

EUROPA Y LAS NUEVAS DIMENSIONES DE SOSTENIBILIDAD- MULTICULTURALISMO Y CALIDAD DE VIDA

CONFERENCIA DE LAS ASOCIACIONES EUROPEAS DEL CUB DE ROMA

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Introduction by Ricardo **Díez Hochleitner**, Honorary President of the Club of Rome
of the speech by Prof. **Dennis Meadows**:

“How climate change and oil depletion affect the future of the enlarged Europe”

- *Excmo. e Ilmos. señoras y señores*

- *Welcome greetings to participants from NAS and thanks to the organizers, in particular to Esko Kalimo; Thomas Schauer; Uwe Moeller, Joerg Geier; Joan Rosas and, in particular, Rafael Blasco Castany, Conseller, Generalitat Valenciana.*

- *Presentation: Prof. Dennis Meadows, our main speaker today has been my colleague and friend for many years. Moreover, spearhead at the vanguard of CoR studies; inspirational source for our debates on the global problematique and resolutique.*

- *Chemist (we both!), Ph.D. of MIT Sloan School of Management, professor at MIT and at the Tuck School of Business at Dartmouth College, he has also been a visiting professor in many countries.*

Prof. Meadows is a well proven specialist in applying computer-based modelling techniques for the analysis of systems behaviour as well as for communication of sustainable management principles. Furthermore, he is the co-author of many books, some of which translated into 35 languages. He is nowadays the President of the Interactive Learning Laboratory.

No wonder that, immediately after I was chosen in 1990 President of CoR – to succeed Alex King - I took two initiatives: First: to ask Dennis please to present to the CoR an updated version of the LTG, 20 years after its first publication, which took place, most timely, at 1992 CoR's annual conference in Punta del Este (Uruguay), just before the Rio de

Janeiro World Summit. Second: to invite the members of our ExCom to elaborate a first Report of (vs. to) the CoR, around two preparatory intense meetings in Moscow and Santander, later published under the title “The Human Revolution”.

Let me also remind us in this occasion that Donella Meadows (Dana) was along all these years key in the team-work performed around the LTG and, as Dennis wrote to me 5-years ago, (I quote) “her death is a great personal loss and I mourn for the globe’s loss. Dana offered an incredibly intelligent, clear, optimistic vision for the future. We will need it, over the coming two decades, more than ever” (end of quotation). This sentiment and view of Dennis I highly esteem and fully share. In fact, we all should keep this very much in mind during the years to come.

Professor Meadows has just been in Barcelona invited by the Catalanian Group of the Spanish CoR Chapter. He has come to Valencia today to introduce to us the Spanish version of the “30 years up-date of the Limits to Growth”, just published by the Galaxia Gutenberg of the Círculo de Lectores. This is the second full review of LTG after the first, now more than 10 years ago, entitled “Beyond the Limits”, also published in Spain after LTG being published in Mexico.

Beyond the Limits constituted a further major step in deepening, improving and completing the complexity of the issues involved in the accelerated trend of the human impact on Nature. It points to the reasons for hope which, in spite of all, are still in our hands

In this regard, let me just tell you that the main ideas, data and tentative forecasts contained in LTG have established themselves most solidly as the reference in global views about the future of our Planet as well as of Humanity at large.

This first report to the CoR did become the starting point of CoR’s systematic debates, annual conferences, close door brain storming meetings with public and private world leaders, as well as with academicians. In spite of the so-called “scandal” of the LTG and the “big bang” it caused to so many egoists, as well as to many ignorant superficial readers, the message is finally reaching everyone. It did already inspire the so called Bruntland Report “Our Common Future” and, thus, the conclusions of the Rio Summit around the concept of “sustainable development”. “Limits to growth” instead of “unlimited ongoing growth”, and now “human and social sustainable development” instead of

“sustained development” is a most fortunate expression, widely used but still too seldom applied coherently in global, regional, local and even in individual actions and behaviours. Therefore education, research and development, together with basic global ethics as part of every culture, are most pressing!

To this end, human dignity must be recognised as due to all mankind, in particular as regards the mobility of people, equal opportunities in the access to learning and knowledge, and job opportunities for all together with security of all kind. This should take place in the framework of overall international social justice guided by an up-dated Declaration of Human Rights and Responsibilities.

In this context, minority groups, migrants, the handicapped and marginalised sectors of the population need to be provided with special assistance. This calls for considerable efforts in favour of both cultural and religious dialogues in order to get to know well each other and to overcome present moral relativism and unethical behaviour resulting, among others, in corruption and power misuse. Furthermore, global visions and ideals should always prevail over biased ideologies and egoism in deciding local actions.

Ladies and gentlemen

After more than thirty years of having initiated our task, The Club of Rome is aware - I believe - of the renewed magnitude of the challenge as well as of the material limitations afflicting us in our ambitious commitment to study and contribute to resolve the *world problematique*. We are also aware that the major priorities continue to be health, sustainable development, research, learning, justice, ethical behaviour and peace. Nonetheless, we are not discouraged by the daunting task ahead but rather induced to clinch it tight in our hands. Thus, following Aurelio's Peccei well set quixotic example, we go on ahead, undisturbed.

Over and above the problems and the hazards facing us, taking account of all the many reasons for hope --stored mainly in people's hearts and minds and in mother Nature's loving generosity-- we shall continue to hold a flaming torch to light the many dark shadows of Humankind by proclaiming our duty towards future generations. “Love implies action” were the last words of one of the greatest romantic writers. Along such lines and out of love for our fellow man, we should follow an unending learning process in order to make a positive contribution in any way within our reach.

Near to forty years of activities is only a beginning. The years to come will certainly show whether all of us, men and women of the world, have chosen for better or for worse.

The present paradoxical situation, - that of a world burdened by setbacks and menaces, and crowned with extraordinary achievements and opportunities - suffers mainly from a lack of political, cultural and moral leadership or, more simply, a lack of a broader outlook. It seems as if we are being led only by the dictates of past experience, for a reality which no longer exists, instead of trying to build the future with renewed enthusiasm in the present Millennium. Major political and economic powers will require profound restructuring (at least in the West) in order to make cooperation possible among all countries.

A more equitable World Order, to be viable, requires as soon as possible the adoption of the principle of world-cohesion through partnership, providing adequate compensations for less favored countries, within the realm of a profoundly renewed United Nations. It would be totally unacceptable and a serious setback to use present economic, financial and trade difficulties as an excuse to trample currently-timid feelings of human solidarity and the growing respect for human rights, hard-won in the aftermath of the last World War. Thus, simply monetary transfers or transfers in kind, including information and technology, are not enough. Rather an overall approach of sustainable development is needed, inspired by solidarity as well as by long term self-interest. In this spirit, also businessmen must assume a new leadership not satisfied even with just creating material well-being through legitimate profits but aiming at long term sustainable, i.e. viable business. This implies a new spirit of partnership (a New Alliance) between the public and private sector in every field to better serve the future of humankind.

The global economy as now structured is outgrowing the capacity of the earth to support it, moving our early twenty-first global civilization ever closer to decline and possible collapse. We are consuming renewable resources faster than they can regenerate. Forests are shrinking, grasslands are deteriorating, water tables are falling, fisheries are collapsing and soils are eroding. We are using up oil at a pace that leaves little time to plan beyond depletion. And we are discharging greenhouse gases into the atmosphere faster than nature can absorb them, setting the stage for a rise in the earth's temperature well above level since agriculture began. The throwaway economy needs to be replaced by a comprehensive reuse/recycle economy.

The good news is that we can already see glimpses here and there of what this new economy will look like. We have the technologies to build it including for example gas electric hybrid cars, advanced design wind turbines, high efficiency refrigerators and water efficient drip irrigation. The technologies and the economics will fall into place if we can get the market to tell the truth.

We can see how to build the new economy brick by brick. If, instead, we continue on the current economic path, the question is not whether environmental deterioration will lead to economic decline but when. No economy, no matter how technologically advanced, can survive the collapse of its environmental support systems.

With many analysts anticipating an imminent downturn in oil production, this era is nearing an end. No one knows exactly when this will occur, but world oil production will likely peak and turn down in the not-too-distant future.

The transition from a world of expanding oil to one of shrinking oil will be a shift of seismic proportions. Oil prices may climb higher not only than any we have known, but higher than any we can readily imagine. The international politics of scarcity will be operating full-time. For several decades, it has been fashionable to note that the United States was the world's leading consumer, that 5 percent of the world's people were consuming nearly 40 percent of the earth's resources. Although that was true for several decades, it no longer true. China has replaced the United States as the leading consumer of basic commodities. Among the basic food, energy, and industrial commodities—grain and meat, oil and coal, and steel—consumption in China has eclipsed that of the United States in all but oil. China has opened a wide lead with grain: consuming 381 million tons in 2005 versus 271 million tons for the United States. Among the big three grains, the world's most populous country leads in the consumption of both wheat and rice and trails the United States only in corn.

Dear colleagues, ladies and gentlemen

We recently entered a new century, but we are also entering a new world, one where the collisions between our demands and the earth's capacity to satisfy them are becoming daily events.

Nature has many thresholds that we discover only when it is too late. In our fast-forward world, we learn that we have crossed them only after the fact, leaving little time to adjust.

The world is not condemned to death, but it is seriously sick, indeed, particularly due to the sick minds of many. It is therefore in their and our minds that we have to bring about a more equitable world based on sustainable development. The human brain is the most

beautiful, most complex creation in the world, where knowledge, beliefs, conscience, creativity, and individual inviolable sovereignty reside. This is the place where ideas are born, as well as the impulse behind our honest will and positive actions. It is because of this common human quality that the planet has cohesion and a promising future, since ideas based on ethical and moral values are in the end more powerful than any other factor in our Universe. Such ideas, transformed into culture, are in turn indispensable for scientific and technological innovation, for inspiring economic, social and human sustainable development, and for political leadership.

In these circumstances, Europe must become fully aware of these facts and risks, not only for its Member States to survive, counteracting forcefully, united and as soon as possible, but to serve the world at large.

In an increasingly integrated, multi-cultural world and interdependent civilizations, if we are facing a possible decline of civilization, we are facing it together and need to do so hand in hand. The fates of all people are intertwined. This interdependence can be managed to our mutual benefit only if we recognize that the term "in the national interest" is in many ways obsolete.

The question facing national governments is whether they can respond quickly enough to prevent threats from becoming catastrophes. The world has precious little experience with aquifer depletion, rising temperatures, expanding deserts, melting polar ice caps, and a shrinking oil supply. These new trends will fully challenge the capacity of our political institutions and leadership. *In times of crisis, societies sometimes have as a leader a Nero and sometimes a Churchill.*

The central challenge, the key to building the new World Order, is getting Humanity to tell to itself the ecological truth in the light and spirit of multiculturalism.

The blood and culture of us Europeans has been blended with those of all other Continents. Thus, the King of Spain rightly said years ago at Aachen, that "Europe is trans-European (and) has been always going further on than itself (...), shedding toward other countries." (end of quotation)

Within these challenges, **Europe** is dramatically visualized by many either as a main source of hope or as a considerable menace: To search for the European identity -- with

all its advantages as well as limitations -- we need in particular the young, not only as the main future actors involved but mainly because they are also the best of the present and, thus, should become now fully motivated by us senior people to change the world in search of a brighter future.

The fact is that Europe has at stake the essence of its own being and the best chances for its future, while being confronted with its historical responsibility towards not only all Europeans, but also towards all peoples and countries in the world.

Thus, willingly or not, Europe continues to be one of the major actors in a rapid and profound changing world, overwhelmed by the complexity of an array of challenges which transcend every territorial border and have very long term consequences. In this perspective, the creation of the European Community first, and now the recent enlargement of the European Union are very important milestones but still insufficient in order to take over its considerable new responsibilities in this dramatically changing world.

The solution of all this can only result from quickly overcoming the profound crisis of ethical and moral values and by regenerating a sense of civic responsibility.

Europe -- even more so the recently enlarged European Union and once it does overcome the present "soul-searching" reflection period about its new Constitution -- should be and can become a big project for peace and well-being.

Thus, in my view, Europe should reach out as far as its breath and vigour are able. That is: its people, culture, and capacity for renewal.

The essence of such European construction at the service of Humankind must, therefore, be based on a civic, moral and spiritual renewal of all the people which make up Europe at large. In fact, the world is not simply the sum of Nation States but mainly of people. Thus, the UN Charter rightly begins by saying: "We the people...."

My friends

In sum, we, citizens of Europe, we have to fulfill now a major mission, hand in hand with all other "world citizens" in order to cope with our responsibilities towards future generations and the future of the biosphere. There are immense and most valuable assets of untapped resources of knowledge and moral energy for this purpose. Women and men together, we

must actively contribute to building a renewed humanism of **universal solidarity**, filled by the creative joy of constructing both a new world and a new World Order.

With this in mind, please tell us now, dear Dennis, about your most important ongoing work and, in particular, your views about the present cross-road of Europe, confronted with the climate changes and the oil depletion underway.

In any case and thanks to the most innovative and creative recent text, of yours and your co-authors about a “30-years update of LTG”, we now have already an important new tool to help to save the environment, the habitat, in which our descendants are expected to live. Consequently, it is time for us all - old and young - to take in hand most seriously and as soon as possible our joint main responsibilities towards the future.

Valencia, April 1, 2006.