



THE FUTURE OF EUROPE

At the conference for European leaders about ethical foundation of governance in the 21st century

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“I find the decision of the Bled School of Management to organize a conference for European leaders a very apposite and important endeavour. The conference is devoted to the issue of management or leadership and responsibility, which is one of the basic challenges of the future, for Europe as well as for mankind in general.

If we wish to talk about European leadership, European leaders, and the challenges that they have to deal with, we must first of all answer the question of what kind of Europe we are talking about. What is this Europe that needs a new type of leadership like?

In a nutshell, it is the Europe of the future, a Europe characterised by the new spirit of its citizens. We are talking about a Europe that is a part of the world, which, as such, shares its destiny. To a large extent, this Europe is a negation of the Europe of the past, which was plagued by conflicts and wars, rifts, egoism, distrust, and self-centeredness.

We cannot talk about European leadership without dwelling on the basic characteristics of the modern world and the processes that are taking place in it and playing a crucial role in its future. Indeed, European leaders are also world leaders. They are among those who are responsible for the governance of the world. The world is reliant upon their knowledge, conscience, and responsibility.

The modern world is known for the interdependence of those who live in it. It is known for the global nature of capital, economic relations, and markets, as well as the widening gap between the rich and poor, which has a negative effect on human development. It is also characterised by its new technologies, especially in the area of information and communications, its ecological problems and the safety risks posed by ecological disasters, along with the limited amount of non-renewable energy sources and minerals. Other important characteristics are the security threats to international human endeavours: terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, organized international crime, uncontrolled biological experiments and genetic research.

In the modern world, it is impossible to live in isolation for long. It is impossible to shirk one's responsibility for one's actions or the actions of others. What happens at one end of the world affects everybody else. The world lives in interdependence. We could

call this "the butterfly-wing" effect as we see the unfolding of a strong pattern of new security threats. Some of these are the terrifying disease known by the acronym SARS, the recent crash of financial markets in Eastern Asia, the oil-spill from the tanker "Prestige" off the Spanish coast, the Chernobyl tragedy some 15 years ago...

The world is demonstrating a number of worrisome weaknesses. It has become crudely competitive and insufficiently solidarity-oriented. Its governance leaves a lot to be desired. Its legal regulation is unsatisfactory and ineffective. Global capital is setting its own rules almost autonomously. Multinationals have cut across borders and the jurisdiction of national states. States are not demonstrating enough responsibility for the world in its entirety and its future, for life on Earth and the preservation of the biosphere.

The Iraq crisis evidenced the lack of orientation, vision, and ethical practices of the region in the use of its tools and power for political, economic, technological, ecological, ethical, and media-related purposes. The same was also visible to some extent from the crises in the Balkans, Afghanistan, Somalia, Rwanda, and the latest one in Congo. All these crises have brought up the issue of legitimacy and legality of intervention - especially a military one - by the international community, even when the goal is to prevent activities that pose a real threat to life on Earth, human dignity, and human rights. This is also true in Iraq's case, despite the undeniable widespread violation of human rights in that country, and the constant threat that Iraq posed to the rest of the world.

The Iraq crisis demonstrated the world's ethical confusion and indecisiveness. The United Nations was the only universal organization that responded to the main challenges of the 21st century, yet the authority of that institution is weakened. Its positions and resolutions are not consistently respected. You are all familiar with the problem involving the setting up of the permanent international court, the problems stemming from the rejection of the Kyoto protocol, etc.

The normative role of the United Nations is weakened also because a number of different international organizations are sharing a parallel orientation. These are the World Trade Organization, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the G8 Group. The main problem is the lack of coordination between them. The effectiveness of the United Nations is also reduced due to the lack of control over the enforcement of its positions and resolutions. For example, there is no international court of human rights that could establish internationally valid criteria.

The United Nations is also hobbled by the way in which decisions are made. The makeup of the Security Council was meant primarily for a different world, characterized by the essentially different conditions that existed after the Second World War.

The world does not have a well-defined and recognised common ethical foundation. Even Europe does not have common ethical values. We witnessed this during the debates about the Preamble to the so-called European Constitution. The attempts to impose the ethical values of one civilization - European or Euro-American - as valid and binding for others are viewed by other civilizations as a kind of a spiritual hegemony; therefore they result in conflicts. These problems have to do with the interpretation of democracy and the attempt to impose the European and American versions of it across

the whole world. This applies to the issue of human rights and other similar issues. We still have to find a common ethical foundation and this through dialogue of civilisations. This is one of the main challenges and duties of those who govern the world. The meaning and the goal of such dialogue is the search for a common denominator of ethnic values that would be universally acceptable. These values must become a foundation of responsibility and solidarity in the global, mutually dependent world.

Therefore, one of the tasks of the future is the definition of a legal structure that would protect human life and dignity, as well as political, social, environmental and cultural rights as values of the highest order. This task calls for a new hierarchy of values. The existing international legal order does not satisfy the need for protection of such potential common ethical principles. It essentially protects states; the rules of protection give priority to state sovereignty and non-interference in their internal affairs. The new task also requires an effective institution that would legitimise and legalise international intervention if those superior values were endangered. We need a system of so-called humanitarian intervention, all the more so since for state-security reasons, which are of course important, human rights are being sacrificed although they are the foundation of democracy.

Such an institution is necessary so that the international community and individual states will be protected from the potential temptation on the part of a single state or an ad-hoc coalition of states to assume individual responsibility for the violation of established values and intervention, bypassing the institution set up by international law.

The modern world is global and interdependent. It is plagued by conflicts and differences. Not just politically, and in terms of civilization and culture, but also economically and socially. Differences due to cultural peculiarities are increasingly important and, because of the substantial gap between the rich and the poor in the world, they represent a major challenge for the world's future and an urgent task for its leaders. The clash of civilizations that Huntington has mentioned is unfortunately a potential reality.

In spite of these weaknesses, the world has become much more aware of its opportunities as well as of the dangers that threaten it. Therefore, it has become more cooperation-oriented. This creates the possibility for a new type of leadership, which constitutes an important prospect and challenge for the world's leaders.

Europe, which has lost its role as the world's leading civilization and culture, is also aware of this. Our continent must now extend its influence and interests in a different way. It must take into account the interests and influences of other regions, accept the necessity of dialogue with them, and share responsibilities. But first of all, Europe must ask itself if it is capable of undertaking this new and different role, which would ensure its influence, respect for its values and spiritual legacy, its economic power, and its socio-political stability.

Europe must ask itself if it can be an effective, convincing, influential, and responsible partner to other hubs of development of human civilization with regard to the basic dilemmas and challenges for mankind. It must ask itself what it can do to be capable of that. But first of all Europe must brush aside its old rifts and avoid new ones. This

applies to the latest rift, generated from outside, the partitioning into an Old and New Europe. A widening of differences and continual splitting will not take us to the goal. Europe must become integrated. This presupposes an integrated spiritual and political community, not one based solely on economic interests. In so doing, Europe should preserve its internal idiosyncrasies and plurality. The enlargement of the European Union is an important step toward that goal.

Europe must mature into a full political entity that would use a common language when conversing with others about the key issues of mankind, rather than have divergent, often mutually exclusive, positions. The distrust among Europeans must yield to trust. Egoism must be replaced by solidarity. Europe must acquire a specific political identity based on common values rather than on profit.

Europe of the future is also an ethical project. European and global issues are closely connected. The future of the world is largely dependent on Europe, too. It will be determined by Europe's internal integration and its ability to assert itself as a source of positive influence and an example of responsibility. The future of Europe is one of the key issues for the future of the whole world.

Of course, Europe's global role will never be unlimited, but it can be very significant because of its experience, its pluralism, and its culture. It is unfortunate that the European Convention did not reflect upon the European Constitution on the basis of these premises. We can only be sorry that we have not availed ourselves of that opportunity.

Europe's role in the world is a major challenge for European leaders. The necessary changes that will have a long-term impact on the set objective create a new leadership and responsibility paradigm in the interdependence of Europe and the world. There are no longer any independent regions that do not influence each other directly, that live side by side without caring about how others are led and how well they are doing. The new interdependence calls for a new definition and understanding of leadership and responsibility. Global responsibility means personal responsibility as well as responsibility for the actions of others. That means that people have responsibilities toward each other and toward mankind in general, toward the biosphere and toward life itself. Responsibility is no longer just horizontal or vertical. It is not only required of state leaders, international organizations and corporations, as well as non-governmental organizations.

With respect to the new world conditions, responsibility must have a broader definition.

First of all, every person is responsible for the impact and the desirable or undesirable consequences of his actions. Second, every person is responsible for failing to act in cases when action was possible. Third, responsibility is commensurate with one's authority and knowledge. These are privileges that imply obligations, yet that often tends to be forgotten.

What I have said departs from the conventional concept of responsibility. Whoever is entrusted with authority is accountable not only to those who have given him a mandate, but to all of mankind and the entire planet. Conceiving of responsibility as being limited only to one's voters or shareholders no longer satisfies the needs of world

reality. Moreover, no agent or institution can limit their responsibility to their official scope of action. We can no longer accept the idea that whoever respects the rules and obeys the laws cannot be held personally accountable for anything. This was the principle of the Nürnberg Tribunal and is still the principle of the Hague Tribunal for atrocities committed within the territory of the former Yugoslavia and in Rwanda.

The new interpretation of responsibility implies that every institution is accountable for actions that are not under its direct authority. An interesting example is the World Trade Organization. Its main task is, of course, to promote the development of free trade. But it must take into account two goals of the international community which unfortunately are not transparent enough: sustainable development and decent living conditions for every individual. Therefore, the activities of the World Trade Organization should be subordinate to these global objectives. It should be held accountable for the impact of its activities - that is the promotion of free trade - on the achievement of these two goals.

Global leadership and global responsibility in the interdependent world also require an awareness of the limits of absolute freedom. These limits must be based on goals and values that the international community recognizes and accepts. There is no community without common values, either at the local or at the global level. Therefore, the responsibility for their establishment is also to be shared. It is a responsibility for all states, for their corporations, and for each and every individual.

This is a brief outline of the responsibility of mankind that has already been discussed in international circles: at the Porto Alegre Forum, by the Roman Club, by ethical taskforces, and a number of other institutions. This outline should be appended to the Declaration of Human Rights.

An understanding of the global and interdependent nature of the world also affects the traditional understanding of principles of leadership and governance. This applies especially to the concept that there is a clear-cut assignment of authority at different managerial levels that can be used as a unique principle for the evaluation of the performance of leaders and their responsibilities. The reality of today's world rejects this kind of absolutism.

No serious problem - such as education, water preservation, use of energy, strengthening of social cohesion, world finances, biomedical research, genetic research, human development, or security and peace - can be solved on the basis of a single principle of governance. Any realistic policy must be based on different principles of governance and their interfaces. Cooperation among leaders at different levels becomes essential. The dilemma of what administrative principle the European Union should choose must be solved by adopting the principle of federalism and decentralization. This is a dilemma of Europe's past, not of its future.

The concept that governance and accountability must reflect the global and interdependent nature of the world requires a change in traditional thinking. First of all, we need to get rid of the idea that there is a sharp distinction between public and private property, and that private property is absolute and untouchable. We must do away with the thinking that opposes economic growth to welfare, material development to spiritual growth, economic development to ecology, mankind to the biosphere, the state to civic society.

Moreover, we must abandon the idea that different responsibilities should be assigned at different levels of governance: community, region, state, and global. To put it simply, each level of governance must provide its own answer to questions that are valid for everybody and be accountable to everybody. This applies, for example, to environmental protection and other similar issues.

Of course, this puts an end to the illusion that a country, a region, a continent, or a corporation can maintain full autonomy and self-sufficiency. On the contrary, every region and part of the planet must govern itself not only in its own interest, but also in the common interest of the whole Earth. These clashes with the concept that any state, government, region, corporation, or individual can do anything that they like on the basis of the sanctity and untouchability of their property, autonomy, and sovereignty. This type of thinking would not correspond to the Preamble of the Declaration of the United Nations in Rio, which says, and I quote, that "The Earth, the home of mankind, is an interdependent entity."

What I said about the necessary mental changes may sound utopian, but I am convinced that this utopia is not so far-fetched if mankind wishes to protect itself from the negative consequences of the world's global nature and if it wishes to use the opportunities that this global nature offers for everybody's benefit.

The world's global nature brings people closer together. But it also creates competition and forces civilizations to measure their power, religions, traditions, and spiritual values. It generates competition in business and striving for political dominance. Therefore, the global nature of the world can be dangerous if competition prevails and is unaccompanied by solidarity. But it can be an advantage and a great opportunity if we are aware that we need a clear, applicable, trans-national order that we can use as a yardstick for our actions. In this way, we would be able to live a productive life together, side by side, and assume our responsibility for the future of mankind and life on this planet in general.

This has to do with the so-called 'golden rule' that applies to human cohabitation. It simply states that you must not do to others what you do not want them to do to you. Or, we could now put this differently: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

Everybody must observe common rules, including the most powerful people in the world. That would make for safe and responsible governance of the world and Europe. Europe is a microcosm of the world. The challenges that its leadership and governance have to deal with are the challenges of world governance.

I am aware that this concept of governance is perhaps more utopian than realistic. But if that is so, then that is just because it is so in our minds, in our traditional thinking. Our minds were shaped in an essentially different world and reflect a different understanding of its laws. Modern reality brings up the issues that I mentioned as items of the agenda for the future and as an urgent task for modern leaders. I am not convinced that the items on this agenda are seen in the same way by everybody, particularly now that institutional reforms and types of relationships are being discussed in the European Union. But the truth is that the incumbent European leaders are those who are leading Europe and the world for the present as well as for the future.

Today, we are shaping the profile of the European Union for those who will live in the future. This is what needs to be discussed, therefore, we must make good use of this opportunity.”