

# **The Dream of Today can be the Reality of Tomorrow**

**Federico Mayor\***

Throughout the march of history the endeavor to achieve a better tomorrow never stops. This is the way to change the world for a better future. A road map for such change starts from yesterday.

## **I- Refounding of the United Nations**

In December 1918, at the end of World War I, US President Woodrow Wilson declared that the horror of the war that had just ended should never be relived, and he urged the adoption of a Covenant for “permanent peace” and the founding of the League of Nations, in order to establish a new order “based on the rule of law, the consent of the governed and the organized opinion of mankind”.

Unfortunately, due mainly to the pressure from weapons manufacturers, the secular adage “if you want peace, prepare for war”, prevailed.

World War II duly arrived, and at its end, President Franklin D. Roosevelt called for a multilateral system, the United Nations, founded in San Francisco in 1945. To support the UN’s international security activities, the United Nations System includes organizations specialized in labor (ILO); health (WHO); food (FAO); education, science and culture (UNESCO)... together with financial institutions such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF).

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But the strongest and most prosperous nations soon began to distrust this international system of cooperation and coordination, and replaced development aid with loans, progressively shunning the United Nations System institutions, and what is much worse, replacing the values that should guide international governance (the “democratic principles” so firmly established in the UNESCO Charter and in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights) with the laws of the marketplace.

And the richest countries gathered together in groups (G7, G8), replacing the democracy of multilateralism with plutocracy, converting the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank for Reconstruction and Development into instruments of their economic policies. In the 1990s a World Trade Organization (WTO) was set-up completely outside the scope of the United Nations System.

At the end of the Cold War the world expected a profound reform of the United Nations to “democratize” international relations, and to reap the “dividends of peace” by reducing social inequalities and finally promoting endogenous development in the poorest countries. But none of this was achieved, and commencing in the early 1990s, the predominance of the richest countries imposed “globalization,” with the creation and growth of huge multinational business conglomerates, limiting the power - as well as the responsibilities - of the States, with considerable social strife that has fostered breeding grounds for frustration, radicalization and hostility, frequently resulting in the use of force and in great waves of immigrants who have lost all hope. As was to be expected, this has led to a situation of profound crisis in which multilateralism appears as the only solution for reversing the present tendencies.

As a consequence, there is an urgent need to call an extraordinary meeting of the United Nations General Assembly to establish the principal criteria for achieving this in-depth

renewal, endowing it with the necessary moral and political authority required to face the great challenges of our time, along with sufficient personal, financial, technical and, when necessary, military resources to enable the United Nations to exercise its functions on an international level. Working together in a coordinated manner, the United Nations System as a whole would be able to prevent and/or resolve conflicts peacefully; establish, maintain and consolidate peace; seek disarmament; and jointly confront international terrorism and transnational criminal activities; while at the same time, through dialogue and agreements on a worldwide scale, working toward resolving the major issues on which the quality of life of all of the inhabitants of the world depends.

“We, the Peoples of the United Nations have determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war” is the initial pledge in the Preamble to the United Nations Charter. This formula, if correctly interpreted, requires no further change. But contrary to the provisions of the Charter, those represented should not only be Nations, but should likewise include representatives of civil society (nongovernmental and intergovernmental organizations, association of cities, regions and business institutions, etc.).

In this manner, a refounded United Nations Organization, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, together with the World Trade Organization, would fulfill their original functions of procuring global development, capable in a few years of substantially improving the situation on a worldwide scale. Also, the Security Council would have permanent and proportional representation influencing decision-making, but without veto rights, in order to address the principal issues of human security, with the fundamental mission of “preventing war”; and promoting economic and social security, reactivating the work of ECOSOC, which for years has not given enough attention to social and environmental issues.

It will then be possible to swiftly eliminate all forms of trafficking (in weapons, drugs, capital and people, by bringing the guilty to justice), proceeding immediately to close down tax havens, an action that can only be accomplished with the support of a United Nations endowed with the appropriate authority and resources. “No resources were available” for funding the fight against AIDS or for the eradication of hunger and poverty. The time has come to “rescue” people, starting with the eradication of poverty through a great global sustainable development plan.

The coordinated action of the United Nations would also provide adequate personal, technical and humanitarian resources to assist those who are suffering from natural or man-made catastrophes. In that regard, a proposal has been put forth to create a force of “red helmets” for rapid deployment to areas where their presence is most needed.

The so-called “right to intervene”, used in connection with “humanitarian assistance” does not adequately express what should actually be considered a duty of the International Community: to prevent genocide, endless suffering, humiliation, torture. In 1996, in a UNESCO working group that included Bernard Kouchner and Karel Vasak, the group proposed that blue helmets should be “imposed” in two situations: massive and documented violations of human rights (such as in Cambodia and Rwanda) and in cases in which the state is nonexistent (such as in Somalia in which power is fragmented among warlords). The United Nations cannot permit future scandals of this nature, which seriously affect the collective conscience.

As in 1945, it was necessary to establish the United Nations for the sake of our future generations. And, contrary to those who seek to underestimate and even denigrate them, we must take the youth movements of 1968 and 2008 (in Greece) very seriously. They are not student uprisings, but rather social conflicts.

Instead of “preparing for war”, “We, the Peoples...” are going to build peace each day through our actions, fully participating in civil society, which urgently demands guarantees that democratic and efficient criteria will be implemented on a global scale.

## **II- Great Crises, Great Opportunities**

Not only is the immense economic scaffold collapsing, but also the concept of power and its ideological foundations. We must take into account all of the dimensions of this disaster in order to rebuild using different materials.

And above all, at the very core of public action, we must reestablish the “democratic principles” which, in an error of history, have been inexplicably replaced by the laws of the marketplace. We must take advantage of this crisis in order to change our course and our destiny. Those who ignored and ridiculed the recommendations that we made in the early 1990s, convinced that an economic system based on commercial interests instead of justice is doomed to disaster, cannot now continue to ignore and ridicule proposals for change. Those who should now be judged cannot be judges. They have been “rescued” by their governments and have lost all authority to express their opinions concerning proposals to “rescue” people! Those who, like the World Bank, the IMF and the WTO, failed to speak up when they should have, must now keep silent.

After the “technological bubble” of the 1990s and the “real estate bubble” of this period in which “sovereign funds” were denied to countries with a “globalized system”, those who remained outside have accumulated two immense fortunes, while often ignoring the conditions of workers and human rights.

This is a crisis *of* the capitalist system, not a crisis *within* it, despite arguments to the contrary from the most fervent champions of the market economy who later intend to continue

down this runaway course, which due to its lack of values and rules of good governance has proved to be a resounding failure.

It is imperative, above all, to refuse to turn to a “new capitalism”, but rather to seek a new global economic system based on justice and regulated by institutions fully integrated within a totally reformed, or perhaps refounded United Nations, endowed with the human, technological and economic resources to enable it to act expediently and to apply to transgressors the full force of the law.

Much discussion has centered lately on the need to urgently reform the International Monetary Fund. In actual fact, it is the whole United Nations system that requires reform, commencing with its inclusion to the IMF, World Bank and the World Trade Organization, which the United States directly excluded from the scope of the United Nations in 1992. Why did Europe recently relinquish its leadership role in the establishment of a new world economic system? This is not a financial problem, but rather a far-reaching political question that the EU should have undertaken with authority.

The world as moving from the prevailing unilateral governance of “globalization” to a multilateral one. A strong United Nations, reaffirmed in its initial unfulfilled mission to “prevent war”, to build peace on behalf of the “future generations”, is our supreme commitment to the United Nations and UNESCO and other institutions that must be reformed and confirmed in their initial mandates only with an adequate supranational authority can the markets be regulated. It is clear that markets are not “self-regulating”, but rather give rise to all types of unpunished transgressions, mafias, etc. at the supranational level.

At the national level it is necessary that government, political parties, and unions should be managed by representatives so that the benefits can quickly trickle down to the people.

Several measures must be adopted immediately:

- Heavy public investments must be made (in energy sources; transportation; water production and distribution; food production using agriculture, aquaculture and biotechnology; housing; ...).
- Financing of and from cities must be provided and regulated, being essential for promoting employment and commercial and industrial activities, especially with regard to SMEs.
- Just as hefty funding has been found to rescue financial institutions, citizens must now likewise be “rescued” with: i) family loans (an excellent model is Brazil’s “family-school loans”, which have likewise been implemented in some of Spain’s autonomous communities); ii) unemployment benefits (with measures such as a “basic citizen’s income”, as a general principle that could initially be extended to the unemployed); iii) benefits for business start-ups or commercial activities; iv) benefits for all of those who with a little help can continue to finance their homes with renegotiated mortgages; v) reality cannot be profoundly transformed without profound knowledge: in consequence, decisive policies are required to promote R&D/Innovation with active collaboration from businesses and funds provided by the EU.

At the international level, certain initiatives could be adopted immediately:

- The necessary funds should be made available to ensure adequate nutrition on a world-wide scale and to promote the fight against AIDS (an amount which would really be insignificant compared to the “rescue” funds);

- □The Millennium Objectives should be activated, especially the fight against poverty, redefining the terms and amounts and finally granting the promised development aid along with the cancellation of foreign debt so that, among other positive results, emigration would in the future be voluntary;
- □A United Nations summit should be promptly called in which, in contrast to the 2005 summit, the funds necessary to eradicate hunger should not be limited.
- □Rapidly consider the immediate application of formulas such as fees on currency transactions, which have once again recently been well planned and proposed at the United Nations and included in the Declaration on Innovative Sources of Financing of Development in the “Action Against Hunger and Poverty” in New York on September 24, 2008.
- Reduction of the impact of natural and provoked disasters by putting into practice the United Nations 1989-1999 Decennial Proposals and the European Union’s recent (GAP) provisions to prevent the effects of recurring episodes (hurricanes, floods, fires, etc.), given that even in the most technologically-advanced countries there is still a total lack of preparation and much social vulnerability in this area.
- Priority attention should be given to Africa, taking swift steps to eliminate the shameless exploitation in the Congo’s Kivu territory in the mining of coltan.

In summary, we must rapidly facilitate the transition from a war economy to an economy of global development.



Civil society now has the opportunity - which does not present itself frequently- to promote radical transformations. After so many years of ignored recommendations and unheeded prophecies, the intellectual, scientific and academic community must calmly but firmly make itself heard. The time has come to demand an active role –which no longer has to be face-to-face, given modern communications technologies such as SMS and Internet. Governments will know that the days of resignation and silence are over. Subjects must become citizens and passive spectators must become actors, in order to implement profound changes in the form and substance of the exercise of power. The great transition from a culture of force and imposition to a culture of the word requires lifetime education at all levels, promoting creativity and cultural diversity, supporting scientific research and health for all.

Great opportunities and great responsibilities must be assumed by citizens who have the most to offer during this change. This is the time for citizen power. This is the time for people and peoples. Crises provide an opportunity to build a new world, to reinstate the universal ethical principles of justice and genuine democracy. We must be reminded daily of the wise words of Sophocles: “When the decisive hours have passed it is futile to run to catch them”.

### **III- Response to Crises: Global Development**

Of all of the crises that foreseeably result from a globalization that has replaced justice and sound political policies with the laws of the marketplace, the most serious one that is capable of mobilizing large sectors of people is the food crisis. Longer-term approaches may be used to address economic and environmental crises –although with serious irreversible consequences in the case of the latter– but the food crisis is directly related to the highest of all human rights: the right to life.

Since this affects the capacity to survive of many people –almost 1,000,000,000 people lack minimum nutrition- hunger results in disturbances and irrepressible social unrest. A minimum level of nutrition must be guaranteed. This is our common challenge and a threat to the stability of nations. Change will be unstoppable if, in addition to the financial crisis, there are shortages of food and water, because basic necessities mobilize not only those who suffer those crises directly, but also citizens all over the world who, aware of the situation, urgently appeal for a transformation from the present economy of war and dominion to an economy of development, with heavy investments –which will also provide excellent business opportunities and increase “customers”. This will lead to producing large quantities of energy at affordable prices, producing and transporting drinking water, obtaining food for all, providing transportation and heating and refrigeration systems that consume progressively less fuel and decent housing.

The knowledge to achieve this already exists. We must be capable of applying it. It is unquestionable that what is presently urgent is to enable all peoples to enjoy the benefits of that knowledge. We can envision islands, even artificial ones, with energy sources from the wind, sea or sun, producing large quantities of energy and drinking water.

Global challenges require global solutions that, in turn, require cooperation on a worldwide scale. Research must now be devoted to increasing the production of food using minimum amounts of water and fertilizer. In that regard, the transfer of the nitrogenase system, which captures atmospheric nitrogen directly in vegetables, cereals and especially in rice, would represent a giant step not only with respect to the increased availability of food, but also in the reduction of the environmental impact of fertilizers.

Instead of reducing the furious pace of weapons reduction, it has been accelerated for reasons of global economy. To current military spending we must also add the price of antimissile shields on both sides.

Through a world emergency plan we must cease to depend on fossil fuels, whose price has doubled in the last few years, and turn to what the large oil companies have for decades either criticized or blatantly concealed: the contribution to be found in renewable energy sources, nuclear (fission and fusion), hydrogen. The production of biofuels must be strictly regulated so that it does not affect the availability of food. Cultivation practices must be improved everywhere, especially with respect to the use of water, avoiding unnecessary transportation and fertilizers that can have a negative environmental impact, and, above all, the subject of subsidies and other protective measures must finally be addressed.

Global development could provide a solid solution and replace the present system that is desperately being kept in place using “patches” involving investments in the “new opportunities” that Asian or Gulf countries offer. The scandal of corruption in developing countries is continuously highlighted, without mentioning the corruptors. Speculation in natural resources, oil and basic foodstuffs has risen to intolerable levels. The G-8 countries are re-nationalizing what they had previously privatized (as was the case recently with banks and financial institutions), while seeking to prevent the nationalization of their own multinational companies located in poor countries, while ensuring that their exploitation can continue in its present conditions.

The current economic system must be changed. Joaquín Estefanía has warned that it is impossible to simultaneously block the free entry of exports from African countries and entry of citizens from those countries who are fleeing from poverty.

With communications technology that enables distance participation and with the increased participation of women (now limited to only 5% world wide), one can safely predict that in 10 or 15 years genuine democracy can be achieved at all levels, ushering in a new era: the era of the citizen. And a great transition will have been made from subjugation and dependence to full citizenship; from a culture of imposition, violence and war to a culture of dialogue, conciliation and peace. Countries will have joined together at the regional level (the United States of North America, the European Union, South America, Africa) and the United Nations will have been re-founded and endowed with the human, financial and technical resources necessary in a “global democracy”, having replaced the present plutocracy in which, moreover, its member states’ have lost a great deal of their national and international authority and capacity for action, while much of the real power is wielded by large supranational corporations. The results are immediately apparent: with international institutions incapable of regulating different aspects of world government, economic, technological and media power has been progressively concentrated in what, together with the war industry, can be considered a “great dominion”.

This was evidenced at the last FAO Conference that, as was unfortunately to be expected, concluded with the most prosperous countries determined not to permit even the slightest change in an unfair and arbitrary system, clinging to policies that allow them, with short-sighted eagerness, to continue to exploit the natural resources on which their prosperity has, until now, been based, but not for long.

No nation is exempt from responsibility. It is unacceptable to transfer “to the marketplace” the moral and political duties that are the responsibility of democratic leaders. It is urgent to establish worldwide codes of conduct within the legal and ethical framework of a duly reformed United Nations.

The world has changed and fortunately, there are many leaders and peoples who have ceased to be obedient, submissive and to yield to pressure to those with the most power. Corporations, communications media and NGOs will join together in a movement that in a few years will give “citizen power” a new dimension.

The diagnosis has been made. It is now imperative to apply the appropriate treatment before it is too late. In moments of great historical change, moral support is more necessary than ever. A new era is dawning. As in 1945, Amartya Sen, Nobel Prize Laureate in Economics said that the state rather than the marketplace must be responsible for the welfare of citizens in developing countries. To prevent the revolution of hunger by activating evolution towards a new worldwide economic system. The difference between revolution and evolution is the “R” of “responsibility”.

#### **IV- Another world is possible**

To transition from an era of change to a change of era, it is essential for society to react, ceasing to be passive spectators and mere witnesses to the passage of time, and commencing to participate actively. Only then will governments be authentically democratic, acting upon the will of the majority of citizens, while hearing and respecting their opinions. One can never cease to underscore the significance of the fact that, at the end of that terrible World War II, the United Nations – chose to commence its Charter’s preamble with these words: “We, the peoples... are determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war”. It was clear that it was *the peoples* who should build peace through their authentic representatives, doing so by virtue of this supreme commitment toward the future generations.

However, it was not “the peoples”, but rather the States, many of them authoritarian, who interpreted the UN Charter at their own

discretion. Cooperation soon became exploitation, subsidies were converted into loans, and universal values were replaced by the rules of the marketplace. Preparing for war to ensure peace prevailed over efforts to build a lasting peace. The United Nations, progressively abandoned by the great powers, became a humanitarian agency, rather than a supranational legal and ethical framework, witnessing how its dream of worldwide democracy dissolved into plutocratic groupings (G7, G8, G20...) that have replaced “We, the peoples...” with “We, the richest...”.

The situation has deteriorated progressively and, at the end of the “cold war”, supported by large weapons manufacturers, a war economy gradually developed. In the year 2000 investments in military equipment had reached 3,000 million dollars daily, while, due to extreme poverty, deaths from hunger and now avoidable diseases were estimated at 60,000 - 70,000 persons each day. There was no political will among the major powers to foster endogenous development or to guarantee the equal dignity of all human beings.

And the present state of affairs is our collective shame, which demands an urgent and radical change.

This change is now possible because, in the last few years, circumstances have rapidly “matured” to enable former “subjects” to become citizens of the world and to acquire a “global conscience”.

Thus, they have the possibility of making comparisons, the fundamental basis of ethics. In addition, there has been an increase in the number of women in public office and in decision-making roles and, finally, we have the possibility of distance participation through modern communications technology (Internet, SMS, Facebook, Youtube etc).

Personal and institutional participation are taking the lead to prevent what is most damaging to our quality of life. The complexity of these challenges requires the permanent interaction of governments, parliaments and city councils with the scientific and academic communities in order *not to delay decisions*, especially in potentially irreversible processes such as biological, social, environmental etc.

The 'human tension' generated by the present crises - economic, environmental, nutritional, energy, demographic, ethical – can *provide an extraordinary opportunity* to convert into action the shock and outrage felt by those who futilely demand reasonable investments for the eradication of hunger or AIDS, and who observe, that the same institutions that have opened the floodgates to pour immense amounts of money into bailouts, are also those that have likewise, with greed and irresponsibility, prompted this crisis situation.

Due to the democratic “awakening” of so many previously-subjugated countries: from the Eastern European countries to the extraordinary emancipation of Latin America, where an “Operation Condor” is now unthinkable, numerous countries in Latin America, Africa and Asia are loosening the grip of autocratic rule. And the European Union will have to do likewise, although it continues to be an economic community, with much inertia from those in power and an inexplicable tendency to favor policies beyond its borders that are deemed inadmissible at home. I am convinced that as the Member States really share essential values, the time will soon come to eliminate such double standards. It should be recognized –we must repeat this tirelessly- that the roots of this multiple crisis lie precisely in the terrible mistake of replacing the “universal democratic principles” of social justice, solidarity, equality with the principles of the marketplace. This has resulted in increased economic inequality, social unrest and has underscored the 'unbearable lightness of democracy', to paraphrase Kundera.

Practices are subjugated by economic and military forces, as well as the power of the mass media, with confused but obedient and passive citizens. It is both shocking and distressing to observe that part of this welfare society revolves around fanatical, unthinking and intolerant partisan groups. But it is now possible to strengthen democracy in order to achieve the radical change that President Obama represents. He emphasizes dialogue, collaboration, constantly seeking peace through justice and equal dignity for all human beings. "Together," he has said, "we can".

It is now right time to radically changing the UN system and financial institutions.

Now, indeed, in ten or twelve years it will be possible for that long desired change of an era to take place, transitioning from a culture of force and imposition to a culture of dialogue, conciliation, alliance and peace. The time has arrived for the great transition from a culture of force to a culture of the word.

Until just recently, immense amounts of money were still being spent on weapons for conventional warfare, which since the Vietnam conflict have fallen into disuse. The Bush Administration took military spending, both its own and that of the "allied" countries to unimaginable limits. But now, fortunately – and this is another important factor in transcending the present crisis situation - President Obama has decided to lead the way toward disarmament, offering a concrete plan to reduce arsenals, change the focus and stop the proliferation of nuclear warheads. As Obama has said, "we must choose between investments to maintain the security of the American people and between others who have chosen to enrich a manufacturing company or a large contractor".

It is now possible, while strengthening the multinational system and immediately eliminating tax havens, to finally bring before the courts the criminals that traffic in arms, drugs, patents,



money and people. This could partially replace spending on weapons with *investments in sustainable global development*: renewable energies, food production (agriculture, aquaculture and biotechnology), obtaining and distributing water, health, transportation and housing etc. Only then will the number of “customers” increase, and the breeding grounds that create migratory flows of desperate people and violence be avoided.

This is now possible, due to that innermost feeling that the raised fist must finally give way to the outstretched hand. The key words are “involvement” and “sharing”. I am sure that at this time the great majority of employed citizens would contribute to a Voluntary Solidarity Fund. One assumes that these problems will be solved by those who failed to timely restrain systems based on deregulation and speculation.

“All human beings equal in dignity”: this is the key –so lucidly expressed in the UNESCO Constitution and the Universal Declaration of Human rights- to entering a new era. All human beings capable of creating, imagining, inventing, and undertaking this new beginning, in the knowledge that we have the necessary abilities and will. And then, unlike those who remain anchored in the past and in their privileges, unlike the skeptics and faint-hearted, we will commence the change that we all desire, toward that other world of our dreams, with serenity, because we know that we can do it.