For a World Citizen Movement

Introduction

We are a forum *geared* to changing world governance, from local to global. We believe it is time to help consolidate a *World Citizen Movement* headed both toward institutionalizing democratic world governance and toward transitioning to a more sustainable, solidarity-based world— a post-fossil and post-nuclear world for some, a post-speculation or post-capitalism world for others.

It is generally considered today that world governance is in crisis. Citizens are well aware that tensions, conflicts, and wars have far from ceased. The scale and complexity of issues have overwhelmed local, national, supranational, and global institutions, made them powerless, and often limited their role, in various regions of the world, to cushioning the foreseeable deterioration of populations' living conditions.

Today's wars and conflicts are caused by many different factors: economic inequality, social conflict, religious sectarianism, territorial disputes, or control over basic resources such as water and land. All of these are illustrations of a deep crisis in how the world is being (or is not sufficiently being) governed: this is what we call the crisis in world governance.

The failed Copenhagen COP 15 and Rio+20 conferences have demonstrated the ineffectiveness of the current world governance system. Multilateralism is deadlocked. World governance entities such as the G7, G8, and G20 are not

legitimate and even less democratic. Globalization has produced a world in which territories are all interconnected, in which societies, cultures, economies and governments are all interconnected. Today's most crucial ecological, economic, political, and social issues involve all of humankind and have become tangible throughout the planet.

To meet these global challenges, we believe it urgent to lay the foundations of new institutions, adapted to the different scales of power and articulated from the most local to the most global. This is how we see the *new* world governance we are trying to contribute to build by institutionalizing pluralistic neighborhood to planetwide communities as a prerequisite to forming a new system of legitimate, responsible, and solidarity-based governance, because cultural diversity is an essential foundation of the global community's wealth.

Yes, there have been occasional breakthroughs. We can see paradigm changes here and there, as well as some economic, social, technological, and cultural innovations, especially at the local levels. Clearly, however, they have not been able to reverse the widespread trend of worsening conflict and sometimes irreversible deterioration of the relationship between humankind and the biosphere.

This is why we are striving for *new* world governance. We need to invent democratic governance of the world and imagine a social force capable of promoting it.

To help organize this needed world social movement, we propose to develop, collectively:

- A *conceptual reading of the* current *world system*, of the key social and political issues, as well as of the *social forces likely to lead the project of bringing about* democratic, sustainable, and solidarity-based *world governance*.

- A *strategy* for allowing these social forces to organize into a *global social and political movement*, which we have called the *World Citizen Movement*.

- Our *Forum* can be made available to contribute to opening a debate on the needed *strategy*, as well as to coordinate tactical actions in the short and medium term. A forum will make it possible to articulate and confront ideas flexibly, with no constraints. It will allow diversity to be expressed and discourage dogmatic positions.

Modernity and democracy

About two and a half centuries ago, the world entered a new phase of its history: both the 1776 and 1789 Revolutions laid the foundations for radical reform of democratic citizenship by rejecting the old order and building a new order based on the individual, on equality among all citizens, on liberty, and on individual and collective happiness.

In the modern conception of history, this liberation is still in a way affecting our history. We can consider that democratic institutions—the political leverage of this liberation—are where the dialectics of emancipation occur in the face-off between the state, on the one hand, and social movements on the other.

The nation state (the concept is subject to debate, but we are using this term generically for practical reasons) is based on the idea of citizenship which potentially makes everyone a citizen with inalienable rights, theoretically guaranteed by the state, and potentially makes the nation the expression of the highest collective identity and subjectivity on the territory of the national state. In this first stage of modernity, nation states were regarded as equal entities in the international system of national states.

Today the *inter*-national conception of the global political system is unable to meet the challenges arising in the *trans*-national space generated by the successive waves of globalization (which the League of Nations then the United Nations have attempted to organize). In this transnational space, the rule of law is at best informal and at worst, reduced to the law of the strongest. It is precisely the governance of this transnational space, insufficiently institutionalized (and which has taken on considerable strategic importance with the advent of globalization, soaring threats to the environment, and the challenge of managing Humankind's common goods collectively), that has become the *de facto* collective stake in world history. In other words, the planet as a whole is both where the main problems of the system are and the next territory where democracy needs to be institutionalized.

The consequences of industrialization (particularly on the environment and health), of globalization, and of economic interdependence have produced, however, another effect on the monopoly of power and the influence enjoyed not so long ago by the nation state; they have increased the weight of local activity and the need for supra-national institutionalization (or governance). We can add that increasing

interactivity of these three levels of governance (local, national, global, to which we could also add regional, or even sub- and supra-state regional, continental and sub-continental) has engendered new situations where the second level of governance, the national state, can sometimes become sufficiently marginalized to be unable to meet its dual function as guarantor of individual rights (rule of law) and as 'pilot' of (a nation's) society. Although these changes do not necessarily entail the—prematurely announced—withering of the state and the nation state, they significantly change the nature of political space and therefore require institutions and mechanisms better adapted to these changes. The dynamics of the nation state, in its role as driver of modernization, are thus hampered.

Dynamics of change and social movement

What, then, becomes of the dynamics of social movement, especially in its face-off with political institutions struggling to fulfill their function?

History has shown that social changes and transformations are born of the dynamics of social movements. Historical illustrations of this are: the Christian and Buddhist groundswells that swept away the Roman and the Maurya imperial orders, respectively; the Reformation that transformed Europe and brought it out of the Middle Ages; or the revolutionary and workers' movements, and the anti-colonialist and anti-imperialist movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that upset the world's political system. Changes and transformations have their roots in the dynamics of civil society, more specifically in political and social organizations, in innovative ideas put forward by influential intellectuals, in

the momentum generated by a few exceptional cultural, social, or political leaders, and in massively spreading technological innovations.

The main feature of the dynamics of civil society is that the organizations at work in it, concurrently, in complementary and sometimes antagonistic form, revolve around a project for social change that exceeds the mobilization capability of each of these organizations: this holistic dynamics is social movement, as we define it here.

It is important to distinguish, from a theoretical point of view, the *movement* (which is virtual) from the *civil-society organizations* (unions, NGOs, churches, grassroots movements, etc.) that are part of the movement. This theoretical distinction has important strategic implications. If the distinction is accepted, the movement must be understood as *potential* force, *immaterial dynamics at work within society to bring about a democratic, sustainable and solidarity-based global society*, that is, something other than the sum of the parts that make it up.

The majority of contemporary theorists and activists do not make this distinction. For them a movement (in its broadest definition) is no more than the sum of the organizations it comprises. It has no independent existence (even virtual and potential). The movement becomes a sort of *coalition*, a *coordination* in marching order. This has two important implications in terms of strategy: first, the movement itself becomes a civil-society organization, and even if it is still called "movement," it loses its internal dynamics, which are by definition contentious. The second is that this umbrella movement can only operate hierarchically and, over time, bureaucratic trends will develop hand-in-hand with a growing

temptation to pose as the vanguard.

Following up on this definition and on the prospects that it raises, we will acknowledge that each era of history has a different type of social movement. For example, the Enlightenment spawned "democratic nationalitarian movements" (aimed at setting up rule of law/nation states), where the term "democratic," stands for the "one person, one vote" ideal, and the term "national" or "people's" (nation or people) conveys the idea that there can be an expressed collective will to determine the direction in which the state is to lead society. The state is therefore both the institution of institutions (the legitimacy by law of which it guarantees) and acts as society's "pilot." Social movements are its opposing mirror image as regards the direction to be taken by society. The identity of a social movement is expressed in its challenge to institutional order by virtue of the deepening, extension, and universalization of the three principles that are liberty, equality, and solidarity.

A social movement thus expresses the desire (when virtual) or the will (when it becomes reality as "policy") to deepen the process of individual and collective liberation. It occurs not only by freeing itself from the alienations generated by the social system, but also by claiming to be, individually and collectively, the subject of its own history.

"Progressivism" in this sense is to want, all at once, more freedom, more equality, and more solidarity. In pursuing this quest, compared to institutions, society sometimes accomplishes leaps in complexity. This is what happened at the end of the twentieth century, which we call "second modernity." Second modernity is

characterized by more "globality" (in the sense of greater interactivity at the global level) and "citizenship" (in the sense in which public space is open to debates, in which individuals and groups wish to participate more in the development, implementation, and oversight of public policies, and in which rights are universalized to women, children, future generations, etc.).

Modernity has featured two major types of social movements: "nationalitarian" democratic movements (which may include anti-colonial independence movements and anti-imperialist national liberation movements) and socialist labor movements (which can include different types of unions and political parties or cooperatives). By definition these types of movements are "generic," but they are, in cyclical time, highly diverse as such and very different from one institutional context to the next or from one era to another.

The democratization process today

Defining the current political movement, the "second modernity" one, as a "democratic cosmopolitarian movement" forces us to offer a precise definition—insofar as we can be precise—of what we mean by democracy. This point begs three observations.

Democracy can be understood as the expression of the will of a community to assert that there are no "meta-social" instituters: neither God, Reason, Progress, or Destiny, if they exist, affect the fate of humans; humans themselves are who collectively prioritize their values, their way of producing, and their way of being

governed and having wealth distributed. Modern democracy "institutionalizes" the idea that the community (the people, the nation) is at the helm. In this sense, democracy is the expression of shared values, of social balances of power (domination, exploitation, cultural hegemony or hegemony of values) and of an arrangement of institutional procedures. We must also take into account the importance of historicity: that is, the fact that these values, these balances of power, and these institutional arrangements can be very different from one culture to another and from one era to another. For two centuries, the arrangement of values, especially the place taken by "ethics" alongside morals, the more contractual management of balances of power, and the arrival of *participatory democracy* as third institutional basis of democratic practice (alongside "representation" and "direct voting") have completely changed the very idea of democracy. Although it is important to go back to the founding philosophical texts so as not to lose the "thread of modernity" and its democratic "progressivism," it is also essential today to rethink democracy and give it new foundations by factoring in the current conditions in which it unfolds, that is, globally in the modern world system, and locally, as close as possible to individuals and communities.

Helping to consolidate a World Citizen Movement

As we mentioned in the introduction, we believe it is time to contribute to consolidating a World Citizen Movement. There are *two* aspects to this: on the one hand, a democratic "cosmopolitarian" movement (the term may seem somewhat off-putting at first but it does define the essence of such a movement

which is neither "international" nor even transnational, but aimed at democratic institutionalization at the global level), and secondly, a movement for a more sustainable and more solidarity-based global society.

The latest major social historical movement, the labor movement, had the potential of a movement both of social transformation (insofar as it contained promising ideas of social change on the global level) and cosmopolitarian because it defended the idea of a global political organization (the International). In fact, however, it was basically a *nationalitarian* movement. The future according to Marx and Engels, then to Lenin and Trotsky—which included organizing within the International national Socialist and Communist parties in order to establish, after their taking power in the world's national states, a *de facto* people's democracy at the global level—did not pan out. The strategy of establishing Socialism on a country-by-country basis, supported both by Social Democrats and the likes of Stalin and Mao, also proved to be a failure on the global scale, even though at the national level, it brought about, here and there, progress in the extension of rights and democratization, and made systemic alienation wane in certain sectors. It also, of course, contributed to establishing authoritarian and totalitarian political systems, which brought the progressive social and political democratization process to a dramatic halt.

Conditions for consolidating a World Citizen Movement

Failing historical precedents that could serve as a roadmap, the central question is: How do we contribute to consolidating a World Citizen Movement? And, first,

how do we foster the conditions for such a movement to emerge, and particularly to rise to its own awareness? Also, how can we participate in its structuring?

Although our conception of such a political and social movement has yet to be clarified at this stage, a few proposals can already be put forward so we can consider its consolidation with a measure of optimism, if only because the communication means revolutionizing our world every day are tools allowing millions of individuals to mobilize around the world practically at the drop of a hat. Certainly, five centuries ago, Martin Luther was able to mobilize masses of people within a very short amount of time. This mobilization, remarkable for the period, was however restricted to a relatively limited geographical and cultural territory. For mobilization today only the planet is the limit, language itself no longer being a limiting factor (although world governance respecting the principle of diversity should be conceptually based on cross-linguistic and cross-cultural dialog). In addition to technology, our growing knowledge on organizing and mobilizing now allows us to understand the ins and outs of major mobilizing campaigns.

Above all, from Rio 92 to Rio 2012, global collective awareness has emerged, providing an opportunity to rally around a common project: *to develop a world-governance system such that the planetwide collective that is humankind can manage the planet's problems.* Setting up such a system of governance is vital, and if we want it to be democratic, only a *World Citizen Movement* is now able to make that happen. The logical outcome of such a world-governance system of and its institutionalization, whatever the form of institutionalization, will of course depend in part on traditional state mechanisms and on the concept of state inherited from the first modernity, but these concepts and mechanisms will be definitely updated

to the global political system of the second modernity (world-modernity). Indeed, if state institutions will be part of this global enterprise of political institutionalization, only dialectics with a world social movement can generate the energy needed to move toward a (state) institutional system based on the articulation of sovereignties, from local to global, i.e., according to our definition, toward a system in which democratic *governance* is truly *global*.

While global problems are accumulating with no solution seeming to emerge, we can no longer just wait for the G7, G8, G20, the United Nations or the major multilateral conferences on the future of the planet to provide miraculous solutions. Today, it is our historical responsibility to react and mobilize by contributing to expanding and linking together local or sector-based mobilizations that are part of this progressive second-modernity movement that we call the World Citizen Movement. We must intensify mobilization, not only to criticize and fight the existing institutions, but also and more so, to assume our responsibilities and our humanity by putting a hand into writing the collective destiny of humankind.