

WELCOME ADDRESS

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Chair of the Board
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Ladies and Gentlemen, Fellow Europeans and World Citizens

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all cordially to this year's Conference of the European National Associations of the Club of Rome. Our presence here in Valencia, in ever beautiful Spain, reflects our conviction for the intention towards a lasting secure progress of the whole humankind, suggesting the strong role that the civil society can have in solving the long-term global problematique.

Our sincere thanks are due to the Valencian Group and the Spanish Association of the Club of Rome for their contributions to sponsor this Conference in this gorgeous city of Valencia.

This is a European gathering, but our interests cover the global horizon from the point of view of the European countries and peoples. Our task is to act as a catalyst of change in the best spirit of our Club.

Civil society is created by networking individuals and groups. International civil society calls for networking over national boundaries even in the regional, as in our case, or in the global scale. Collaboration is here necessary in order to create the desired effects. Networking generates so-called social capital that strengthens our capacities to achieve the expected goals. This is what the European Support Centre of the Club of Rome has as its key mission: To support and coordinate the activities of the European National Associations of the Club of Rome.

This Conference is expected to provide us with ample opportunities for exchanging our ideas, knowledge and visions for building a more sustainable world. Under the main theme of the Conference "Europe and the new dimensions of sustainability – Multiculturalism and human quality", we will consider a broad spectrum of key challenges for the future. In 2006, these challenges are more acute than ever, as suggested by numerous recent reports monitoring the state and the developmental trends of our globe.

Although the risks of losing the sustainable path to the future are increasingly well recognised, the twin challenge of ignorance and indifference is evident throughout the world. Even if ignorance will be gradually diminishing, there are not enough signs of overcoming the widespread indifference.

When considering this dilemma, the Annual Conference of the Club of Rome concluded slightly over a year ago that the role of the civil society will be crucial here by providing services that others are unable to provide. The non-governmental organisations may develop new forms of civic engagement, building on structures that traditional nation states can no longer deploy in the post-industrial global society. Yet, a greater awareness of the world problematique is not sufficient; the people need also start to practice the world resolutique in their everyday life. We should not be content with listening only passively the almost daily news about the worsening state of our globe.

The whole humankind and the nature surrounding us are at present the essential objects of the free-market global economy. In this world-wide economic competitive game, there are winners and losers. Yet, it is evident that the nature is one of the worst losers. The world economy is a system that lives its own life, constantly aiming at growth that should be permanent. Probably the most important and simultaneously the most difficult task at present is to find means that will guide the world economic order to follow ethics that express a sufficient sense of social responsibility and that uphold sustainable development in the global scale. How can we contribute to increasing governance of global change in this spirit?

The humankind has come very far by implementing innovations made possible by scientific discoveries. Innovation is the key word still in the future in finding out more efficient means of satisfying our growing needs. Another key principle may be modesty; it has always been considered as a virtue and it should not be forgotten as such.

Networking among the peoples in Europe may be easier than in other regions and continents due to our common cultural heritage. That is certainly one of our strengths. We are here eased by the integrating process of the European Union, although its recent steps do not reflect such a deep European cohesion as has been widely expected.

It is useful to bear in mind that the EU, as so many international organisations, has a programme for advancing sustainable development. Collaboration here is well justified, as illustrated by a conference on the role of the civil society in sustainable development and its function of monitoring the EU strategy, to be held in Brussels in a week's time, organised in part by the European Support Centre of the Club of Rome.

We have come together here in Valencia from all parts of Europe. Let us join our expertise and motivation in order to reinforce our efforts for an unforeseen progress in action towards global sustainability. I wish all the participants insightful deliberations in the course of our Conference.