

The future cannot be withheld

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*There is a sufficiency in the world for man's need but not for man's greed.
(M. Gandhi)*

The Earth has experienced many pandemics in its history. The contemporary one looks to be one of the worst regarding the level of human development. This pandemic has destroyed human life in many ways, with no clear sign of how and when it is going to end. The pandemic has raised the level of poverty, inequality, unemployment, starvation and psychological awareness. Many human beings have become self-isolated, while the wheels of the global economy have almost stopped, thus leading to another “unprecedented recession.” The coronavirus pandemic has become a very serious problem, but we have to know that humanity is faced with other issues, not in any way less severe or dreadful: nuclear weapons and climate change. The difference between these being that we will hopefully recover from this pandemic, but it will be difficult, if at all possible, to find a way out of the other two issues. In addition, the world is in deep crises in many other issues, such as in different levels of development, inequalities, unequal distribution of power, often not having an adequate capacity for making decisions, and many more.

This is in many ways a crucial moment for human civilization. We have learnt of the weaknesses of the dysfunctional character of the entire existing world system. This pandemic is, in many ways, an important alarm from which we should learn what to do and how to behave in the future and so to, at least, avoid, beyond many other threats, another global recession.

COVID-19 is an “unprecedented global crisis that demands an unprecedented global response”. The coronavirus has destroyed the health of numerous people, thousands of human lives and millions of livelihoods, limiting everyday human freedom, and capturing millions of lives across the planet. With the pandemic persisting, the resulting economic damages are likely to result in many negative effects. The fact that people are being forced to continue to self-isolate and as a result are suffering psychological disorders cannot be neglected.

The World Academy of Art and Science (WAAS), one of the leading institutions of sciences and arts in the world, is devoted to look towards the future while recognizing the existing global situation, and feels responsible to stress the following points in the current situation:

* This pandemic (COVID-19) has shown that the world, regardless of its many differences, is more unique in many aspects than is accepted in real life, and in particular by the world leaders. The same threatening processes apply equally to any part of the globe regardless of race, religion, sex, and wealth of the population. There is no way to exclude any group from the processes which threaten the existence of humanity and environment on this planet.

* The economy should be based not on the benefits from goods, but rather on the benefits to human life and the environment at large, while providing their safe existence in long run. Everything else will help to destroy the earth earlier than expected. The 'profit economy' should be understood as the residue from an old philosophy that is unfortunately still being used as one of the main real parameters in economy.

* The science of human activity should help balance all on the planet, so that they can survive in a sustainable manner as long as we do not find the way to migrate from the earth to new surroundings. This is questioning the basic feature of scientists: their freedom to do research.

* There is need to treat politics not as a means to govern the world, but as a way to govern the circumstances we face on the planet. In that sense it is extremely undesirable to carry on with the arms race, the environmental catastrophes as well as with the existing "economic rush". The planet should be governed by knowledge and concern for the environment, and not by the aspirations of the politicians.

* It is not clear if the future society will be more human than the existing one. But, no doubt, this pandemic made it clear that we are going to live in a more restricted society and environment adapting to many new rules if we want to survive on this planet. Thus, it is obvious that humanity would need to live in the future practicing more restrictions and procedures that have been defined in advance. This has definitely affected the meaning of "democracy".

* Humanity has to recognize, as much as possible, the coming threats. The climate change issue needs to be recognized with much more pragmatic attention by the policymakers, the industry, and in particular the economy and technology-

makers. As the climate crisis deepens and an unprecedented pandemic pushes us toward a global recession, we must break many existing chains and accept a more sustainable society. It seems that this coronavirus pandemic is definitely forcing us to rethink the world structure and the ways to build it, which has not been initiated until now by any other disasters including SARS. Thus, if we want to eliminate the deepening inequalities and further harming of poor countries due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there is a need for reinventing many global relations, especially those which remind us of neocolonialism — paving the path to a Global Green New Deal (GGND), — which means a world running on 100 percent renewable energy.

* It is very encouraging to learn that human beings have, in the past, succeeded in overcoming many extreme challenges. The contemporary situation requires that we should not end shelter-in-place by practicing restrictions generally. Before returning to normal activities, those who are most responsible need to act to ensure that the disease can be controlled while equally providing safe transition to normal life without experiencing, if possible, many future outbreaks. Certainly, all efforts should be such that marginalized groups are not disproportionately impacted in this process.

* Working together through the COVAX Facility we have to understand that it “is not charity, but it’s in every country’s best interest. We sink or we swim together”¹. We hope that it is obvious that by practicing equitable and simultaneous access to new lifesaving COVID-19 vaccines this pandemic will end.

* It is crucial to recognize that not a single side of the problem generated by the pandemic should be underestimated. Thus, the action should not take into account only the health effects of the coronavirus, but equally the economic and other consequences and changes that will affect millions of human beings as well as our environment. We should seek a solution that will return as many people as possible worldwide to normal life, while protecting society from a complete economic downturn that could take generations to recover fully. Certainly, we have to recognize that nationalism in its many forms, especially one practiced at the moment by some countries, namely vaccine nationalism, will prolong the pandemic. Certainly, humanity has to get prepared to deal with the consequences generated by this pandemic.

The World Academy of Art and Science will continue helping society in building a prosperous, safe and healthier future by its activities aimed to further recognize key

¹ Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO

issues related to this pandemic and other similar challenges, so as to enable society to control them and keep moving forward sustainably.