

## 26<sup>TH</sup> LISBON FORUM

1-3 December 2020

### Learning from our global challenges: Enhancing Solidarity

#### Concept note

The world we live in is a complex system. One in which a heterogeneous network of actors has the power to influence decisions at global level, in certain cases without necessarily being held accountable for them. A system that continues to be characterised by increasing inequalities, which are still deeply embedded in our society. But it is also a system where us, the people, and our representatives, can come together and cooperate for the common good. This is the lesson that the COVID-19 pandemic has been teaching us since day one, forcing us to deal with a fundamental question: **how can we enhance international solidarity so that it becomes an effective tool to overcome the challenges we are facing in the present and to set the basis for a more sustainable and unified future?**

As a response to the current crisis and despite the recrudescence of radicalisms in some parts of the world, the call for more international solidarity and better cooperation has been almost unanimous<sup>1</sup>. Yet, the process of turning intention claims into actionable plans, has not been able to match fully the urgency of the challenge. In some cases, those plans were prematurely put to a halt, just after they were set in motion. In others, we failed to achieve consensus regarding what was the best solution to take. Now, if this has happened so far in a context in which we are all clearly pressured by a common and very tangible threat, how do we expect to get along when facing other threats that might not be so visible or perceived as common?

It is a legitimate question, but one that cannot be considered only partly. As a matter of fact, as the North South Centre of the Council of Europe and its partners have been systematically sharing since April through the #SolidAction campaign, a huge wave of solidarity has emerged among people. From providing food and supplies to the most vulnerable citizens in Kenya, Portugal or India; to developing a software that facilitates children's access to education in Pakistan... These initiatives, whether led by civil society organisations or other actors, bear testimony to what can be achieved when we stand up and decide to collaborate. They also are an inspiration for all of us to reinstate international cooperation as a pivotal element of our system of global and regional governance.

Of course, we cannot expect that such complex and multidimensional problems, as the ones we face today, can have an easy fix. However, the willingness of solving a problem is sometimes as important as the solution itself. It is then imperative to set our short and long-term priorities straight,

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<sup>1</sup> To mark its 75th anniversary in 2020, the United Nations launched the UN75 online survey to encourage people worldwide to share their thoughts around current and emerging global trends and to define how enhanced international cooperation can help realize a better world by 2045. Accessed on 28 June 2020, the survey collects nearly 250 000 responses: <https://un75.online/>

so that we can start to tackle what is threatening our existence now while we set the basis to strengthen the sustainability and resilience of our planet and society for the future to come. The current pandemic is not only a strong reminder of how we are all part of the same humanity in the present, but also of how, with different degrees of responsibility, we all have a part to play in the protection and management of the world, for one another and for the generations of tomorrow.

How can we ensure that we move towards a system of global and regional governance for life and solidarity? What are the assets and weaknesses of the present international architecture? How to ensure that our multilateral system is a system for solidarity, coordination and rapid response in the face of crisis such as the current one? These are the kind of questions that this year's Lisbon Forum seeks to address.

In an exceptional year and on the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the European Court of Human Rights, the Lisbon Forum places life, people and the planet at the core of a debate on international solidarity and human rights. Held online, the Lisbon Forum will offer a vibrant and dynamic platform that will allow the North-South Centre to gather decision makers, experts and activists from different parts of the world to exchange knowledge and practice and to shed light on possible ways forward.

### **Format and Programme**

This year's Lisbon Forum will be held online between 1-3 December, reaching out beyond its usual constituents to offer even broader participation (see programme structure attached)

To address the main question, the Lisbon Forum will look into three specific problematics through concrete examples from the ground and three thematic workshops:

Education and citizen's consciousness	Addressing vulnerabilities through intersectionality	Intergenerational dialogue and environment protection
Raising awareness on citizens partaking and responsibility through (mindful) sustainable lifestyles: the role of global education to enhance international solidarity.	The workshop will explore the application of an intersectional approach to vulnerability reduction and how to raise awareness on the unequal impacts of crises on women and girls.	This workshop will address the strong link between environmental governance and the concept of intergenerational solidarity. How to ensure intergenerational collaboration, dialogue and learning to protect the biosphere?

### **Background**

For over 30 years, the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe has acted as an interface for the Council of Europe's vocation for solidarity, dialogue and partnership beyond Europe. As a Centre for *Global Interdependence and Solidarity*, it is a tool to mobilise international cooperation and solidarity and raise awareness on the world's growing interconnectedness between local and global realities while developing citizen's skills, values and attitudes to understand and deal with the complexity of global issues.

The Lisbon Forum is a distinctive platform for dialogue for policy makers, academics and activists on issues related to global interdependence and solidarity. It allows networking, sharing of knowledge and mainstreaming of good practices among actors from different fields and expertise to jointly tackle the global challenges.

This year, the Lisbon Forum is also the epilogue of the North-South Centre's public campaign "[One World, Our World: #SolidAction](#)" that, since April 2020, has called for and given visibility to collective mobilisation for solidarity against inequalities.