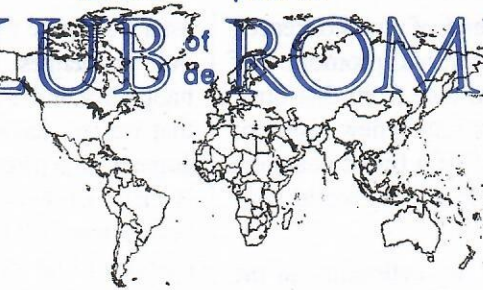


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SERIES 1 NUMBER 26

JUNE 1998

# New Scenarios for a Changing World

by Ricardo Díez-Hochleitner, President of The Club of Rome

*The following is the text of a speech given by the President of The Club of Rome at a meeting in Rome, April 9, 1998, to celebrate Thirty years of The Club of Rome*

Today we are celebrating 30 years of The Club of Rome, here in the impressive Campidoglio of Aurelio Peccei's beloved city, under the auspices of the Foundation that bears his name.

The excerpts of interviews with Aurelio have brought back our memory of him even more vividly than usual; and we are always grateful for an opportunity to hear the inspiring and precise views of our dear colleague Umberto Colombo, honorary President of the Fondazione now chaired by Roberto Peccei, a faithful son of the Club's main founding father and himself a fine colleague of ours.

The 1998 Lecture, entrusted this year to Ernst Ulrich von Weizsäcker, adds yet another special dimension to this event, since the conference he will be delivering on one of our recent reports to The Club of Rome – **Factor 4** – gives ample cause for hope based on the many possibilities at hand to combine a variety of actions to improve our planet's increasingly complex and serious situation deriving from the limited availability of natural and energy resources and the impact of their waste.

On this memorable day, I shall briefly address the question of future scenarios for a changing world. However,

let me begin by telling you that my first encounter with the man who inspired The Club of Rome took place 35 years ago now in Washington. While I was working at the World Bank. This is to say that I met Aurelio Peccei in 1963, on the occasion of one of his visits to the then Secretary of State Dean Rusk. With his usual elegant language and eloquent gesturing, he shook me deeply when he asked me for my vision of future changing societies. After an almost passionate analysis of the world situation and trends, his main question to me was consistent with his own solid logic, as follows: Someone concerned with educational reforms, planning and financing – as I have always been – should have a clear prospective view of future scenarios within which the beneficiaries of educational systems and learning processes could and would live their active lives.

Without going into the scope and content of our substantive conversation on that occasion – at a time when we were mainly concerned with succeeding in introducing the principle of equality of opportunities, life-long education and the provision of adequate financial resources – I just wish to tell you today that it was due to that intelligent, challenging and friendly dialogue that I became a



colleague and always a staunch friend of Aurelio Peccei, our first President. My active pursuit and promotion of educational prospective studies also date from that time, activities in which I have sought not only a new vision of education but mainly new scenarios of a future changing society, a search on which the fate of the world may depend.

In fact, the first request I made to my colleagues in the Executive Committee – before I accepted the honour of chairing The Club of Rome beginning in 1991 – was to summarise the highlights of all the studies and debates undertaken until then in a first report by The Club of Rome (and to date the only one report of such nature), that is to say, a report by the Executive Committee members, before going on to discussing new future scenarios. The work requested was accomplished in approximately one year's time, around discussion held during two meetings, one in Russia and the other in Spain. This fundamental report, entitled "The First Global Revolution" was put together in a masterly manner by Alexander King – my admired immediate predecessor – with the help of Bertrand Schneider, our Secretary General. The final text provided not only an up-dated overall analysis of rapidly changing and ever more complex long-term global problems, but also a major recommendation by way of conclusion to promote **knowledge** and **solidarity** as against wide-spread ignorance and selfishness. Furthermore, our Club of Rome members were called upon through this vehicle to formulate alternative possible solutions to the pressing *world problematique*.

Since then, we have been fortunate enough to bring a good number of new reports to life, some of which are already published and all successively outlined and debated at numerous workshops and seminars, particularly at our annual conferences held since 1991 in Uruguay, Japan, Argentina, Malaysia, Canada, Puerto Rico and the USA. On the grounds of this wide variety of studies and debates – related to the daily observation of, among others, ongoing human impact on the environment, natural disasters, material growth and the resulting growing disparities between the rich and the poor all over the world – I dare to suggest that we have, notwithstanding, still every opportunity to mend the direction of the fate of humankind. This will be so, provided we recognise the difficulties – which are growing exponentially – and consequently everyone's necessary and honest dedication, backed by all available resources, to affront the challenges ahead. Otherwise, we are probably headed for a major global disaster. However, we in The Club of Rome have never been deterministic or catastrophists.

If The Club of Rome exists and carries on with its tasks, it is by no means to pursue and proclaim doom and dis-

aster but, quite the contrary, to alert about the many serious challenges that unfortunately threaten mankind's happiness and even survival, under the firm conviction that we still have time and greater and greater means to counter such threats if we are knowledgeable and willing. Because of this positive attitude, we often speak out in a severe warning language, addressed mainly to decision makers, while at the same time – mainly when speaking with the young – emphasising that there is every reason for hope, that a splendid new world order is possible if they wish to bring it to life.

Under these premises and addressing, first of all, the young, allow me to begin by referring to the bright future scenario which we have the opportunity – moreover the right and even the duty to aspire, in line with the fundamental spirit and *raison d'être* of The Club of Rome.

On the brink of the Twenty First century, the world – humanity at large – should have no cause for concern but rather should take pride in its many achievements and the good prospects for the decades to come; I would highlight some of the foremost of these achievements and prospects:

- No world-war seems to be in sight after almost six decades since World War II.
- Considerable economic growth has taken place in many more rich countries.
- Basic needs have been covered for a considerable number of millions of poor human beings, thanks to bilateral aid and the work of NGOs.
- Education for all is now recognised as a desirable target, while access to advanced knowledge will probably further spread with the help of multimedia and Internet.
- Natural resources and renewable sources of energy are more and more at hand in response to consumer demands, at least while they last.
- Explosive demographic growth has been considerably reduced and tends to be tamed further in the strongholds of less developed countries.
- Structural changes have at present a major adverse effect on full employment but flexible job opportunities are growing.
- Scientific and technological development is on the rise, even though we have barely scratched the surface of wisdom available to us in Nature.
- Cultural identities are being enhanced all over the world, thus enriching total human cultural wealth while an almost global civilisation is being adopted by all societies.



- Global trade, finances and economic growth are expanding more and more.
- Nation-States are still being sustained by deep-rooted institutions built on traditional ethical and moral values which guide societal behaviours and social cohesion.
- Governability at the local, national and international level is, on the grounds of the above mentioned factors, manageable in the hope of an harmonious and coherent world order, particularly if based on multipolar co-operation and broad-based solidarity as the foundations for long-lasting sustainable development.

However, even if such achievements are taken for granted as a given framework, some mechanism of global governance is needed to monitor, forecast and control developments around the world on issues on which Nation-States must delegate their sovereignty to supranational organisations, given their increasing interdependence in an ever more globalised world. This should include the principle of overall international social justice guided by an up-dated Declaration of Human Rights and Responsibilities.

Such an approximate scenario, which should be able to accommodate all the various nuances that ought to be included, may and should be possible. Under the motto "Humankind, Nature and Technology", the EXPO 2000 in Hanover – whose International Advisory Board I chair – is an endeavour intended to confront the present global situation with world wide projects and a "Global Dialogue" in search of alternative solutions. Therefore I often refer to EXPO 2000 as "an invitation to hope". Unfortunately, however, in contrast to the views of well-meaning wishful thinkers, any bright picture of the future is subject to important caveats, such as the following, to mention some of the most consequential:

1. Current life styles, particularly in the more economically developed areas of the world, need to be drastically changed to minimise the human impact on the environment not only through environment-friendly use of technologies but mainly as a result of wholly different individual and collective habits and attitudes in the demand and use of consumer goods. We must protect not only dry land but also and very particularly the planet's vast global ocean and the atmosphere that embraces them both in recognition of the mutual interactions among them and in order to preserve the global ecosystem, including biodiversity. Otherwise, sustained development will be unattainable and what we will have instead, among other effects; will be a scarcity of water resources everywhere and wide-scale hunger, not to mention an aggravation of old and new

pandemics owing to the impact of the thinning of the Ozone layer in the upper atmosphere on human immune systems.

2. Everyone's human dignity must be recognised as due to all mankind, in particular as regards the mobility of people, equal opportunities in the access to learning and knowledge, and job opportunities for all together with security of all kinds. In this context, minority groups, the handicapped and marginalised sectors of the population need to be provided with special assistance. This calls for courageous efforts in favour of both cultural and religious dialogues in order to overcome present moral relativism and unethical behaviour resulting, among others, in corruption and abuse. Furthermore, global visions and ideals should always prevail over partisan ideologies in guiding local action.
3. Individual and collective political determination and continued specific action need to be based on sound democratic roots as well as on values held in common and deeply felt. However, such feasible aspirations, are presently highly dependent of access to advanced knowledge, still too often restricted to the well-to-do. Man and society, the main actors in any change, are essential but their specific circumstances at any given time are also decisive. The impact of multimedia and Internet in every field of human activity, will bring manifold blessings, but not without causing some considerable disturbance. In any case, we must enlist the creativity deriving from the uncertainty facing us and the present overriding weight of rights and duties in the exercise of freedom by every man and society to resolve false dilemmas posed by previous deterministic thinking.
4. Diverse potential scenarios for a changing society, now faced with the polarity between growing globalisation and localisms, have first to avoid the pitfalls of what for the time being is one-sided single super-power leadership. Similarly, local short-sightedness, sometimes wedded to exacerbated nationalism or even flirting with terrorism, must be urgently laid aside. Furthermore, the task before us may entail building a **world-wide urban network**, i.e. a United Cities Organisation to parallel the United Nations Organisation. We all are caught up in the trend of being simultaneously world citizens and citizens of a given region (Europe, for instance), of a Nation-State, of a Community, of a city or a village. Thus the task may well be to learn to reconcile all of these many loyalties around values of solidarity, co-operation and, in particular, tolerance thanks to a fluent dialogue of cultures fed by firm democratic convictions. Conse-



quently, governability will depend largely on our capacity to adapt to these increasingly overlapping realities --with new emphasis on globality and supranationality- if the world is to enjoy lasting peace and a decrease in the number of violent confrontations provoked by greed and selfishness. A new world order based on co-operation amongst supranational communities in Europe, North America, Asia, Latin America and Africa should contribute to avoid global and local confrontations, including civil war and terrorism. To this end present distrustful attitudes against emerging regional groupings of Nation-States such as the European Union must promptly be overcome, since the Euro is to be a tool for development into a true Community in the widest sense of the term.

Recent reports to The Club of Rome, already published, such as "Factor 4", "The future of work", "How to take Nature into account", "How will information transform society (The Net)", "The capacity to govern" or "The limits to social cohesion", together with those reports now in the making such as "The future of the oceans", "The governance of the Nation-State" or "The global financial flows", outline, always from an interdisciplinary approach, many of the elements to the complex, interdependent and uncertain long-term global scenario. The message, time and again, is how frustrating and contradictory it is when our present situation and world trends are met with unwillingness or political inability on the part of both public and private leaders of civil society in trying to resolve the major issues before us. Thus, in order to change the course of events we require urgent, almost immediate action, instead of leaving goodwill for later on -- maybe until it will already be too late to effectively act.

Meanwhile, the worst kind of ignorance of all -- born of

the refusal to see, hear or know about anything that disturbs our selfishness -- is giving way nowadays to the rebirth of the worst demons of the human spirit, such as envy, xenophobia, racism, intolerance, fanaticism, corruption and hate. While awash with information of nearly plague-like dimensions -- too often previously manipulated -- we continue to be short of sound knowledge and even more so of leadership free of a thirst for power and profit, anxious to overcome confrontation in the benefit of mutual understanding and co-operation.

Thirty years after having initiated our task, The Club of Rome is aware -- I believe -- of the renewed magnitude of the challenge as well as of the material limitations afflicting us in our ambitious commitment to study and contribute to resolve the *world problematique*. We are also aware that the major priorities continue to be health, sustainable development, research, learning, justice, ethical behaviour and peace. Nonetheless, we are not discouraged by the daunting task ahead but rather induced to clinch it tight in our hands. Thus, following Aurelio's well set quixotic example, we go on ahead, undisturbed.

Over and above the problems and the hazards facing us, taking account of all the many reasons for hope -- stored mainly in people's hearts and minds and in mother Nature's loving generosity -- we shall continue to hold a flaming torch to light the many dark shadows of Humankind by proclaiming our duty towards future generations.

"Love implies action" were the last words of one of the greatest romantic writers. Along such lines and out of love for our fellow man, we should follow an unending learning process in order to make a positive contribution in any way within our reach.

Thirty years of activities is only a beginning. The years to come will certainly show whether all of us, men and women of the world, have chosen for better or for worse.

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