibility

Humanity has the supreme gift of liberty. Each human being has been blessed with the capacity to judge, to decide every time he is placed on the border between light and shadow, between certainty and uncertainty.

Human liberty was the only requirement that had to be fulfilled when the universe was created. Everything in the universe can be predicted, everything is ruled by the immutable laws of Physics and Chemistry, except human discretion. If anything is imposed as an irrefutable truth, the supreme human capacity would be dismantled, disoriented, given that everything has been previously set and pre-established. Human dignity is precisely based on

the unique and unhindered power to cope with any essential question, on the capacity deeply rooted in temporal and putrefying biological structures to freely fly across the unlimited space of spirit.

Every unique human being is capable of creating. This is where the greatest hopes of humanity lie. Until very recently these were mere sparkles in the history of mankind. Human beings have lived under the dominance of male absolute power, they have been forced to remain invisible, anonymous, silent, fearful, submissive... But today, for the first time in history, mankind has a global awareness, we can see the world as a whole, each and every dimension of our planet Earth and we know that the future can be invented. In this respect, I always like to recall President John F. Kennedy's remarkable speech made in Washington on 23rd June, 1963 that disarmament and peace are said to be unattainable goals but he would prove that they are within our grasp, because there is no challenge beyond the reach of the creative capacity of human beings.

Liberty and the capacity to create will prevent us from slipping into determinism, into believing that "there is no remedy". The past has already been written. It must now be accurately described. We must learn from the lessons of the past to be able to invent the future. To be able to provide all required conditions to each and every human being so they can all have a dignified life, and fully exercise their unique capacities.

6. A Systemic Crisis

What has been called a financial crisis is truly the visible part of a *systemic* crisis that requires courageous, creative and inclusive solutions. A crisis that cannot be addressed by simply injecting financial resources into specific areas of our system, or by promoting production in traditional sectors of our economy. It rather requires a change in paradigm based on human and environmental sustainability. And the first steps that must be taken consist in the regulation of climate change and the eradication of poverty. All individuals who breathe the air of our planet should be able to exercise their right to live a dignified life.

The upheavals of the financial crisis have become increasingly frequent and dramatic. In East Asia, Argentina, Turkey, Brazil, Russia, and Europe, the carnage caused by the "new economy" is a clear sign that we are not facing fortuitous accidents with a limited impact on economic life, but rather accidents that affect the core of our system.

These breakups that have finally produced a major contraction of economic life, due to increasing unemployment and inequality, highlight the breakdown of financial capitalism and clearly show the definite failure of today's global economic order. It must be radically transformed.

The "laws of the market" have led to a chaotic situation that could only be solved with "rescue plans" amounting to thousands of millions of dollars and resulting in what has been wisely described as the "privatisation of profits and the socialisation of losses". Support has been provided to those who are to blame and not to the real victims. This is a unique historical opportunity to redefine the global economic system with social justice as our main target.

There was not enough money for AIDS funding or for world food... but it now turns out that, when there was a real financial flood, funds were available to save from sinking precisely those who were overindulgent with the IT and real estate bubbles and who, thus, contributed to lay the financial basement for “globalization”.

“Global challenges require global solutions which necessitate cooperation at a global scale.”

Enough! The time has now come to “rescue” the citizens and, to that end, we must make a quick and courageous shift from an economy of war to an economy of global and sustainable development. We must put an end to collective shame: the investment of more than 4,000 million dollars per day in military expenses and in the weapon industry while more than 20,000 people are dying every day from hunger, most of them five year old boys and girls, must be stopped. We need a global sustainable and human-centered economic development to eradicate the abusive exploitation of natural resources (oil, gas, minerals, Coltan...) and to enforce law under the supervision of the United Nations as a renewed organization, comprising the International Monetary Fund, the International Bank “for Reconstruction and Development” and the World Trade Organization, which are endowed with all required human, technical, defence and financial resources to efficiently exercise authority at a global scale.

There should be sufficient investment in renewable energy, food production (agriculture, aquaculture, biotechnology), water procurement and supply, health, environment and education in order to build a “new economic order” that will be democratic and will benefit people. The delusion of globalization and market economy must come to an end. Civil society will no longer be a resigned audience and when the need arises it will demonstrate how much power citizens have, thanks to the new technologies. The time has come for change at the public and individual scale. The time has come for justice.

We already have knowledge. We now have to use it. To use the ethics of time before it is too late. Certainly nothing is as urgent today as the possibility for everyone to enjoy the benefits of knowledge. Global challenges require global solutions which necessitate cooperation at a global scale. We must now promote research aimed at increasing the production of food with minimum consumption of water and maximum fertilizer saving. In this regard, the transfer of the nitrogenase system that allows leguminous plants to directly capture atmospheric nitrogen to cereals and, in particular, rice, would represent a gigantic step forward not only as a means to increase food availability but also to reduce the environmental impact of fertilizers.

The frenetic pace of the war industry, instead of slowing down, has rather been accelerated for “security reasons”. The only brilliant idea that the “great four”—France, Germany, Italy and Spain—came up with when they gathered to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome was to double the war expenses. Instead of setting up the ethical compass that guided the steps of the EU founders, instead of reinforcing a monetary union with a social,

political, cultural and economic union, instead of focusing on the urgent re-instatement of an efficient multilateral system and a UN capable of quickly repairing the damage caused by plutocratic groups that were the preferred partners of the Reagan-Thatcher tandem during the eighties, instead of letting the world know during the 60th anniversary of the EU that all members of the Union would be forced to strictly observe the Charter of Fundamental Rights (2000) and that the EU could not tolerate the faintest sign of racism, fanaticism, dominion, xenophobia, or the bitter roots of past conflicts, instead of seeking a new conception of security that would include a generous contribution to development (Sustainable Development Goals) and to the agreements reached in Paris in December 2015 concerning Climate Change, acknowledging how urgent this is due to the potential irreversibility of the processes we are dealing with, instead of placing Europe at the forefront of solidarity and anticipation, the only thing that occurred to them—“If you want peace, get ready for war”—was to buy more weapons and to build more walls.

The Paris Agreement made during the “Convention on Climate Change” (from November 30 to December 13, 2015) must be put into practice by all countries because what is at stake is our common destiny. Measures should be taken at a planetary scale, and all citizens of the world who cannot accept the irresponsible behaviour of current leaders should loudly raise their voices through cyberspace. We must choose our future. The first paragraph of the Earth Charter* states the following: “We stand at a critical moment in Earth’s history, a time when humanity must choose its future...”. And it ends saying: “As never before in history, common destiny beckons us to seek a new beginning”.

It is now time to behave and to live in such a way as to ensure that the year 2020 will mark the beginning on a big scale of steady and coordinated action that will prevent agreed-upon measures to be taken in three years within a much bleaker ecological context than the one we are living in today. It is essential to ensure the on-time fulfilment of the forecasts that were approved after so many problems and in such a rush. We must, therefore, have at our disposal duly tested mechanisms to monitor and control all results.

In the Anthropocene age, it is vital to guarantee the habitability of our planet and a dignified life for all human beings, because the foundation of all human rights is the equal dignity of everyone regardless of sex, skin colour, religion, ideology, age... The systemic crisis has generated social imbalances and extreme poverty to such an extent that, due to the impact of human activity, the Earth is quickly deteriorating.

We are living in the digital era. Freedom of expression gradually allows the participation of all citizens in decision-making and, thus, democratic systems are reinforced and far-reaching changes will become possible because of the simultaneous occurrence of three positive facts: 1) there is further awareness of what is happening in the worldwide scenario, and this increases our feelings of solidarity (material, intellectual and moral as established in the Preamble of the UNESCO Constitution); 2) more women are taking part in the decision-making process, exclusively on the basis of their specific capacities; and 3) participation over long distances has been made possible by modern communications technology.

*“La Carta de la Tierra” (2000) <http://cartadelatierra.org/descubra/la-carta-de-la-tierra/>

Since the “Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit” in 1992, 25 years have already elapsed! The reaction of the citizenship has not been reflected by the mass media in such a way as to force worldwide leaders to be watchful.

Today we can contemplate the world, we must be watchful. “How difficult it is to pay attention to what happens everyday,” said Julián Marias, to avoid routine from leading us to accept the unacceptable, or to consider that there is no cure for “collateral effects” of today’s system. This genocide caused by distress and starvation is taking place every day: the way we behave with individuals who try to migrate to more developed countries because they die from starvation in their own. We must proclaim our outright rejection through cyberspace so it is more widely spread. In the digital era, we will at last be able to put into practice Mario Benedetti’s brilliant version of a popular saying: “It all depends on the pain produced by what you’re looking at”.

The ethics of time is pressing us, all citizens of the world should feel urged to react, in particular, the rulers of our societies, so that the Paris Agreement on Climate Change is implemented, and the irreversible deterioration of the Earth’s habitability is prevented. The Sustainable Development Goals should also be put into practice to avoid the fact that thousands of people continue to die every day from starvation and distress. Is there anything more irreversible than death?

7. Global Challenges Require Global Responses

An article entitled “Very Urgent Call” published on 6th February 2017 proclaimed that “in the face of serious global threats, We, the citizens of the world, should come together at once!”*. And also that it was of utmost importance to alert everyone on a global scale of the unacceptable irresponsibility we could be accused of if we do not react vigorously to redirect current trends.

In September 2015 in the “*Joint Declaration on Social and Ecological Emergency*”† endorsed by Mikhail Gorbachev, Mario Soares, Garry Jacobs, Colin Archer, Roberto Savio and François de Bernard, we had already suggested that, within a context of non-solidarity that was becoming increasingly egoistical, xenophobic, racist and fanatical, actions should be taken immediately to address environmental issues, social inequalities and extreme poverty, and to eliminate nuclear weapons. We had also stressed that we should no longer postpone the reinstatement, initially through the establishment of an extraordinary permanent meeting of the United Nations as a democratic multilateral system, a system that was placed aside by neoliberalism and replaced by plutocratic groups.

As was the case with other recent manifestos and global calls (Statement of Nobel Peace Laureates, Barcelona, December 2015‡; Campaign on “Disarmament for Development”, at the initiative of the International Peace Bureau, Berlin, September-October 2016.§), any

* <https://llamamientourgenteblog.wordpress.com/>

† <https://declaracionconjunta.wordpress.com/>

‡ http://www.fund-culturadepaz.org/doc/Declaracion-Barcelona_PN2015.pdf

§ <https://desarmeparaeldesarrollo.wordpress.com/>

eventual echo of the Paris statement was silenced by the gigantic media power, which is always keen to favour a submissive and misinformed attitude from audiences.

The Paris Agreement on Climate Change (COP) as well as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for the 2015-2030 period are seen as positive steps in the right direction. But soon the expectations have become less optimistic not only because resources are still too scarce to allow implementation of SDGs and the COP, but also because it has been reported (by the Oxfam Intermon report) that wealth is still concentrated in a few hands, and funds dedicated to development assistance and international cooperation have experienced a reduction... And then suddenly the American Presidential elections appeared on stage. The Republican party, with only a few exceptions, has always been in favour of US hegemony, and has strongly opposed democratic multilateralism (remember how it opposed the League of Nations in 1919; the United Nations System, especially in the eighties, when it entrusted Worldwide Governance to autarchic groups; it refused to endorse the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989; it placed the World Trade Organisation outside the scope of the United Nations; it ignored the Resolutions adopted by the UN Security Council when Iraq was invaded in 2003). Statements made concerning nuclear weapons, the rejection of United Nations and the intention not to comply with the Agreements on Climate Change etc. represent a global threat that cannot be tolerated.

It is totally unacceptable that the actions of the leaders of the most powerful countries on Earth, who have repeatedly ignored the warnings of the scientific community, imply an immediate risk for humanity as a whole and, in particular, for future generations.

Until very recently, “We, the Peoples...” could not express ourselves. Now we can do it freely. And we know what is going on. Now, we can raise our voices. And this must be done urgently. The ethics of time. A crime of silence.

In the face of a global threat, a global response must be given to anyone who prevents us from fulfilling our supreme duty: taking care of the new generations. To betray them would be a huge historical mistake.

In “Social and Ecological Emergency”^{*} (September 2015), reference was made to Pope Francis’ encyclical *Laudato Si*, to the important decision made by President Obama with his emergency plan to cope with climate change, to President Mikhail Gorbachev’s speech at the International Climate Change Symposium that took place in Rome on 27-29 May 2015 and to the Agreements between the Mayors of Capital cities and large cities, under the leadership of Paris Mayoress Anne Hidalgo. Pope Francis has made an urgent call for yet another dialogue on the way we are building the future of our planet. We need a dialogue that will bring us together, because the environmental challenge we are facing, with its human roots, is a concern and has an impact on all of us. A new universal solidarity is needed. If the current trend goes on—says the Pope—we could witness during this century unprecedented climate changes and an unparalleled destruction of ecosystems, with major consequences. Climate change is a global issue with serious environmental, social, economic, and political dimensions. And it poses one of the main challenges to mankind today.

^{*} <https://declaracionconjunta.wordpress.com/>

In chapter 4, in the section devoted to “Intergenerational Justice”, the Pope firmly states that we are not speaking of a deliberate attitude, but rather of an essential issue of justice, since the Earth we have been born in also belongs to future generations. Every potentially irreversible process requires adequate and immediate action. The mitigation of the impact of the current disequilibrium depends on how speedily we respond, especially if we consider that we will be held responsible by those who may suffer the worst consequences.

President Obama, during the presentation of his “Clean Energy Plan,” aimed at eliminating carbon dioxide emissions, with a total yearly cost of 9 billion dollars. Knowing that there could be points of no-return, he warned us that it might be too late to talk about climate change. UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon stated that “we are the first generation that can put an end to poverty and we are the last generation that can put an end to climate change”.

President Mikhail Gorbachev, founder of the Green Cross International, warned during the aforementioned Congress of Rome that 2014 was the hottest year ever recorded as far as we know. The scientific specialists have further warned that the “range of opportunities” for a deep action on climate change is rapidly becoming narrower, although we can still stabilize the situation and promote sustainable development. In fact, next December, Paris will be the last opportunity to limit to two degrees centigrade the temperature increase with respect to the pre-industrial period... Politics has been left behind with regard to biosphere transformation processes, with a long series of crises—food, water, energy, poverty, climate. Gorbachev also added that we are indeed facing the crisis as a result of our current development model.

And on top of that, as if perspectives were not gloomy enough and urgent calls for action have not succeeded in dealing with the maelstrom of immediate results, the huge confusion of ideas and the impunity that prevail due to worldwide organizations not having enough authority, make it even more difficult for today’s mankind to be able to calmly contemplate the future and resolutely take whatever measures are necessary to challenge the *status quo*. A further call for attention should be added to these gloomy perspectives, requiring further attention and reflection before adequate measures can be taken to avoid reaching a point of no-return. This new cause for concern forces us to take into account the ethics of time, the occasion. Peter Wadhams, professor of Ocean Physics at Cambridge University, declared earlier this year* that the polar region is warming twice as fast as the rest of the planet. And, above all, that melting has a feedback effect on climate change and increases the oceans’ level, putting our lives at risk. “The time has come for action” is the subtitle of this paper. What was thought to be a consequence is now seen as the cause: since it is not reflected on ice, sunlight directly penetrates into the sea and contributes to water heating. If we take into account that ice used to occupy 1 million square kilometres in the Arctic and it only represents 100,000 kilometres now, according to estimates, we see that the “albedo” effect—the percentage of sun’s radiation that the Earth surface reflects or sends back to the atmosphere—has decreased, so that what caused melting has now become the cause for and increased global warming, since it directly affects radiation on marine waters. The sea level

* http://elpais.com/elpais/2017/01/05/ciencia/1483641450_746829.html

could rise by a full meter this century, according to Wadhams, if adequate corrective actions are not taken right away.

There are no excuses. We must overcome today's storm and be able to face the future in a level-headed and resolute manner, calling for an extraordinary and permanent meeting of the UN, because I must warn that we could be on our way to a point of no-return.

The Resolution approved by the General Assembly, entitled "*Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*", insists on the fact that the Agenda is a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity... This Plan will be implemented by all countries and stakeholders by means of an alliance based on cooperation. We are determined to free mankind from the tyranny of poverty and deprivation and to heal and protect our planet... We are determined to take bold and transformative steps which are urgently needed to shift the world to a sustainable and resilient path*. And it says further that "we are determined to end poverty and hunger in all countries over the next fifteen years, to fight against inequalities within each country and between countries, to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies, to protect human rights and promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and young girls, and to ensure a long-lasting protection of our planet and its natural resources."

When it comes to describing "our world today", the Resolution is particularly courageous: "We are meeting at a time of immense challenges to sustainable development. Billions of our citizens continue to live in poverty and are denied a life of dignity... There are enormous disparities of opportunity, wealth and power. Gender inequality remains a key challenge... Unemployment, particularly youth unemployment, is a major concern... Global health threats, more frequent and intense natural disasters, spiralling conflict, violent extremism, terrorism and related humanitarian crises and forced displacement of people threaten to reverse much of the development progress made in recent decades."

Natural resources depletion and adverse impacts of environmental degradation, including desertification, drought, land degradation, fresh water scarcity and loss of biodiversity, add to and exacerbate the list of challenges which humanity faces. Climate change is one of the greatest challenges of our time and its adverse impacts undermine the ability of countries to achieve sustainable development. Increases in global temperature, sea level rise, ocean acidification and other climate change impacts are seriously affecting coastal areas and low-lying coastal countries. The survival of many societies, and of the biological support systems of the planet, is at risk.

There is no doubt that this Resolution contains, given the emergency that is at stake, all guidelines that could lead humanity to efficiently act as a whole. Once again, in the present scenario with the state of our current leaders and in a system where ethical values have been replaced by stock exchange values, we cannot expect—and this is a big concern—that a remedy will soon be found to avoid us from falling into the abyss. In this regard, I have great hope in the initiative of the International Peace Bureau in Geneva, whose aim is to allocate 10% of current investments to weapons and military expenses for human and

* http://unctad.org/meetings/es/SessionalDocuments/ares70d1_es.pdf

sustainable development at a global scale*. The Campaign ended on 3 October 2016 with a big celebration in Berlin... And, once more, complete silence was the response of mass media, which have a biased approach to reality and are subservient to “markets”. It seems, therefore, that a reasonable Resolution will not become a reality because the “big powers” (military, financial, energy and media industries...) have not yet faced the clear and firm opposition of “We, the peoples...” who, despite having the means today to express themselves, still remain disseminated, lost in their isolationist circumlocutions inside their ivory towers.

“It is of utmost urgency to establish a new notion of security under vigilant supervision and direct participation of the United Nations.”

As we have seen, in the new era, it will be essential to reconceptualize security, labour and opportunity when the time comes to implement solutions.

8. A New Conception of Security

Today big powers still think that military power is the sole expression and reference for “security”. It is a big and extremely costly mistake to deal only with war issues and totally neglect other issues related to “human” welfare and well-being, the latter being in any case the only thing that should really interest us.

We see arsenals that are crammed with rockets, bombs, submarines, planes and warships, but if we turn around, we find thousands of human beings who are dying from starvation everyday or who live in extreme poverty conditions without having access to adequate health services, and we are appalled to see how habitability on Earth is gradually deteriorating, and we know that action must be taken without delay.

When we see the radical difference between investments devoted to potential conflicts and resources available to face recurrent natural disasters (fire, floods, earthquakes, tsunamis...), we are horrified to realize that the notion of “security” that is still favoured by major arms manufacturers is not only obsolete but highly prejudicial for mankind. Therefore, it is of utmost urgency to establish a new notion of security under vigilant supervision and direct participation of the United Nations. Each time we have the opportunity to see the extraordinary actions of so many people and volunteers who try to save survivors of a terrible earthquake, we feel propelled to raise our voices as citizens of the world, voicing our refusal to further tolerate the huge damage, often deadly, caused by so many forms of “insecurity” to those, the great majority, who are not protected by military troops.

Food security, access to drinkable water and health services, quick, coordinated and effective action to face emergencies: this is the only security that “We, the peoples...” deserve and dream of.

* “Disarmament for Development”, IPB, Berlin, Sept.-October, 2016. <http://demilitarize.org/get-involved/conference-2016/>

9. Democratic Governance—The Pending Evolution

No nation is exempt from responsibility: it is totally unacceptable to “transfer” to the “market” moral duties and responsibilities that should be adhered to by democratic rulers. This is why it is most urgent to have at our disposal a global behavioural code within the legal-ethical framework of the reinstated United Nations. In a period of great historical acceleration, moral foundations have become more essential than ever. We are, as in 1945, at the beginning of a new era. Amartya Sen, who won the Nobel Prize for Economics, recently stated that the state, and not the market, must be held responsible for the welfare of citizens, especially in developing countries. If we want to avoid a revolution triggered by hunger, it is vital to support the evolution towards a new global economic system. The difference between revolution and evolution is, we must insist on the “r”, meaning “responsibility”.

“Our main wealth lies in diversity and our power depends on common and universal values that keep us together.”

Not only citizens but rulers can be subject to general disapproval at a given moment. Promoting feelings in favour of or against a specific country or culture is a way to stir up terror. Nobody has chosen to be born in a specific place, to have a specific skin colour or to be a man or a woman. Merit does not lie in where or how we are born and, therefore, no one can boast about or be discriminated based on this. What matters is not how one was born but rather how one lives, how one behaves. Education must be provided to everyone during their whole life! This should be the most relevant and transcendental kernel of the great “Earth Project”: making it possible for all rulers to become aware of the crucial moment we are living in, of the ethics of time, and to promote a big movement at a global scale in favour of a future world where everyone without exception may live a dignified life.

When we see Earth as a whole, we realize today what a tremendous irresponsibility it was to have transferred to the market the political duties, guided by ideals and ethical principles that could have led to democratic governance. When we see the deterioration of the environment—air, sea, soil, the gradual standardization of cultures, despite the fact that our main wealth lies in diversity and that our power depends on common and universal values that keep us together—the erosion of so many relevant aspects of the democratic scenarios that were built with such strenuous efforts, the lack of reaction from people and institutions, resignation, submission and distraction seem even more unexpected and intolerable. How is it possible?

In view of all the above, we made the decision a few years ago to frame the *Universal Declaration of Democracy** that addresses the main dimensions, the ethical dimension especially, of the idea of “democracy”. Besides social and political democracy it mentions economic, cultural and international democracy. Article eleven of the Declaration states that “All dimensions and features of the economic democracy shall be subordinated to social justice”. Let’s make it clear: these are the principles of democracy that “must guide”

* <https://declaraciondemocracia.wordpress.com/>

humanity, according to the Preamble of the Constitution of UNESCO. Emphasis should be on “Intellectual and moral” justice, liberty, equality and solidarity. Such a Declaration, with all possible amendments, should help straighten the crooked paths that humanity is following today. As already mentioned, a great mobilization must be organised and led by intellectuals, universities and whatever institutions are sensitive enough to understand that we not only need a genuine democratic system; it’s most urgent to take the required steps.

The time has come for change and reclaiming our self-esteem. The time has come to raise our voices with both serenity and resolution. The time has come for the emancipation of citizenship, for people restricted by boundaries to become free peoples. We were not born violent; we were taught to be violent. Violence is mainly generated by examples that are found too often in our daily environment, and also by teaching history as an endless chain of conflicts and battles. We have prepared ourselves for war... and we have done precisely what we were getting ready for. Now it is clear that we want, at the beginning of a new century and a new millennium, a radical change of attitude, a change of patterns: “If you want peace, you must help to build peace with your daily behaviour”. If you want peace, “be the change you want to see in the world,” said Mahatma Gandhi.

By the end of the forties, beginning of the fifties, the keywords were “sharing” and “international cooperation”. Sharing, splitting and giving to others, appropriately distributing, this is the essence of the “democratic principles” that have to be followed in order to put an end to the times of absolute power.

We remember the endless discussions about the nature of development: it has to be *integral* and not be reduced to economic issues, it has to include, in the first place, social and cultural issues; it has to be *endogenous*; “sustainable” development according to the notion introduced by the Commission under the leadership of Gro Harlem Brundtland; and, by the end of the eighties, at the request of the then Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF, Richard Jolly, development became humane.

It is already mentioned: the alternative lies either in evolution, aimed at overcoming inertia, or in revolution. José Monleón very rightly and accurately titled his book conceived as a “warning-alert”: *21st Century: the pending evolution?*^{2*}. Today, six years later, when action is more urgent than ever, due to so many processes having reached in no time a point of no return, we realize that it is essential to put into practice with no delay the pending evolution. Finally, we should dare to confront the challenges of our time, in particular, those that can lead us to pass on to future generations an intellectual and material legacy of a lower quality than the one we received. It is essential to invent the future. This can only be done if we free ourselves from fear, as stated in the Preamble of the Declaration of Human Rights. We must urgently dare to know and learn how to dare.

All of us should dare to offer our hand instead of raising it. There are grounds to expect, according to José Monleón, that we will no longer need a tsunami or a great cataclysm to feel impelled to act, to stop from being idle, distracted, and to achieve with our actions a world that is no longer as it is, but rather as it should be.

* <http://federicomayor.blogspot.com.es/search/label/Jos%C3%A9%20Monle%C3%B3n%20Evoluci%C3%B3n%20pendiente%3B%20Evoluci%C3%B3n%3B%20Revoluci%C3%B3n>

We live and die in the anxiety of a satiated society. The time will soon come for friendship, for love, for generosity, for a permanent will to serve others, for a permanent defence of equal dignity for all human beings, for living together in harmony.

“For the first time in history, transition is possible from a culture based on domination, imposition and violence to a culture of encounter, dialogue, conciliation, alliance and peace.”

Whether we recognize it or not, we are experiencing a true historical “leap forward” that could soon place us in the appropriate circumstances to be able to evolve in the right direction, preserving what should be preserved and changing without delay what should be changed. Acting rightly and on time. It is our unavoidable duty to do so. Ernesto Sábato already warned us many years ago that “there is a way to make change possible: not to give up”. This is what Stéphane Hessel told us again a few years ago—with the support of José Luis Sampedro—in his essays “Time for Outrage!” and “Time to commit ourselves!”. Let us act in such a way that we no longer deserve the lines written by Otto René Castillo in the seventies in his unforgettable *Report of an Injustice*: “One day, / the apolitical / intellectuals / of my country / will be interrogated / by the humblest / of our people. / They will be asked / what they did / when / their country / was slowly / dying out, / like a sweet campfire, / small and abandoned”. Now it is the world that is dizzily “dying out”. Let us act in such a way that we are soon able to proclaim that we were the ones to carry out the pending evolution.

10. A Historical Turning Point from Force to Word

Since the beginning of time, force was imposed upon us. Since the beginning of time, it was believed largely that “Si vis pacem, para *bellum*”. Now that human beings have become true citizens of the world and are able to express themselves, to know what is happening everywhere, now that women are participating in decision making, with all their intrinsic capacities, for the first time in history, transition is possible from a culture based on domination, imposition and violence to a culture of encounter, dialogue, conciliation, alliance and peace. On 13 September 1999, the United Nations General Assembly approved the *Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace*^{*}. It contains a series of measures aimed at promoting a culture of peace through education; promoting sustainable social development; enforcing the fulfilment of all human rights; ensuring gender equality; promoting democratic participation; favouring understanding, tolerance and solidarity; supporting participatory communication and the free circulation of information and knowledge; promoting international peace and security.

“Words will remain our last resort,” said Blas Infante. Today, indeed, we must try to resolve most conflicts with words and not with the use of force. On 16 December 2016, the United Nations General Assembly approved a Resolution[†] which, despite recognizing the

^{*} <http://www.un-documents.net/a53r243.htm>

[†] http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/71/L.47&referer=https://www.google.es/&Lang=S

progress achieved during the last twenty years, as evident by the fact that some countries, such as Bolivia and Ecuador, have included it in their Constitution, firmly recommends, with the support of a vast majority of its members, taking the adequate measure to promote the transition from a culture based on force to a culture of peace. The first few paragraphs of the aforesaid Resolution state the following: “Recognizing the importance of the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace, which serve as the universal mandate for the international community for the promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence that benefits humanity, in particular future generations”... “Welcoming the efforts of the international community to enhance understanding through constructive dialogue among civilizations,... and also the inclusion of the promotion of a culture of peace in *“Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”*... invites Member States to continue to place greater emphasis on their activities promoting a culture of peace at the national, regional and international levels, to ensure they are further expanded and that peace and non-violence are fostered at all levels... encourages the involvement of media, especially the mass media, in promoting a culture of peace and non-violence, with particular regard to children and young people...promotes strategies in the field of information and communication technologies aimed at implementing the Declaration and the Programme of Action, as well as activities that will *increase global awareness* of the Programme of Action and contribute to its implementation”...

A shift is needed from force to word, from a culture based on force to a culture of peace. Peace within each human being, peace at home, peace in the villages, in the cities... worldwide peace. We should embrace with an open heart, with relentless proximity, with an open-handed generosity all those who have suffered the most, those who have cried more tears.

This is what is meant by a culture of peace, the duty of justice and solidarity.

11. The Academic, Scientific, Artistic & Literary Communities at the Forefront of an Overall Mobilization

Higher education is essential to ensure that all human beings act freely and are responsible for their everyday behaviour. It is vital as a catalyst that triggers social responsibility*, that will shortly allow all “peoples” to take control of their own destiny, to act according to their own reflections and never again due to someone forcing them to do so, that promotes scientific rigour because a deep knowledge of reality is an unavoidable requirement. If we only have a superficial knowledge of reality, we will never succeed in making radical transformations. Very often only extraordinary or unusual events are brought to us by the media; otherwise they would not deserve to be in the news. Scientific knowledge does not always deal with the same issues that are in the media spotlight, because science rather seeks to “see the invisible”. As Bernard Lown said when he received the Nobel Prize for Peace, “only those who see the invisible can do the impossible.”

Very often scientists have had a reactive attitude, instead of acting on their own initiative, and taking the forefront as representatives of people. But many of the issues posed by local,

* GUNI Report http://www.uoc.edu/portal/es/agenda/2017/agenda_157.html

regional and international governance require the sound knowledge that only the most experienced scientists can provide.

“The most urgent task is a great educational action, to make us aware of our current responsibilities, to help us become full citizens instead of mere subjects, to enable us to anticipate.”

It is easy to understand why members of the Parliament are not the most appropriate individuals to deal with and to set forth scientific solutions (i.e., when the issues at stake are transgenic products, diseases that can cause pandemics, the risks of different energy sources, the recapture of carbon dioxide...). Scientists should never be subservient to power, but when this type of issues has to be addressed, they should remain close to power and ensure that the solutions implemented are those that can favour individual and collective welfare as well as the environment.

We need knowledge, wisdom, gradual insight of the world as a whole. To have a better knowledge about genetic features and the epigenetic context contributes to exploring human diversity to the very limit of uniqueness. Each human being is unique and unrepeatable, and is capable of inventing, discovering, swimming against the tide.

Science and awareness will allow the great historical shift: from force to word.

12. Before it is too late: it is Time for Action

Taking into account potentially irreversible processes, it is our common responsibility to bear in mind “the ethics of time”. Acting in a way that will prevent us from taking a path that allows no return. We specifically have to take into account next generations: our legacy cannot condemn them to have a standard of living that prevents them from fully exercising their unique capacities. In November 1997, the General Conference of the UNESCO approved the *Declaration on the Responsibilities of the Present Generation towards Future Generations**. We would like to highlight one of the paragraphs of its Preamble: “Bearing in mind that the fate of future generations depends to a great extent on decisions and actions taken today, and that present-day problems, including poverty, technological and material underdevelopment, unemployment, exclusion, discrimination and threats to the environment, must be solved in the interests of both present and future generations...” The articles in this Declaration emphasize the importance of freedom of choice, maintenance and perpetuation of humankind, preservation of life on Earth, the protection of environment, human genome and biodiversity, cultural diversity and cultural heritage, peace, education and development, non-discrimination...

Let us look into the eyes of our descendants, of children and of the poorest among us, and let us resolutely proceed to act against those who, in the hurricane of current political

* Declaration on the Responsibilities of the Present Generation towards Future Generations, UNESCO, 1997. http://portal.unesco.org/es/ev.php-URL_ID=13178&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

and economic irresponsibility, could lead mankind to a situation that is unacceptable in all respects. As already mentioned, the most urgent task is a great educational action, to make us aware of our current responsibilities, to help us become full citizens instead of mere subjects, to enable us to anticipate, now that digital technology has made it possible.

To be able to address the serious global threats that can lead us to irretrievable situations if they are not quickly resolved, it is indispensable to take into account the ethics of time, and to call for a huge mobilization at a global scale in favour of an Extraordinary Meeting of the General Assembly of the United Nations, whose aim shall be to approve all adequate measures to prevent us from reaching a point of no-return, both from the environmental and social point of view. During this meeting a “roadmap” should also be approved for the immediate reinstatement of democratic multilateralism, for a renewed United Nations that would put into practice the beginning of the Charter—“We, the peoples...”—through a General Assembly consisting of 50% of representatives of all nations and 50% of representatives from the civil society institutions. At the same time the Security Council will have the support of a Socio-economic Council and an Environmental Council. The veto power will no longer exist, and voting will be proportional. To address special issues, scientific rigour will be the main criterion. Two world Commissions will be created to specifically follow up the implementation of the COP Agreements on Climate Change and the Sustainable Development Goals.

We, the peoples, should raise our voice because we feel propelled to do so by the urgency of potentially irreversible processes. We cannot remain silent. Nor should we continue to be an indifferent audience, beset by the gigantic media power of the “markets” that have succeeded in generating a “massive distraction”, as stated by Soledad Gallego-Díaz*. “Nothing that you build has stood. Any system you contrive without us will be brought down,” warned Leonard Cohen.

Therefore, the time has come for a great mobilization at the global scale so that peoples at last take control of their own common destiny. Words are our only “mass construction weapons”. We shall all be united, raise our voice... or we shall become accomplices to a crime of silence.

“The voice / that could have been the remedy / ...and finally was nothing / due to fear”.

A crime of silence†.

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Notes

1. Federico Mayor, *Memoria del futuro* (Paris: UNESCO, 1995). <http://federicomayor.blogspot.com.es/search/label/Memoria%20del%20futuro>
2. Jose Monleón, *Siglo XXI: la evolución pendiente* (Madrid: Clave Intelectual, 2011).

* F. Mayor, Blog: “Ni un día más de silencio” (31/03/17). <http://federicomayor.blogspot.com.es/2017/>

† F. Mayor, “Delito de Silencio”. Editorial Comanegra, 2011.