

ONE HUMANITY, OUR HUMANITY

An Appeal from the North South Centre of the Council of Europe in face of the COVID-19 crisis

In these times of COVID-19 emergency, we face a global, common and survival challenge, which more than ever shows us global interdependence and the need of solidarity to face it. We are all in the same boat, in the same spaceship Earth in our voyage towards the future: what happens in any part of it, to anybody who travels in it, affects all of us. Since we are all; and we are each the same human being. We face the challenge, at this crossroads of History, to show the true nature of our shared human condition.

As in any crisis, both the worst and the best of it may be present. COVID-19 is a virus for the body, and it may be a virus for the soul. It is a challenge for our physical, medical health; and it is a challenge for our social health. We have to take care of the physical body; and we have to take care of the social body. Politically, socially, economically, technologically. Personally, locally, regionally, nationally, globally. It matters what we do – and what we do not; and it matters how we do – and how we do not. Peace – understood as absence of direct, structural and cultural violence when addressing conflict and facing problems and challenges in human societies - is at stake. Human rights, rule of Law and democracy are indissolubly linked to development. And human rights, rule of Law, democracy and development are at stake on how we face and deal with the emergency, and how we face the global crisis it will entail. Our values and principles, the shared open universals on which we base our social contract, constitute a fundamental guidance on how to sail through these stormy and uncharted waters, as well as a precious common good to preserve to navigate beyond and afterwards.

Europe is at stake, as global governance and the international system are. Since Europe is today not just a geographical space where historically so many confrontations have taken place, but a shared project of peace based on our common commitment with human rights, the rule of Law and democracy which we share at the Council of Europe. A Community of Law, and a human construction. European construction has both an internal and an external dimension. Either human rights are for all humans, or they are not. As a construction based on human rights and human dignity, it cannot but be guided by them inwards and outwards. More than ever, we are shown our global interdependence; more than ever, we are appealed to our solidarity.

Horizontal solidarity, between the different human societies – and the states and regional organizations they are structured – and among each society – its different political and socioeconomic actors and institutions; its citizens -. Vertical solidarity, with our older

generations, who have dedicated their lives, efforts and hopes to make possible that we live in a better world with more possibilities to enjoy the human rights we proclaim than they did, to live life in all its dignity and potentiality, whom we cannot leave behind, whose right to life we have more than ever the moral obligation to protect in face of this pandemic; and with the coming generations, who will have to pay back the indebtedness of our economies we are going to assume for our present survival, towards whom we have more than ever the moral obligation to explain one day that we did what we are doing not only for our survival – our World, our Humanity – but also and especially for theirs, to whom we face the challenge to leave a viable World, a navigable spaceship Earth the day we handle the helm to them. Politically, economically, socially, environmentally and climatically: the challenges and implications of this crisis are multiple, and our solidarity with the coming generations is requested in all of them. Gender solidarity, since we cannot afford that this crisis widens the gender gap and affects negatively Women's empowerment, rights and opportunities.

We are all the same person, the same human being, through space and through time, beyond gender and any other collective identity. More than ever, the motto of the North South Centre "One World, our World" means today "One Humanity, our Humanity".

It is time for consciousness, for reflection; and it is time for action. On the institutions, and specially on global and regional governance, not forgetting that that of subsidiarity is a both-ways principle – since, while it implies that policies are to be carried out at local and subnational level when they can be more effective for the citizens, it implies as well that they should be carried at supranational and global level when they can be thus more efficient. On public policies. On priorities.

Time for reflection and time for action from the European Centre for Global Interdependence and Solidarity / the North South Centre of the Council of Europe. Looking behind, a bit more than thirty years ago, in times of East-West confrontation, of menace of mutual mass destruction, there was an assumption of consciousness on the need of North-South solidarity; that there is only one World, our World. A consciousness which led globally to the North South campaign, carried out in Europe by the Council of Europe, and to the non-resignation, the commitment and the willingness not to let it die out once it was over; but to create a tool to keep promoting from Europe consciousness and action for global interdependence and solidarity. A commitment and willingness which led to the international conference on the way forward held in Madrid in June 1988, where the Madrid Appeal was issued, which, among other issues, called for the creation of a European Centre for Global Interdependence and Solidarity, decided by the Committee of Ministers, after the offer by Portugal to host its premises, on the 16 November 1989.

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 Molina or its Euromediterranean Youth University in Hammameth, and so many other initiatives, actions and

moments we can remember when passing through its History. We can see with satisfaction that it has reached its 30th anniversary with a new impulse and a new vision reflected in the *Vision Paper* as a navigation chart 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. A chart which signals us as the horizon towards which to navigate 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 Intercivilizational 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.

Looking ahead, while the priorities, the roadmap and the horizon established at the *Vision Paper* look more valid and necessary than ever, we face now the challenge to sail through this storm and stay the course towards it. To assume it, we propose and intend to follow a triple line of action with the vocation to contribute to the reflection and action on global interdependence and solidarity in face of the crisis, and to its solution based on human rights, the rule of Law, democracy and development and the promotion and vindication of our common human condition.

- Introducing the perspective of the COVID-19 crisis implications and challenges into the Centre's programs on Global Education, Youth and Empowerment of Women.
- Conceiving the 2020 editions of the Lisbon Forum and the University of Youth and Development as fora for dialogue, debate and proposal ideas and paradigms and global governance and policy responses to the crisis, trying to address the fundamental questions on how to preserve and promote human rights, the rule of Law, democracy and development in the post-COVID-19 World; and which kind of global governance, European construction and public policies do we need to face it. With a vocation, as was the case of the 2019 Lisbon Forum, to make it a Forum of *quadrilogue* between governments, parliamentarian, local and regional authorities and civil society representatives; as well as of dialogue between international organizations – both global and regional, and between cultures and civilizations.
- Conceiving and carrying out the #solidaction campaign *One Humanity, Our Humanity* to raise consciousness and sensitivity on global interdependence and solidarity on face of the challenge of the COVID-19 crisis and the response to it. In the same way that a bit more than thirty years ago the Centre found its origin in the North South campaign, it should contribute to the present challenge by being this mobilizer and catalyser of this campaign, which aims to be conceived as a quadrilogue and a network of networks campaign, mobilizing and welcoming the participation of all the Centre's stakeholder, partners and former laurates of the North South Prize.

This line of action is conceived as a two phase strategy, with the Lisbon Forum as a turning point: a point of arrival of the campaign and the preparatory work to make it possible; and a

point of departure defining ideas and proposals to be followed and carried out. In the same way that the Madrid Conference issued the Madrid Appeal, it could be envisaged as the occasion to issue a *One Humanity Appeal*. An appeal of hope, of willingness, of commitment, of affirmation of our common human condition and solidarity in face of our common challenges. An appeal for thought, and an appeal for action.

Mercedes Sosa tells us in her song:

*¿Quién dijo que todo está perdido?
Yo vengo a ofrecer mi corazón...*
(Who says that everything is lost?
I come to offer my heart...)

If we offer our heart, nothing may be lost... On all and each of us depends to turn crisis into opportunity, to make the time of global interdependence that of human solidarity, to sail our common spaceship Earth through this storm and stay the course to hand over a better World and a better Humanity to our children the day they will replace us at the helm.

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