



Urgent: A New Era, New Solutions*

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“There is no challenge beyond the reach of the creative capacity of humanity”

— John Fitzgerald Kennedy, 1963

Abstract

We have to invent our future. Never before have so many things changed so quickly. In the digital era, human beings are no longer invisible, silent and obedient. As the Earth Charter says in its beginning: “We must join together to bring forth a sustainable global society founded on respect for nature, universal human rights, economic justice, and a culture of peace”. Equality of gender shall finally allow us to reach the balance that should be the cornerstone of a new era. UNESCO Constitution sets forth in its preamble that humanity should be guided by “democratic principles”: justice, liberty, equality and “intellectual and moral” solidarity. A “Universal Declaration of Democracy” is presented. A genuine democracy that will increase food and environmental security, economic equality, immigrant rights, access to education for everyone... and participation, thanks to modern communication technology. Actions to be urgently adopted: at the international scale, especially through the refoundation of a UN System; at the regional (European Union); and at the local and personal ones. We have reached a historical turning point that will allow all human beings, and not only a few of them, to live a life that is worth living, being “free and responsible”, which is the aim of education.

“We have to invent our future. Inertia is the biggest enemy because it leads us to deal with new problems using old solutions.”

We have to invent our future. Inertia is the biggest enemy because it leads us to deal with new problems using old solutions. Never before have so many things changed so quickly. If an appropriate evolution is made possible, revolution may be prevented. According to Amin Maalouf “unprecedented situations require unprecedented solutions”. For centuries, absolute male power has been based on power of physical strength. The time has come to resolutely put forward the power of reason. In the digital era, human beings are no longer invisible, silent and obedient. They have stopped acting as mere subjects and have become citizens. Radical changes are transforming the spatial, temporal and basic features of our behaviour.

Those who believe we are facing a short term crisis and that the previous “order” has to be restored are missing the point. We have reached a historical turning point that will allow *all*

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human beings, not only a few of them, to live a life that is worth living. We must now focus on “being” rather than “having”. We have to yearn for “better” and not for “more”, and the “asymmetric wealth” must be replaced by a freely chosen moderation shared by all.

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The dream of prosperity only for a few has prevailed over the dream of liberation of many. The spheres for personal autonomy are becoming increasingly small in terms of economy and behaviour and even in terms of thought, due to massive information and media pressure. We need to recover enough time to think, imagine and “think what has never been thought.”

1. Unavoidable Moments for Decision-making

This is how the Earth Charter begins: “We stand at a critical moment in Earth’s history, a time when humanity must choose its future. As the world becomes increasingly interdependent and fragile, the future at once holds great peril and great promise. To move forward we must recognize that in the midst of a magnificent diversity of cultures and life forms we are one human family and one Earth community with a common destiny. We must join together to bring forth a sustainable global society founded on respect for nature, universal human rights, economic justice, and a culture of peace”. We must take action at once, with no further delay, especially when irreversible processes are at stake. We have been living, especially in the last decades, in the midst of an extraordinary conceptual confusion, ecological degradation, extreme poverty, unjustified inequalities, nuclear threat, lack of an efficient multilateral approach, a complete disaster resulting from a money- and short term-oriented system.

In his introduction to a recent issue of “Futuribles” entitled “From one Era to Another”, Hugues de Jouvenel emphasizes how wise the Club of Rome was, under the leadership of its watchman Aurelio Peccei, when in 1972 it already stressed the “limits of growth” and the urgent need and the duty we all have due to our inter generational responsibilities, to replace as much as possible the natural resources that are being consumed, and to avoid environmental degradation.

Today we have to take into account in our everyday behaviour the Earth as a whole. Production delocalization and the subsequent pollution do not contribute to solve anything on a planetary scale. We must see ourselves as citizens of the world and behave as such, taking actions that allow us to meet basic needs without destroying the ecosystem. “We are on the brink of a political, economic and financial crisis” according to the economist Thomas Piketty. And we should add that it is also an environmental, conceptual and ethical crisis.

We have finally become aware. We know and we can at last express ourselves freely. Equality of gender shall finally allow us to reach the balance that should be the cornerstone of a new era, an era in which we will no longer avoid challenges, but rather face them and be ready to accept the unacceptable.

2. What is Ethically Unacceptable?

Here there are some of my *ritornellos*: i) It is intolerable to invest 3 billion dollars per day in military expenses and in the weapon industry while almost 40,000 people are dying every day from hunger and abandonment, most of them being boys and girls ranging from one to five years old; ii) according to a recent report from OXFAM, 85 people own more than half the population of the world (3,300 million people!); iii) The “welfare society” represents only around 20% of the overall population of the planet and, therefore, the vast majority of the human beings are excluded from the wealthier district of the “global village”; iv) The contribution of the richest countries to development aid has decreased rather than increased: with a few exceptions, most of the richest nations have not observed the United Nations 1974 Recommendation to commit 0.7% of their GNP to aid development of the poorest countries (Spain’s contribution to development aid is at present amongst the lowest, with 0.46% in the year 2010 and only 0.16% right now); v) By using an inclusion strategy and establishing an adequate legal regulation for specific activities, the exploitation, especially by big multinational corporations, could very quickly cease to be one of the greatest offences inflicted today to humankind: instead of using high fences and razor wires to avoid immigration triggered by hunger and despair, a new policy should be implemented to prevent current abuses induced by impunity at the supranational scale; vi) Climate change and Arctic melting are two major geopolitical and geo-economic challenges, and it’s up to us to prevent any decline in the quality of the Earth’s habitability, now that we have entered the Anthropocene.

3. Absence of Appropriate Multilateral Organizations

In 1989, when all were calling for peace, when President Nelson Mandela had achieved reconciliation in South Africa and had eradicated the abominable racial *apartheid*, and when the huge empire of the Soviet Union became a Commonwealth of Independent States, thanks to the magic of Mikhail Gorbachev that brought the cold war to an end without a single drop of blood; when the peace process in Mozambique and El Salvador was successfully completed and was resumed in Guatemala, unexpectedly pro globalization neoliberalism stepped in and the Western world remained impassive while the great “democratic principles” established by the UNESCO Constitution were replaced by the market laws, and United Nations was upstaged by the plutocratic groups composed of 6, 7, 8... 20 countries.... and the World Trade Organization was founded outside the framework of United Nations. And the Convention for the Rights of the Child was not endorsed by the Republican administration of the United States in 1989 and Iraq was invaded, arguing the presence of alleged mass destruction weapons... and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict remained unresolved... and besides the *inter*-religious conflicts there were also *intra*-religious conflicts (Shiite, Sunni, Salafi, Jihad...) and a strong resurgence of xenophobia can now be observed, even in the once “model” countries of Northern Europe through nationalism being back again.

In the United States, President Obama has exercised his executive powers to achieve the following: important social progress such as the approval of “*Medicare*”; the integration of many millions of immigrants who were not yet “regularized”; cutting plans for the Pentagon military budget; economic growth through major incentives to encourage employment and

large public works... In the meanwhile the European Union, built through a hasty monetary union with no previous political and economic union, is gradually laying aside its role as champion of democracy and civil liberties, and is strictly complying with the dictates of financial patterns not only through large economic cutbacks but also by setting aside some of the main social conquests that had been achieved. Creativity and invention have moved east and in September 2014 China has been allowed to take the lead over the European Union in Research, Development and Innovation (R&D&I) efforts.

China, a communist country, has now become a great capitalist power. And what about India? How can we still be dealing with current issues based on “traditional great powers” and not take into account what the reality is in today’s world? As a scientist I know that a radical transformation of reality is only possible if we have a deep knowledge about it.

4. The Solution: Genuine Democracy

As mentioned above, UNESCO Constitution sets forth in its preamble that humanity should be guided by “democratic principles”: justice, liberty, equality and “intellectual and moral” solidarity.

A *democracy* that will increase food and environmental security, economic equality, immigrant rights, access to education for everyone... and participation, thanks to modern communication technology.

Democracy consists in placing the reins of destiny in the hands of “We, the peoples...”. To make this possible citizenship involvement must be permanently ensured. Today, we *are counted* during elections, but later *we don't count any more*, we are not taken into account, programs are not kept and parties elected by absolute majority prevail over the legislative and even the judicial power.

The “top boss” of the participacy designates whoever he wants without having heard the members of his own party. The main mission is to ensure re-election through all available means. We are currently undergoing a period of great stress within institutions (the IMF, for instance) and “markets” are relentlessly pursuing those who (in Spain and Greece) are the political expression of social movements.

To enable everyone to fully exercise their human rights, a democratic context is an unavoidable requirement.

- i. ***At the international scale***, especially through the refoundation of a UN System that will represent “the peoples”, by ensuring that the veto is replaced by a weighted voting system; that 50% of the General Assembly is composed by members of the civil society; and that both a Socio-economic and an Environmental Council are added to the current Security Council.
- ii. ***At the regional scale***, in the European Union the current monetary union must be urgently reinforced with an appropriate political and economic union, implementing the excellent EU Charter of Fundamental Rights approved by the European Parliament in 2000; in the United States, as a result of the worldwide outcry against the outrages of the Republican Party, a reorganization of political life is required so that they may regain the

worldwide leadership, it is still up to them to exercise, but with new patterns approved by everyone that will eradicate the typical anti-democratic shift of the Republican Party; in Latin America, the CELAC (Community of Latin American and Caribbean States) must be reinforced, to enable the emancipation from the long and painful dependence they have been subject to, and to ensure they have the faculty to put forward new governance formulas; in Africa the current positive trends of the Pan-African Union should be encouraged; and the same holds for the Arab League which is still far away from being settled; associations in the huge Asian continent demand, more than anywhere else, the presence of a moral and efficient authority at a planetary level.

- iii. **At the domestic scale**, we must ensure that the standards of a genuine democratic system are being complied with, and to that end it would be relevant and appropriate to adhere to the *Universal Declaration on Democracy*, drafted a few years ago and already signed by many distinguished personalities, and which is undergoing some improvement prior to submission to the United Nations.
- iv. **At the local scale**, it is worth while stressing the increasingly important role of cities.
- v. **At the personal scale**, act in such a way so that our everyday behaviour is based on principles that express our basic belief in the equal dignity of all human beings.

The right to decision-making, the right to know. That is why, along with the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* of 1945, it is of the utmost importance that ruling authorities have a thorough knowledge of the Declaration of the World Conference on Human Rights held in Vienna in 1993, which clearly underlines the rights of indigenous communities, minorities, disabled persons, women, the most vulnerable sectors of population to education and the right to self-determination, which according to Chapter five is admissible only under specific circumstances such as the end of a military or colonial domination.

5. Multiple Transitions

i) From an economy based on speculation, production delocalization and war to an economy based on sustainable global and human development, where tax evasion and tax havens will have been completely eliminated; ii) from a culture based on domination, imposition and violence to a culture of encounter, dialogue, conciliation, alliance and peace. From force to word: this is the great historical turning point that will consolidate the new era. A culture based on effort, imagination, dignity for everyone.

Broadly speaking, the main challenges are the following: population growth, induced by a decrease in mortality rather than a higher birth rate; food and drinking water; health care, assuming specific pharmaceutical and health costs of chronic diseases arising from increased longevity; complete equality for women who are the cornerstone of the future we are dreaming of; environment (waste, recycling and recapturing of carbon dioxide), with special emphasis placed on renewable energies; quality of life: housing, allowances, new types of work, employment and occupation, with a possible reduction of working hours and “flexitime”; drug trafficking, which should be regulated in order to put an end at once and for all to the heinous criminality of mafias.

To achieve all the above, it is of the utmost importance to promote R&D&I in every country so that all priorities that are unquestionably needed for a good governance are laid down: i) food for everyone (agriculture, aquaculture, biotechnology); ii) drinking water accessible to everyone (efficient management of consumption, harvesting, desalination); iii) health services for everyone; iv) environment (recapturing and reducing carbon dioxide emission; electric vehicles; cable railway); v) education for everyone; vi) peaceful settlement of conflicts.

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Radical changes that the digital era has produced on “how” and “where” the education in general and the higher education in particular are provided should not have any impact and especially should not reduce the basic importance of “what”, “why” and “what for”. To contribute to the upbringing of “free and responsible” human beings—which is the aim of education—instead of specialists and technicians with specific skills and abilities, education should also focus in philosophy and artistic activities that promote creativity.

In the case of Spain, a “country plan” could in a few years transform our country into “Europe’s California”. The additional possibility of an “Iberian agreement” covering the whole peninsula plus four archipelagos, would not only allow the promotion of tourism and second homes but also a top quality health care with internationally prestigious research centres. Based on its history and geographical location, Spain is no doubt bound to become a great “meeting” point between African, Latin American and Arab countries.

6. It has now become possible

It has now become possible, thanks to the power of the citizenship that will soon prevail over the current “great dominion” (from the military, financial, media, energy and digital powers). In this respect, it is worthwhile stressing the mobilising, catalytic role of the scientific, academic, artistic and intellectual community, in short, of the creative community. To promote this role, a great World Forum will be held, with the contribution of universities, scientific councils, arts associations, mass media, companies... The time has come for action. Pope Francis, a great mentor of our times, has recently said: “What should be done against the scandal of poverty? Less words, more action.” More action. Citizenship participation, which has become possible for the first time, will change the world, allowing us to find new paradigms and to make them come true. The World Academy of Art & Science (WAAS) is conducting a commendable job in this regard.

“Be the change you wish to see” was the big challenge put forth by Mahatma Gandhi. Now there will be thousands of millions who will gradually assume a global awareness, a

global citizenship who will freely express their opinions, in particular young people who, according to José Luis Sampedro, must “change the course and the vessel”.

In the above mentioned World Forum, the foundations of the “new beginning” must be drawn up, before it is too late. There are many excellent analyses, but remedies must be timely implemented.

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