

UNU - Discours d'ouverture

Opening speech (= intervention)

UNU meeting

Budapest, 23 September 1991

Fundação Cuidar o Futuro



The United Nations University

Opening Speech by H.E. Mrs Maria de Lourdes Pingasilgo

Budapest, 23 September 1991

Your Excellency
President Dr Arpad Goncz,
Dr Domokos Kosary,
President of the Hungarian
Academy of Sciences,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my honour to represent here the Rector of the United Nations University.

It is even a greater honour to be able to address, on his behalf, a few words to you, Mr President.

Let me express the gratitude of the United Nations University for your presence and for the interest you have made so manifest for our initiatives.

As you know, the United Nations University (UNU) was created by the General Assembly of the United Nations in order to accomplish a work of research, training and dissemination on the "most pressing issues of mankind's survival".

The Conference we are starting today fits perfectly within the scope of UNU. Our Continent, labelled as the old continent for so many decades, is undergoing tremendous changes which create totally new conditions within its boundaries and for the world as a whole.

The era we are entering has lost its basic parameters. We vaguely know that we are at the dawn of a new civilization. However, the only feature we can distinguish clearly is one of complexity. Or even, being more precise, of a dynamic complexity.

This means that we are watching (and being part of) numerous systems of life/thought/social organizations, at once autonomous and interdependent (cf. USSR).

Whatever we may discover, this is a time of turbulence, coming suddenly without forecast or warning signals.

It is a time of uncertainty, when there are several scenarios, each clearly defined and all equally probable. No firm directions can be discovered.

It is a time of unpredictability.



Done with are the paradigms of linear evolution, of continuous growth, of unlimited progress.

Maybe the new paradigms are already in the midst of our efforts, but it is still too early to try to articulate them.

What we know is that the traditional political culture is over, its foundations being so deeply shaken.

This is why we need new tools for the perception of the political, cultural and socio-economic mechanisms of every society.

We need new mental categories to establish the links between the actors and the issues we are dealing with.

We need a renewed imagination to take the decisions demanded by the novelty of the times we live in.

Europe is a crucible of all those processes.

Signs of the changes and of the search are reaching out to the most inattentive of European citizens.

Daily events but also basic questions are brought home by the mass media. Europe is talked about. A new sense of belonging is cutting across the whole continent, East and West.

Already for several years, the United Nations University has been trying to contribute to the search. It has understood that the questions of European identity and institutions have a direct bearing on the global issues -

of the political governance,
of the economic reorganization of the world,
of the scientific and technological basis for a new civilization of survival.

The Medium-Term Perspective of the United Nations University gives the adequate framework for the exchange we will have during these days.

The changes in Europe do change the contents and the means of the global responsibilities of individuals, nations, institutions. The breaking down of a dual zone of influence brings more sharply into focus the questions of interdependence and the needs for a true partnership.

(I acknowledge that this was the expression used in the last summit of the G-7. We hope that its members may live up to the task of reorganization of the world governance which will allow such a partnership to evolve.)

The United Nations University wants to contribute to a multipolar world where every region will have its own share of the world governance. In its activities, the United Nations University aims to foster extension and universalization of human rights as a basic condition for a State of law and for genuine partnership to initiate peace.

The strengthening of the identity of every region is, for the United Nations University, a fundamental condition in view of the full exercise of global responsibilities.

The reorganization and revitalization of the world economy are very much at stake in Europe at this moment of its history.

The macro-economic stabilizing factors, the conditionality for financial credit, the mix of private and State responsibility in the capital ownership and investment, the overall goal of economy at service of basic needs are all at stake in this continent. The direction given to the answers of the problems Europe is facing is decisive for a world of well-being and justice for all.

For the United Nations University life is also very much at stake in the safeguarding and improvement of life-support systems.

It is in Europe that the technological revolution has started. Here the rationale behind science and technology at the expenses of nature took off for two centuries of degradation of the environment worldwide.

It is normal to urge Europe to redress the situation thus created. Certainly by introducing the costs of ecology in all the industrial costs. But most of all by understanding the new demands of a civilization which shows already that there must be limits put upon an idealized and dehumanized concept of progress.

The points on our agenda deal with the main challenges Europeans are facing. In order to fulfil our task we must be able to find the scope of ideas and the mode of operation that will lead all of us further in answering to the challenges. I have no doubt that this task, accomplished on the soil of Hungary where so much of the European richness finds its expression, will be a success ...

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