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*ON THE NECESSITY FOR SUSTAINABLE AWARENESS & GLOBAL GOVERNANCE IN AN INTERDEPENDENT WORLD*

Sustainability was once again to the fore at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD 2002) in Johannesburg. To this day, however, efforts to promote sustainable development on a global scale have had little success. Quite conversely, long-term difficulties have become discernible. Why is it not possible to make the overall significance of the concept of sustainable development tangible and to convey the message of new visions, of a new quality of a holistic life? Firstly, the unwieldiness of the term itself makes it difficult, since it implies some finger wagging. New endeavours are already underway using the new buzz phrase “responsible prosperity for all”—but it remains to be seen what type of prosperity is meant and who this prosperity is really for? It is said that one needs time for something to be constructive, but we cannot continue to rely on the associated cardinal virtue of hope alone. Additional measures must be taken to show everyone how vital sustainable development is to our very survival. Sustainable development cannot be prescribed. Sustainability can only be ensured gradually through a series of socio-political processes of concretisation and decision-making. A broad factual debate on sustainability will pave the way to establishing an appropriate social consensus. If all our senses are not addressed in this process, we will never dare the step from holistic awareness to the appropriate action. Innovative and creative approaches are required.

The concept of sustainability challenges modern economic theories. Instead of banking on the growth imperative, it focuses on a dynamic equilibrium between the economy, social stability and the preservation of natural resources. The fourth, i.e., the political or institutional, pillar of sustainability, targets the sustainable development of “rules” for social coexistence. In a world that is characterised by ever more complex interrelations and interdependencies and vulnerabilities, it is no longer possible to resolve the global challenges, such as poverty, destruction of the environment, war, migration, unemployment, social conflicts, crime, international terrorism, and infectious diseases, on a national level alone. In order to control global change, there is a need for co-operation and coordination on all levels as well as interdisciplinary planning and holistic awareness.

Section 1 of this paper outlines the interdependencies between environment, peace and development in this era of globalisation<sup>1</sup>. Section II highlights the shifts in power, which benefit global players, as well as the basic regulatory conditions of Global Governance necessary for this. In addition to structural reforms and policy-making, the new holistic awareness explained in section III is a prerequisite for sustainable behavioural changes that build both on knowledge and values.

I. ENVIRONMENT—PEACE—DEVELOPMENT AS GLOBAL CHALLENGES

Sustainable development as a normative concept conveys a vision of the world as it should be, and at the Earth Summit in Rio in 1992 it was declared an international objective<sup>2</sup>. On a macro level, the term sustainability was defined as the commitment to “equitably meet developmental and environmental needs of present and future generations” (Rio Declaration, Principle 3). The mission statement, which became known in 1987 through the Brundtland report, was based on the maxim of intergenerational action, in other words equitable action for all generations. Today, efforts extend

<sup>1</sup> It is too narrow a definition to equate globalisation with the internationalisation of economies. The removal of boundaries in daily life and behaviour can be felt in all dimensions of society, politics, economy, technology, and ecology. One therefore often refers to “globalisations” in the plural.

<sup>2</sup> An historical overview of the development of the concept and development theories and policy has been examined in other contributions and would go beyond the scope of this paper.

far beyond focusing on the resources and sink issues and encompass the integrative and equitable treatment of the three dimensions ecology, economy and social affairs. Therefore, the fair intra-generational treatment, i.e., the distributive justice between and within the various countries, must also be embraced. All human inroads in social, economic and ecological systems should always be viewed under the aspects of responsibility and sustainability.

The long-term survival of the planet Earth and the world's population is jeopardised primarily by the inequality between people and their natural resources. Mankind's destructive impact on the planet has been felt early on. Historical examples can be found in antiquity already. Environmental crises at the time, however, were restricted to a local or regional impact. It is not until the beginning of the Industrial Revolution that we see the impacts of anthropogenic changes on a world scale: depletion of the ozone layer, climate change, decline of bio-diversity, deforestation, degradation of land and waters as well as the disposal of harmful waste.

The mechanistic worldview, which has been evolving since the 15<sup>th</sup> century, favoured the transition from an understanding of nature to a (supposed) domination of nature. The gap between man and nature grew steadily, and this isolation sowed the seeds for the "denaturation" of mankind. With the belief in progress, which had its heyday in 18<sup>th</sup> century Europe, mankind set out to "discover" the world. A virtually undisputed, optimistic and partially arrogant view of modern, industrial development prevailed until the sixties of the last century and still exists in some places to this very day. With the application of the economic paradigm to all areas of society, people were not only reduced to human capital or described in terms of their purchasing power or even cost factor, but nature too was exploited for economic gain as a source for raw materials or resources for the production process, or became a rubbish bin or sink for the disposal of harmful wastes. The neglect of nature's intrinsic value is causing the relationship between society and the environment to breakdown even further. This we find manifested as environmental damage and consequently as living conditions that are harmful to human health. The close link between environmental quality, health and also poverty is apparent. Health is not only essential to ensure a humane life, it is also a prerequisite to warrant the sustained social and economic development for all of society.

Most of the environmental catastrophes arising from our unsustainable life style do not respect national boundaries. Cyclones, floods and droughts render even more difficult the daily fight to survive in the poorest nations of the world, which are exposed to disproportionate environmental risks due to their more fragile eco-systems. Environmental problems are both the cause and consequence of (a broadly defined) poverty. The international community has—as one of the UN millennium goals—pledged to halve poverty by the year 2015. And poverty is not simply defined as a lack of material wealth. The definition of poverty as the non-fulfilment of basic needs for survival (food, water, clothing, housing and adequate sanitary facilities) does not go far enough—poverty also means cultural and social exclusion. Poverty means a lack of political participation and involvement by people in decision-making processes that impact them. And the repeated subjection to humiliation, exploitation and powerlessness associated with poverty are often exacerbated by a lack of self-esteem and poor self-confidence.

The last five decades of development aid have shown that it is not possible to import or export development<sup>3</sup>. Development is more than economic growth and technological progress. Yet as a result of the presidential address delivered by American President Harry S. Truman—when he assumed office in 1945—four fifths of the world's population were thought to be "underdeveloped" from one day to the next. For the first time in history, entire nations were perceived as poor, or

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<sup>3</sup> The term "developing countries" is not used due to the problems of the term "development." Instead they are referred to as nations of the southern hemisphere or South. Of course the North/South geographic distinction is problematic, just the generalisation of the "West." Industrial countries are now referred to as "modern industrial nations." The concept of underdeveloped has long been avoided on account of its associated with physical or mental inferiority and its humiliating undertones and the hierarchichal expression "Third World" has become obsolete ever since the end of the Cold War.

considered themselves to be poor, because they could not buy everything they needed to “live as human beings.” People’s behaviour and existence was overridden by the obsession of “having more.” Traditional beliefs and the respect for Nature were “devalued” with one blow. Many felt and still feel that the purpose of development is to achieve the ideal image of a glorified (modern) industrial society as the highest level of social development. According to this linear evolutionary model, “non-Western” societies can and should be “civilised” by introducing Western socio-cultural, political and economic ways of life. This reductionist view of a global development ignores the many possibilities for culturally diverse ways of life and forms of expression.

Today’s new transport and communications systems provide links between highly diverse cultures across national boundaries. Globalisation, however, is accompanied by a new trend towards relocalisation, a return to local particularities and regional cultural strengths, that is articulated in the compound word “glocalisation” (from global and local). Contrary to some fears, this is not giving rise to a globally homogenised way of life, a global “monoculture.” The cultural exchanges taking place over the centuries have much rather evolved into a “global blend” and Western cultures are simply one aspect of this world society characterised by diversity and non-integration. This should not belie the risks and inequalities of new fundamentalisms and compartmentalisation trends however. The result seems not to be a global community, but rather “global apartheid.” Only those people who have access to communication and transport are participating in the global world, for instance—this means exclusion for those who have no or only limited purchasing power. The poorest nations are becoming ever more marginalised—economically, socially and politically. Thus, one cannot speak of a successful world market integration. The three major competing global players (North-America, Western Europe and Japan / South-East Asia) conduct three quarters of “World” trade, while Africa’s share amounts to about two per cent. Thus, globalisation equates to marginalisation and fragmentation (or “fragemegration,” i.e., simultaneous integration and fragmentation).

The General Secretary of the United Nations has confirmed that the majority of the world’s population does not benefit from globalisation. The illusion of universally achievable economic wealth has faded for most people. Various attempts to achieve belated development have destroyed living conditions in many places, contributing to impoverishment and increased dependency, social and political exclusion in addition to the loss of cultural skills and considerably accelerating the destruction of the environment. The global propagation of the Western way of life, based on non-renewable fossil (and nuclear) energy resources, has last but not least revealed itself to be a “nightmare scenario” in view of the ecological limits. The first signs of a “chauvinism of wealth” can be made out in some areas—it calls on others to do some rethinking, while refusing to alter own lifestyles, but rather attempting to reserve these for own uses. The advocacy of environmental protection by rich countries is suffering from a massive credibility problem. This problem will not be solved unless we limit our ecological footprint and achieve a reversal to our excessive or erroneous development trends. Sustainability in the modern industrial nations implies above all awareness and a change in mentality and behaviour—“Living a good life instead of having much;” sufficiency is the dictate of the hour. It’s not a question of asceticism but rather of frugality. There is more to prosperity or quality of life than material possessions.

According to Franz Nuscheler, the following key statement is crucial to help understand what cooperative development is about: Development cannot be thrust upon you, development must come from within. One must underscore that development needs to occur in harmony with nature. Due to their reciprocal influence, it is no longer possible to separate man and nature. This awareness could be the impetus for the necessary move towards an integral and intact relationship between mankind and the environment based on a new responsibility ethic. External inputs such as funding, expertise and personnel cannot effect a self-determined and lasting development, they can merely promote such a development. Instead of charity and aid, which are rather vague and self-complacent, it is essential to finally allow other cultures to autonomously define and live the diversity of their own ways of life and to respect them in doing so. Each individual has his or her

own creative and productive abilities and methods to resolve his or her own problems. Up to now, straightforward “entitlements to assistance” have placed people under tutelage and pushed them into (further) dependency, choking their own motivation. Consequently it is a matter of creating space, incentives and appropriate basic conditions so that a person’s self-esteem, own initiative and sense of responsibility can evolve. However, it is important to examine closely whether the encouragement (or help) to self-help is not an easy excuse to refuse solidarity, co-operation and responsibility. Since the establishment of a self-supporting and sustainable system requires a long-term socio-political process, it would be fatal to suddenly drop people from a system upon which they were dependent. There must first be changes in the exogenous international political and economic factors that limit or disempower independent effort (such as financial speculation, agricultural subsidies, and other export restrictions, debt crises, etc.). Affected nations must also implement internal political reforms in their social and economic structures in order to increase their self-help potential. Thus African leaders, for instance, have taken a stance against poor government, mismanagement and corruption by founding NEPAD (The New Partnership for Africa’s Development) in favour of accountability, transparency, democracy, and human rights.

The greatest threats to mankind lie in ecological, socio-economic and political grievances that lead to structural violence. Poverty, shortage of resources and their unjust distribution can provoke violent conflicts and present a huge challenge to peace policies. The causes of war are less likely to be the so-called ethnic reasons and more often about “valuable” resources, such as oil, water, timber, diamonds, or drugs. Apart from the humanitarian catastrophe, armed conflicts destroy life’s resources, spread uncertainty and instability, and put the development of the affected areas back by years or even decades while forcing millions of people to become refugees. Hunger does not lead directly to terrorism, but coupled with hopelessness it creates a climate of violence. September 11, 2001 made manifest the link between global security and justice. Thus the impact is not only felt by neighbouring countries but has far-flung boomerang effects.

The structural changes necessary for global sustainability require co-operation on an international scale. There is, however, a large degree of reluctance to include the population of the southern hemisphere as partners with equal rights in global decision-making processes. In terms of economic and increasingly political and military power, the current relationship between North and South is one of force, superposed by a relationship of ecological dependency. Although it has long been apparent that the West needs further development in many respects and could learn from southern nations—for example in their relationship with nature or in terms of social cohesion—the transition from a one-way donor system to a global culture of learning is a slow one. Just, people-centred, socio-cultural and technologically adapted and ecologically viable, self-determined and interdisciplinary, sustainable development co-operation is not a humanitarian luxury. It is an investment in the future. Comprehensively understood sustainable development policies help protect and preserve our environment. They are the key to human security, for the peaceful coexistence of different world cultures. And they open up the possibility of a new holistic quality of life.

## II NEED GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

New power relationships emerge in the course of globalisation processes. Under the dogmas of neo-liberal deregulation and privatisation, the economy has increasingly detached itself from society and reacts upon it now through (alleged) practical constraints. Nations that are defined by their population and their territory are subject to the control of transnational or cross-border players. Thus, transnational corporations (TNCs) play not only a key role in shaping the economy but also society in general and they can exert power without being accountable for what they do. In international (location) competition for investment decisions and jobs, nation-states and individual production sites are played off against each other (eco-dumping and social dumping). In doing so, transnational corporations “earn” much more from financial markets than from the production of

goods. Nearly three per cent of world trade is based on the actual trading of goods and services, the rest forms a bubble of speculative funds—the world acts as a huge company, a casino (hence the expression casino capitalism) without voter concerns or political accountability, but with frequently devastating and real consequences.

The repression of state participation either consciously or subconsciously imputes that markets basically provide a near-to perfect, self-regulating welfare mechanism for society. However markets are not in a position to correct themselves. The state warrants the functioning of the economy by establishing the infrastructural conditions necessary for investment and production as well as education. More market does not necessarily mean less state, but instead provokes an enormous extension of regulations, inspections and interventions. Privatisation, which is perceived as the panacea of economic policy, involves the replacement of state influence by private power (groups)—thus privatisation equates to a redistribution of power. Even if this is not immediately recognised as such, the result is a privatisation of profits and a socialisation of losses. The removal of state control mainly promotes the interests of those who dominate the market and who can thereby bar any competition—full competition is another fallacy: market competition is distorted, limited by monopolies or oligopolies, dominated by centres of power. The nature of this neo-liberal paradigm, which conceals the central ideal, debunks this as mere ideology. At its core, the “homo oeconomicus,” i.e., the purportedly independent, objective, rational, unemotional, perfectly informed individual, who freely maximises own benefits irrespective of relationship ties or social connections, bears witness to an absurd, anti-social view of masculinity—and this one sided vision of humanity simply does not exist in the real world.

Today, entrepreneurs do recognise the challenges of the time, whether from a sense of social responsibility or in an attempt to prevent the system from collapsing. The economists Smith and Keynes referred to the necessary basic conditions and even Hayek writes about the need for embedding the market economy in its environment. We are faced with the great challenge to unite the market and humaneness and to bring them into line with nature. To do so will require the reorientation, reorganisation and strengthening of political creative powers. Josef Riegler’s holistic model of eco-social market economy is an exemplary instrument for sustainability that manages to reconcile supposedly opposing economic, social and ecological interests.

The ever-growing gulf between poor and rich<sup>4</sup> within and between nations provokes social tensions, undermines political legitimacy and threatens peace. Global threats and challenges demand alternatives to nation-state political and democratic structures. This does not mean that the (nation) state has become obsolete. On the contrary, it has become indispensable as the only legitimate authority to protect public interests. Using the co-operative model of the transnational state it should be possible to re-inspire policies with new life (not only in terms of a nation state, but also in terms of a civil society). Shared sovereignty means gaining additional operational and problem solving capacities through co-operation.

Global Governance is necessary in order to co-operatively manage the core tasks for the future and the policy decisions of globalisation. It is not merely a matter of reinforcing international co-operation in international organisations but of a new political model that focuses on common welfare and also accommodates the emerging political areas as players along side nation-state politics and international regimes: transnational companies and players in the financial markets operating across borders, scientific bodies, the media as well as civil society and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), which fulfil an effective corrective function in world politics last but not least on account of their international publicity. Global Governance is therefore a complex process of consensus-finding and decision-making between governmental and non-governmental players from a local to a global level in order to shape global change. The German

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<sup>4</sup> The income of the poorest 10 per cent of humanity is equal to 1.6% of the richest ten per cent, who in turn earn the equivalent of the total earnings of 57% of the poorest people in the world.

translation for Global Governance—“Weltordnungspolitik,” literally “world order policy”—may be misleading since it is not a matter of creating an international authority or world government. Governance without government is the new form of societal control as first envisaged by Immanuel Kant in 1795. A reformed UN system would be the institutional cornerstone of global governance and the reinforcement of a global rule of law would be the key building block.

Global Governance means regaining political control and creative power. The nations themselves remain the principal players, but take on the additional responsibility for coordination and reconciliation of interests of the various players with their divergent interests. Emphasis is placed on a sense of responsibility among decision-makers and their political will to implement multilateral agreements and national strategies through appropriate measures and to make available the required funding. Objections purporting that the common good is something rather alien to the prevalent thoughts and actions motivated by power and self-interests and that the chances of co-operation and a reconciliation of interests are rather slim must be countered by emphasising the need to co-operate on account of the urgency. The erroneous development trends and dangers, resulting around the world on account of the globalisation process, call for co-operative and coordinated action for reasons already explained—in our own interest or simply in order to survive.

It is still not clear how coherence between ecological, economic, social, and political systems can be “concocted” and effective, democratic decision-making structures can be ensured. Among other things, equal rights and possibilities to take action for all countries are imputed. Global challenges can only be met through a transformation of the current North-South relations—the maxim is “real partnerships instead of paternalism.” In addition, international organisations need to be reorganised, the “institutional trinity” (The World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Trade Organization (WTO) must be made more democratic, broadening their range of economic interest to bring about greater transparency and responsibility.

It is futile to build up a global order of finances and trade, a global social and environmental order if these are not integrated into a global order of peace. An international culture of co-operation, a “new spirit of the Global Village” should replace the old notions of opposing nations. It is imperative that the marginalisation of the United Nations, spearheaded by narrow-minded individual interests, and the unilateral hegemonic claims of the USA, be opposed by political alliances from “like-minded-countries” and from society in general. Security can only be achieved by working with and not against others.

### III AND A NEW, HOLISTIC AWARENESS

Basic conditions alone do not create sustainable world order. To achieve this, a change in awareness and the development or return of non-materialistic values is necessary. Sustainable living, for instance, is opposed by greed—this greed is self-propagating and insatiable by nature, dividing and polarising, perverting and devaluing, preventing love and contentment, greed alienates. What was once known as avarice has now become an economic virtue known as the maximisation of profits. The extensive application of the principle of competition, short term personal interests and so-called individual freedom are replacing basic human values and social achievements, and have detrimental effects in terms of the environment and quality of life for future generations.

Human rights are the basis for a comprehensive, positive concept of peace, as they call for key political, socio-cultural and economic “causes of peace.” The following formulation of core elements for humane living conditions should also make clear that sustainable, peaceful development is a global challenge:

- Fulfilment of the basic needs for food, clean water, clothing and housing, including adequate sanitary facilities,
- Access to basic health services,

- Comprehensive education and equal opportunities in the access to information,
- Independence and freedom that imply the individual's responsibility for the common welfare of future generations as well as for the environment (as a value in itself),
- Cultural self-determination and the safeguarding of autonomous living spaces based on mutual respect,
- Personal responsibility, self-confidence and self-esteem,
- Socio-cultural and political participation, a constructive (political) conflict culture,
- Equal opportunities for men and women,
- Democracy and Good Governance, good government leadership,
- Non-violence and personal safety,
- Sustainable, i.e., socially aware and ecological, economy, and
- An intact ecosystem.

A healthy environment, freedom and justice for all, participation, personal responsibility and self-respect are "boundless values." A culture of peace is characterised by solidarity and hospitality. We tend to take our own value system as an absolute parameter. But the world order of others is on a par with our own. The complexity of each way of life makes up the uniqueness and richness of this world. Dialogue, deeper intercultural understanding, empathy and mutual respect form the basis for a peaceful (international) reconciliation of interests and the secure coexistence of different cultures. It cannot be a question of equality or egalitarianism, but rather one of equal opportunities and fair distribution combined with a more holistic view of humanity. (See also Hans Küng's "Weltethos" [Global Ethic].)

There is little purpose in trying to assign blame or conducting reductionist analyses that seeks to play off economic causes against socio-political causes or individual mistakes. There is a far greater need for the development of holistic solutions. Specialisation in scientific fields has not really encouraged interdisciplinary discourse. In addition, the educational system provides knowledge that is removed from its overall context. Plato's understanding that knowledge and values are one seems to have been long forgotten. Originally, development meant the unfolding of human abilities and potential. A reorientation of educational policy to its original, comprehensive purpose will play a key role in this respect. An education that encourages independent thought and is geared towards the development of human potential could emancipate people from internalised constraints (e.g. consumerism) that impede the development of their consciousness and could grant them the scope to develop a critical relationship to whatever political and economic framework is defining their lives. Such a democracy-promoting educational policy is one of the prerequisites for personal development and freedom, for building self-esteem and for eco-social and political commitment—for genuine, pro-active individualism. This means not focusing solely on personal interests but also taking on responsibility, the emphatic inclusion and participation of people, based on the understanding that, in essence, man is a social being and can only find complete fulfilment and contribute to the common good within the framework of society.

We must break down accustomed, one-dimensional thought patterns and break out through the narrow boundaries of the traditional, mechanistic economic theory, in order to (re)establish the homo integralis. As part of the whole, mankind has a responsibility to nature; ethics are inherent to the bio-centric principle. If mankind achieves a deeper understanding of the overall interrelations of things, then mankind will voluntarily gear actions to benefit the recognised whole. Taking on the responsibility for the common good, including nature, is then commensurate with genuine freedom, far removed from the perverted individualism that is currently discernible whose own narrow remit prevents any advancement.

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