

Human rights - human obligations

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Dear Minister Bartenstein, dear Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

For more than 60 years I have had a close relationship to the sea and on various diving expeditions I have had the opportunity to register drastic changes at places which I had visited 20 or 30 years before. It is, however, not enough to point to damage to animal and plant life in the sea. In my opinion, the destiny of the oceans is inseparably linked to the destiny of mankind on this planet.

The human race has to restrict its wishes globally, just as much as its reproduction and its economic growth.

We have to reconcile ourselves again with nature, otherwise we will destroy our soil and its ecosystems, contaminate our drinking water and the atmosphere and pollute the oceans, streams and lakes.

Instead of waiting for others to act, each of us should make a start; otherwise our cultural progress will be at stake, the variety of life on the continents and in the aquatic world will be destroyed and our basis of existence will be lost.

Nowadays, each human being should integrate him- or herself into a growing movement of world-citizenship. The autonomy of every country - whether big or small - ought to continue to be respected. But all problems which can only be solved through a global consensus ought to be tackled with community conscience.

Economic restriction implies a rigorous change of attitude which will make painful modifications necessary. But if we intend to preserve the great cultural achievements which humankind has already attained in the long course of its development, then it is imperative that every individual acquires this kind of consciousness.

Only through insight into our global situation and into the restrictive boundaries of further development, is it possible to protect the continents, the atmosphere and the underwater regions against serious damage. And only in this way can the seas with their immense wonders and riches be preserved. Let me give you some examples:

- Modern fishing methods, such as mile-long driftnets and industrial trawling on flat sea beds, are already causing considerable damage which by far outstrips the profits in fact gained by these methods.

- Highly subsidized technological fishing endangers not only marine life but also the coastal fishing of local populations. Many marine organisms which are of considerable importance within various food chains are thus - as I have observed on several occasions - considerably affected.
- The internationally sanctioned annual catch of sea-mammals, especially whales, is, for purely selfish reasons, constantly exceeded.
- Fish and shrimp farming in bays and estuaries overfertilize the coastal areas and endanger the local ecosystems through pathogens. This is documented in salmon farming.
- The ever growing world-wide sea traffic, especially tankers, drastically reduces the quality of the sea water in wide areas. In the cleaning procedures of ships at sea, oil and chemicals are released and so life in the open sea as well as in the coastal waters is badly affected.
- Rivers and streams transport enormous quantities of untreated household and industrial sewage into the oceans, which, especially in shallow areas, destroys the eco-systems of the sea bed. Such pollution affects mangrove swamps, the Aral Sea, the Caspian Sea, the Baltic Sea and the northern seas.
- Deforestation along the coast destroys not only the fertile soil, which is thus swept into the sea by rain and erosion, but also, in tropical areas, the coastal reefs. Specifically, coral growth is affected.
- Offshore drilling and its waste contaminate productive sea areas, such as in the North Sea and the Caribbean.
- The dumping of waste including radioactive material, yes even of entire wrecks with reactors, represent a very serious heritage for future generations. Dumped relics of the wars, such as poison gas grenades, endanger marine life more than ever.
- Tourism affects the traditional cultures of local populations along the coasts and on islands. Underwater tourism in many areas has to be restricted in order to preserve the beauty of the coral reefs.
- Sharks are being wiped out, at present, all over the world. As, within the eco-systems, they play a significant role, their disappearance causes very negative effects.
- Some industries have world-wide effects. Pesticides and fertilizers do not only harm coastal waters but are also transported by winds even as far as to the arctic and antarctic seas.
- The world-wide impact of the greenhouse effect leads to climate changes which endanger the existence of coral reefs, islands and coasts all around the globe. A gradual rise in the sea level would mean a catastrophe in many regions.

The 30 paragraphs of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as issued in December 1948 by the General Assembly of the United Nations, should be supplemented by just as many equally important human obligations. One of these is to respect, in principle, the right of all organisms to live. If we overstretch our obvious superiority, there is a danger that we risk - or even destroy - our own basis of existence.

Technological progress has enabled us to gain so much power that it can reduce, yes even extinguish, all forms of life. However, without this tremendous variety of species we would hardly be able to exist. They offer us food, a healthy environment and aesthetic pleasure.

The reproduction of our species on this planet has, as is already clearly documented by numerous negative effects, reached its upper limit. The individual, however, having become so pleasure-minded and egoistic, it just doesn't want to face this fact. Egocentric by nature, human beings welcome every excuse and argument that supports their lifestyle. It is a tremendous crime if human beings nowadays are not ready to face the truth and instead cling to their temporary personal advantage.

It is easy to understand that the population explosion is directly connected with the pollution of the seas and of continental nature. With the birth of every human being, there is less room for the necessary requirements for human life. This inevitably leads to an increase of poverty and of the danger chaos and wars.

Many of us already understand that it has become unethical to produce children who are not wanted by their parents and whom their parents are unable to feed and raise properly. Not birth control is to be considered a crime or a sin, but uncontrolled reproduction is a crime as it leads to poverty, despair and, often enough, to starvation. The enormous means which, nowadays, are invested in the enhancement of pleasure should instead be rigorously aimed at the most important goal: stopping human reproduction, because this will become a tragedy.

From this point of view, I think that it is absolutely necessary to proclaim an international law with more or less the following content: every woman on earth is allowed to have two children - but no more. If a child dies before it is six years old she has the right to have another one. If a woman is not able or not willing to have any children she should be entitled to transfer her rights to another woman who is.

Child labour should be forbidden on principle. If the human race considers itself to be the summit of evolution, then the production and education of its descendants should not be left over to chance or to arbitrary motives. Humanity is increasing by 80 or 90 million individuals every year. In practice, this means that every year it becomes necessary to create 40 to 50 million new jobs to provide for this growing flood of humanity. This, however, is absolutely impossible, as the present situation clearly indicates. If we do not succeed to solve this most serious problem of all problems of mankind within the next ten years, then there is a real danger that poverty and despair will lead to wars and, as a consequence, to the destruction of the human race.

If, on the other hand, we succeed in limiting the number of human beings on this planet to about 6 or 7 billion - or, even better, in reducing this number, by and by, to 5 billion -, then quality of life can be enhanced more and more, and mankind will be able to further increase its present cultural achievements.

In nature, the equilibrium between species is self-regulating. If one species is expanding too vigorously then its source of food is automatically reduced and, by and by, the equilibrium is restored. The human race, however, has become so powerful that it only has one enemy left: itself. Wars used to be a kind of remedy but nowadays have become a global danger because of the utilisation of nuclear energy. Also, nuclear reactors which are built for purely pacific purposes are, so to speak, pre-fabricated nuclear bombs. They do not even have to be fired

into enemy territory. They can be used as offensive weapons because a small bomb or sabotage is sufficient to cause a long-term contamination of wide areas with radioactivity.

A further task which is just as costly but also very important is the reduction of the global economic growth down to zero. This does not mean that stronger and more skilful companies should not assert themselves over competitors and thus expand. But such expansion should only be allowed for those enterprises whose products are compatible with the limits imposed on us by the size of our planet and the interests of other living creatures. On the frieze of the temple of Delphi was written: "Know thyself!" Nowadays, I think a further reminder is becoming extremely important. It reads: "What can we allow ourselves?" A free market economy, because of its inner dynamics, continuously evokes new wishes which, however, cannot all be fulfilled on a planet of this restricted size. Automatically, dissatisfaction grows, even there where this would not necessarily come up without the influence of free market economy.

The German philosopher Schopenhauer said that reason is the servant of our desires. This is exactly what we have to fight against. The continuously growing amount of wishes and desires are a further central problem we have to face. Every single individual will have to ask himself: "What can we still allow ourselves?"

I would like to stress again: the destiny of the oceans is inseparably linked to the destiny of mankind and of all living creatures on sea or land.

Therefore, I feel justified to formulate the following

Declaration:

- 1. The human race has to reduce its limitless aspiration for power. Otherwise it will destroy its own basis of existence.**
- 2. Therefore, the reduction of population explosion and economic growth down to zero has become imperative.**
- 3. Technicological progress as well as human striving for pleasure have to be limited. Qualitative progress has to replace quantitative growth !**

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