

Speech by H.E. Manuel Montobbio on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the North-South Centre at the Council of Europe on

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Looking ahead and navigating beyond

On the 30th Anniversary of the North South Centre

In his essay *In the same boat*, Peter Sloterdijk compares the History of Humanity, of human life in society, to that of navigation, from that in rafts going down the river of the primitive communities, to the one of all in the same boat of our era of information society globalization. All in the same boat, in the same spaceship Earth in our journey towards the future, in the middle of the Ocean, we can just try to float, let us be taken by the currents and the winds; or we can try to sail, to reach a point in the horizon which may become a welcoming harbour or the island of Utopia. Our collective navigation in History is not like driving a car on a previously traced road, but that of the ship in uncharted waters: we don't know the winds or the currents we will have to face, but where in the horizon we want to direct our way.

María Zambrano told us that we are the only beings who do not only suffer History, but also want to make it. And we want to make it with ideas, to realize them in History, to make of ideas the points where we want to sail to. Since we don't resign ourselves to let them in Plato's cave. Since, once conceived, ideas call to the future and advance it. Although Utopia has not been realized in History, it has moved it. This ambition, this capacity to transform ideas into reality defines us.

In his memories, Jean Monnet tells us that nothing is possible without the persons, and nothing remains without the institutions. That persons pass by, and what we can do to leave to those who come after us, is to contribute to the institutions, whose life is infinitely longer than ours, and can, if well built, accumulate and transmit wisdom to the next generations. Since only institutions can become wiser, allow future generations to build on what they have learned from the precedents.

The European Centre for Global Interdependence and Solidarity, known as the North South Centre of the Council of Europe, whose 30th Anniversary we commemorate, is an institution we have managed to build, a ship with which to navigate, which acquires its ultimate purpose and sense in relation to the navigation of the common spaceship Earth in our journey towards the future. 30th Anniversary: moment to celebrate, to look behind and ahead, to reflect, in the double perspective of the realization of ideas in History and of the relationship between memory and hope.

Looking thirty years behind, we can contemplate the process which began with the Brandt Commission and the Brudland Report as a change, a construction of paradigm, of consciousness on development and sustainability, on global interdependence and solidarity. Consciousness of “One World, Our World”, as the NSC logo says, and non-resignation which led to action: to the Lisbon Conference “North-South: Europe’s role” on 9-11 April 1984, organized by the Parliamentary Assembly of the CoE; to the North-South Campaign organized by the CoE throughout Europe; to the Madrid Appeal when evaluating its results in June 1988 in Madrid, asking for triangular cooperation between governments, parliaments and NGOs, for strategies and education for development, for the creation of organizational structures “taking into account the proposal of a centre for global interdependence to continue ideas and structures built during the North South campaign”; to the Committee of Minister’s Resolution (89) 14 of 16 November 1989 establishing the European Centre for Global Interdependence and Solidarity. And from then, with the illusion to create an institution, to provide the Council of Europe this partial agreement as a tool for Global Interdependence and Solidarity, as a tool to make Europe mean human rights, rule of Law and democracy not only for Europeans, but for all human beings, as a tool to make them mean development, from a building in Lisbon some persons embarked themselves in this journey which has lasted already thirty years.

Looking throughout this thirty years of the European Centre for Global Interdependence and Solidarity – also known as the North South Centre – we can pass by the way which has led as to its programs and lines of action on Global Education, Youth and Empowerment of Women or to its flagship annual activities of the North South Prize and the Lisbon Forum – respectively in their 24th and 25th edition –, to its University of Youth and Development in Mollina or its Euromediterranean Youth University in Hammameth, and so many other initiatives, actions and moments we can remember when passing through its History. Looking throughout these thirty years, we can see also the Centre as the argument of the hope of all the persons which have dedicated their work and their lives, their passion and their hope to it. Looking throughout these thirty years, we can see the birth and growing of an institution to its maturity age, and the accumulation of experience and wisdom it entails, which permits us, thanks to the effort and illusion of those who have preceded us, to go beyond where they could go with our daily effort and illusion. Looking throughout these thirty years, we can

see the Centre alive as a reference in the lives of those who have taken part in its programs, its Youth Universities, the Lisbon Forum or the North South Prize, and hear their testimony of what it has taught or given them. Looking throughout these thirty years, we can see its contribution to ideas made into History.

The contribution, also and meanwhile, to the alchemy between memory and hope. María Zambrano told us also that neither the past nor the future do exist, but the present of the past, or the memory, and the present of the future, or the hope. We face always the challenge to make the alchemy of transforming memory into hope, to look behind to better look ahead. And thus the celebration of the Centre's 30th Anniversary cannot consist only on looking behind, paying tribute those who preceded us and have made it possible, to honour the greatness of their hope which gave birth to the Centre, commemorate what has been achieved; but to look ahead into the horizon and define where we want to address our navigation, which hope we want to turn into memory within thirty years, reaffirm the ideas and the engagement in light of the present challenges and circumstances, face the challenge of transforming the memory of the Centre into its hope, with the consciousness that on the length of the vision, on the highness of the hope, depends to a large extent the life and the World we will celebrate within thirty years.

To look inwards to look outwards: to reflect. That is what we have done by carrying out a reflection process which has led to the elaboration and approval at the meeting of the Centre's Executive Committee last June 21st of the Vision Paper which constitutes our navigation charter from now on. A process with the participation of all members of the Centre and relevant interlocutors and stakeholders. The navigation chart we need to navigate, as well as we need a ship, and the hope and the will, and to know and master the winds and currents of our time.

A Vision Paper which reflects on the who, the what and the how and where of the Centre, establishes some guiding principles and objectives, and offers an approach to the Centre's past and present.

The who, by making a conceptual approach from what is implied in its name, as well as in its membership:

- *Global*, as a Centre for the external and global projection of the CoE, with a vocation to realise its objectives beyond its geographical area, and to contribute to answer to the questions and challenges of globalization.
- *Interdependence and Solidarity*, assuming development as a goal, and the challenge and opportunity to relate human rights, rule of Law and democracy with it, as well as the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals as a guiding line of action.

- *Of the Council of Europe, and therefore for human rights, the rule of Law and democracy*
- *For Intercultural and Intercivilisational Dialogue, with the purpose to contribute to the contribute to each society's evolution through its own History, cultural tradition and cosmovision to the conviction on the universality of human rights, rule of Law and democracy*
- *With a vocation to contribute to its Neighbourhood Policy*
- *An Enlarged Partial Agreement, with the value and potentiality of non-CoE member States participation*
- *A quadrilogue Centre, since an essential and defining characteristic of the Centre is the presence in its institutional life and activities, together with the representatives of the governments, of parliamentarians, local and regional authorities and of civil society and NGOs, conforming a unique framework and an opportunity to act together*
- *A European Centre, and an opportunity to foster the external dimension of European construction together with the European Union.*

The what, by proposing that, while continuing with its present programs and activities, to develop its potentiality the Centre orients itself also towards: strengthening the role and contribution of the Council of Europe to the Sustainable Development Goals and the link between development and human rights, rule of Law and democracy; contributing to Intercultural and Intercivilisational Dialogue; reinforcing the Centre's presence and interaction with the Euromediterranean diplomatic architecture and being a useful tool of CoE's Neighbourhood Policy; and contributing to the explanation and knowledge of CoE's conventions.

The how and where, by focusing on how to pass from vision to action; the development of a line of action on "pre-cooking" and second-track diplomacy; the Centre's geographical and universal vocation; the application of the guiding principles and objectives; its anchoring within the Council of Europe; and on assumption of ownership.

The 30th anniversary of the Centre is an occasion, as we have been saying, to reflect, to look behind and ahead; and is an occasion to celebrate. To celebrate what we have been, what we are and what we want to be. To celebrate that we are, since any celebration cannot be but a celebration of life. To celebrate our departure from harbour towards new horizons, new navigations, new experiences. To invite you to join us in our journey and make it the journey of global interdependence and solidarity towards human rights, rule of Law, democracy and

development. To celebrate and live, essentially, our ultimate journey, that in search of the universal soul which inhabits in each and all of us.

Viver não é preciso

Navegar é preciso...

To live is not necessary, to sail is necessary... The words and the melody of the song *Os argonautas* of Caetano Veloso – sung by him, by António Caimho or so many others Portuguese speaking singers – come to me with the image of the monument of the discoverers where in Lisbon the Tejo encounters the Atlantic, reminding us of so many departures seen from there that have made us to be what we are. Without navigation life is not life. Since to live is to be, to become all we can be; and we can hardly be it without embarking ourselves, without sailing, navigating towards the future and towards ourselves, without becoming the only being who transcends himself – as Kant defined us -, without feeling the Sun, the wind and the sea, and feel and thank that we are alive. Let us embark ourselves in the North South Centre and depart towards the future, to make vision and ideas reality.

Let's look ahead, and toast for the navigation of the North South Centre and of our common spaceship Earth towards the future, for highness of our hope, for the length of our vision, for the realization of the spirit, of the ideas of human rights, rule of Law and democracy, of peace and development, for the nurturing and fulfilment of our common universal soul.

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