

A Just, Sustainable and Participatory Society

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My name is Ruud Lubbers, I am Dutch and I am from the Netherlands and I want to address you, in connection with this conference, on the theme "A Just, Sustainable and Participatory Society."

Let me explain first what I did before I become a professor on globalization and sustainable development. I was born in 1939 and became a very young minister of economic affairs in 1973. That was on economy and on energy. 1973 was a very special year because we had the first oil crisis and I became immediately related as a politician to problems of energy, environment and economy.

It went on, since then, in politics. I was Prime Minister there, in The Netherlands, from 1982 to 1994 and then I left office because I thought it better for democracy not too long so stay in such a position and reflected on what to do in life and I decided to devote, at least part of my time, to young people. When I was doing for a good topic, it came to me that when I was back in society, to put it that way, a new word had come into practice. The word "globalization." And of course I was concerned also about sustainable development. So I became a professor on globalization and sustainable development. Maybe first a few words on why did this word globalization come into use.

In my analysis, this happened already 10-15 years ago because a few things in life came together. First, globalization by and of technology. There, we are talking information and communication technology. A process of less wait and more science, ICT. An enormous outburst and increase in terms of communications and mobility and that relates to the second aspect of globalization, by and of economy; trade and growth of investments and the transnational companies. New words like "global sourcing" came into practice, the deregulation of financial markets, which also created, in a way, a new era of technology and economy. But, there was one thing more. When I grew up, we divided the world, at least as politicians, in three worlds. In the first world, that of the market economy and democracy. The second world, which was called the socialist or communist world with a planned economy and most of the time only one party system. And thirdly, of course, the third world that of the developing countries, the poor countries. But in a political way, also the non-aligned countries. They did not want to make a choice between the model of the first and the second world. This all came to an end in 1989, the end of the cold war. Then, almost all nation states, around the globe, made a choice for market plus democracy. Here it came together, developments of technology, economy and political ideology. It was the time that the then president of the United States, George Bush, said this was good for the world and we will organize now a new world order based on market plus democracy. It didn't work out that way. Why not? In the first place, of course, that because countries, through they made fundamentally the same choice, they are in a totally different stage of development, of different political priorities and have a different

cultural background. That makes it very difficult, to organize, as nation states, together something good. But beyond that, the nation states themselves, proved to be less effective than we had hoped. It's because of, let's say, permeable borders, porous borders, governments were less effective to organize quality of life within their own territory. Democracy and territory are, in a way, related to each other. And because they were less effective, they became less credible. Sometime, they became also corrupted. All together, democracies weren't essential, they were not so much success as we had hoped. So less-effective governments and when ministers then go abroad and come to an agreement, either it be in Washington or Brussels or wherever in the world, and those ministers come home, in their national parliaments they hear, "This is not democratic, we should decide here in our own country."

So there is a lot of tension between globalization and the dream of a world of democratic nation states. As a matter of fact, we have seen in the nineties, many worries about globalization. People notice deficits. What do I mean with deficits? There is not an ideal world. We saw a lot of violence, maybe no new wars between nation states, but within nation states, so-called "failed nations," a lot of violence. So this is a violence deficit, or as you like we call it the security deficit. The security deficit was also a social deficit. Though the markets were expanding, became global, the social relations between people, questions as equity, which were practiced within countries, were not practiced globally. So we had social deficits also within countries because of the new technology we have seen an enormous exclusion of people who simply could not cope with the new realities. Then we have the environmental deficits and finally, what I already said, the democratic deficits. So all together, people were not that enthusiastic about globalization.

This brings me to a third aspect of globalization. After that, I explained shortly the processes of economy and technology, global market and that they explained the weaknesses of democracies in terms of deficits: security deficit, social deficit, environmental deficit and democratic deficit. It seemed, all around the globe, people seemed to react against globalization. They were organizing themselves in civil society institutions, often called also NGOs. NGOs about issues: environmental issues, human rights like Amnesty International. Also, local NGOs, social movements. We have also seen a revival of religious movements. Sometimes they are nice, sometimes with fundamentalists is not so nice. But anyhow, to understand globalization, one has to see also this, what I call, the rebound against globalization in terms of attitudes and institutions of people.

So far a few words about globalization, this brings me to the other word "sustainable development." Sustainable development was coined in the middle of the eighties in a book, or report, from a commission under the chairmanship of Gro Harlem Brundtland, the then Prime Minister of Norway. And we were already, since the beginning of the seventies, reflecting about how we have to go on in the world with an always spreading and successful economy and technology. But when it becomes global, we certainly will have to face problems with the environment. And then, the main point, in our systematics of production and consumption, we should not go on in such a way that we not only have environmental damage today that will, in a way, compromise the potential and the

capacities and the possibilities of generations to come. So there was started a new process, not only solidarity between people and equity of people today in our country and in other countries as well an intergenerational solidarity with generations to come and therefore, we started to use this word "sustainable development."

In the middle of the eighties, I had the privilege to be a personal friend of Gro Harlem Brundtland's. We worked together and shortly after Our Common Future, we had a conference in The Hague. It was from countries around the globe, to discuss further what to do about the environment and ecology and there we came already to the conclusion that you cannot see this isolated, that it has to be related to equity, to eradication of poverty, to fair relations in the world. And this was the beginning of the agenda of Rio de Janeiro in 1992, where we had the United Nations conference on Environment and Development. A very spectacular conference with new things. Of course, basically it started with the concern with the environment. We came to the conclusion that we had to start with an agenda, an agenda for the 21st century. We introduced the concept of biodiversity and the problems of climate change, but we agreed also on the so-called "Rio Principles." For example, the precautionary principle with all our enthusiasm about new technologies and new economic possibilities we said before you start the big process you better check if there are risks in terms of health and environment and, if so, don't do it. Precautionary principle.

Another was that, we started to think that cultural diversity was a precious thing, or is a precious thing, in our world. So having all this globalization, economy, technology, consumerism, cultural diversity is a precious thing as well. So Rio de Janeiro was a very rich conference. However, in Rio there was an interesting thing. What happened there, for the first time, it was meant to be a conference of politicians and diplomats and, as a matter of fact, there were many, many people of civil society, of the Non-Governmental Organizations. They organized, in a way, a summit with their own ideas, we see that later on as well. After Rio de Janeiro we have seen a summit in Cairo about the problems of democracy, birth control and what have you and then we were together in the Copenhagen Social Summit and the Women's Summit in Beijing. And after a few meetings, it became clear that was it not only a one-time occasion that civil society started to present itself and to play a role in the world because it was a new faction.

So since then we know that globalization is not only a challenge for nation states, but that also civil society and NGOs are becoming to play a role, which was an important one. Those institutions, groups of citizens, have started not only through certain activities themselves to serve their purpose, not only put pressure on governments but also to put pressure directly on business. This is a rather new phenomenon but it has begun. The transnational companies realize that for their functioning it is not enough to obey only to the rules of each country for which they are active. But they have to take into account also the opinions of civil society, of the peoples, you might say, around the globe. So they start to internalize societal values. It might sound like a dream but it is the beginning reality, not all around the globe, because of enormous differences between countries. But anyhow, it's an important perspective, it's the perspective that we are heading to a new symbiosis of governments, business, and civil society. This is a new possibility. Do not

misunderstand me, as a former politician I am convinced that we need strong democratic nation states, we need inter-governmental institutions, but we need also, and that's a new element, the input of the civil society. In fact, we are heading to a new symbiosis of government, businesses and civil society.

Last year we had 1998, which was 50 years after the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in 1948 as you recall. And there were many meetings to realize that we have to work further in the tradition of the human rights. Human rights was started in 1948 after two world wars which started at the very moment that we wanted to end colonies, decolonization. And since 1948 we have tradition "step by step," to enlarge the concept of human rights in terms of social rights, in terms of taking nature more into account and so on. So in a way, since 1948 we have a permanent process and the initiatives of today like, for example, the Earth Charter is a continuity with these human rights activities. But it is a little bit more, is a little bit more. I recall at a meeting in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, this was the end of a process and, at the very same time, the beginning of a new process, in which we realized that there was this problem of intergenerational equity and solidarity. The concept being of sustainable development. In the Rio de Janeiro it was basically the NGOs who had written down already, concepts, drafts of declarations to make it clear what they meant by a good society, living up to the future. Since then we have seen different initiatives. Myself, I was very much, and I'm still connected with the Earth Council and Earth Charter project. Let me explain shortly. In Rio de Janeiro, that meeting, as well the governmental at the total event there was chaired by Maurice Strong. After that conference, though he as UN then, he decided to devote attention and to support civil society, the world of the NGOs, and UN for the so-called Earth Council. And he agreed then to go for an Earth Charter.

A similar initiative was taken by Mikhail Gorbachev in Moscow, with an institution called Green Cross. And we came together and said let's join forces and that was really the beginning of the so-called Earth Charter process. To be fair, there are other groups in the world and individuals who had the same idea, who felt the need to do something beyond human rights only and to point out an new situation in relation to nature, if you like, to Mother Earth as well as to your fellow citizens, the intergenerational equity. For example, in Germany, you have a famous man named Hans Koon, Hans Koon was, is from the Roman Catholic Church. What he started, already, quite some time ago, spanning all the religions and we came to the conclusion that there are similar points in the different religions and cultures. Basic points what we call the golden rule is "Never do to other people what you don't like people to do to you." This is very simple of course, but it is important because it makes clear that there is a possibility for a sort of global dialogue between religions and people of different convictions. He built even further on that, and that has led to a declaration of the churches in the world and from there on he have a connected, asked to work together with the so-called InterAction Council. They came with an important declaration in which they coupled rights and responsibility. And other famous people in the world were elected. Let me mention one other example. There is the famous Judge Goldstone from South Africa who is known for "Verheij" committee and other activities. That judge was asked to work with other specialists on declaration as well to write down, precisely, principles of justice and equity, of environment and

development of the new niche of the global community. So what we see today and I think if we discuss sustainability we have to realize that, talk this over with each other, we see not only the role of the nation states and the intergovernmental institutions. We not only see also the input of civil society but also we see the initiatives to empower people to support people in civil society. When I studied these different declarations, and tried to see what really the points are there, it became clear to me that they have something in common. And this is that you can characterize them by their going for a just, sustainable and participatory society. What is this about then? Just is to reflect justice, equity and fairness. And that sustainability is about the responsibility for generations to come. Now the point of participatory. Participatory is essential because each and every person is important and needs to be empowered to be a citizen in full rights in the global community. A citizen in its own rights, this is the aspect of human rights but also to empower him to be active in work and outside work, to take responsibility as well. So a just, sustainable and participatory society makes three elements clear which are essential, for what I call, the sovereignty for peoples around the globe. The world sovereignty is only related to a nation state and a government and since we have democracies we speak about the sovereignty of the people. But it is something beyond that. Not only the sovereignty of the people within one country, one nation state but also the sovereignty of the peoples around the globe, together. Working for a just, sustainable and participatory society making use of this new symbiosis of governments, businesses and civil society. Of course this all has to be characterized by democratic principles. Each of the three segments of governments, business and civil society have to lift and act accordingly to the rules of transparency in the open, accountability, who are accountable in those institutions and the third, of course, is integrity or no corruption. These are basic elements but I do think its possible that we empower people, assist them by working on an Earth Charter today. In the context of this common purpose as I tried to explain. Going for a just, sustainable, and participatory of society.

A couple of years ago Frances Fukiyama wrote a book with the title, The End of History. I would rather say "the history of mankind as being interdependent." All peoples around the globe have only begun and it is a challenge with a Charter to reflect how we can do better. To discuss this with each other and I hope that with this video conference, and the possibilities of being interactive with each other can help a little bit to achieve. It won't be easy, it's a long way to go but it is very positive that we see globalization in terms of all the facts to the peoples of the world but that we use also new possibilities, like this of ICT of today in our own discussion and really invest each of us in this common effort.

Thank you so much.