**KEY CHALLENGES TO HUMANITY 2018**

The current prevailing policies of our world’s leadership are a sure course for disaster.

Priorities in global spending are widely out of balance. Military expenditures have reached outrageous proportions (exceeding $1800 billion, i. e. more than double the top year spending during the cold war), whilst other major concerns are severely underfunded.

Our current world order is neither just nor sustainable. We know it. It should be changed.

Urgently needed is a revisiting of the work done by the UN High Level panel on major challenges in 2004.

Key challenges are:

**1. To avert the annihilation of mankind**

Great concern is justified due to the resumption of the arms race. There are now more than 15000 nuclear weapons. This number will increase in the coming years. Do we realise that about 100 nuclear warheads are sufficient to put an end to human civilisation?

We should increasingly be concerned about the effective management and control of the nuclear weapon systems becoming subject to misinformation, misjudgment, human and technical failure, and the lowering of the nuclear threshold. Even more so given the envisaged delegation the deployment of nuclear weapons to artificial intelligent systems.

This Doomsday Machine, together with new arms technologies and systems, developments in cyber warfare and the weaponization of space, creates the potential of an Armageddon beyond description.

The current ominous reality and developments are founded on an outdated security concept. We tend to think that greater military expenditures contribute to greater security. This is sheer folly! Paradoxically greater military expenditures do not contribute to more security, instead lead to greater insecurity. In the 21st century governments still act on the basis of the old Roman adagio: if you want peace, prepare for war. The military-industrial-scientific complex fuels it. In the nuclear age however we are forced to adapt our security concept to the new reality created by science and technology. We need therefore a fundamental reappraisal in our thinking about peace and security. The new paradigm should be: if you want peace, prepare *actively* for peace.

This implies among others addressing major causes of conflict. Diplomacy and development are more effective instruments for promoting peace and security than military force.

Urgently needed is the dismantling of the Doomsday Machine and returning to a minimum level of nuclear deterrence, in combination with effective and closely monitored arms control treaties. A new arms race should definitely be averted.

**2. To stop the progressive destruction of the world’s natural habitat.**

Current attempts to address immediate ecological issues are inadequate. Thus far we have failed to live up to global commitments.

The ecological crisis and the present global economic order are closely linked. New ideas about a sustainable economic model are urgently needed, restoring the balance with nature. This includes addressing the issue of consumerism.

**3. To reverse growing inequalities**

Inequalities are a major cause of conflicts, mass migration etc.

Initiatives are needed which lead to:

- New development strategies for regions most affected (Africa, Middle East, Latin America)

- Improved transparency of the financial sector (transactions, just fiscal policies)

**4. To reduce the causes of mass migration**

Actions ad 2 and 3 should include a deliberate effort to address the causes of massive migration, especially from the African continent.

**5. To control the collosal forces resulting from progress in science and technology**

Preventing dehumanisation.

- Proper handling and use of artificial intelligence.

- Same: genetic engineering

- Global data processing vs. human dignity and privacy

Human beings should not be reduced to a bundle of algorithms.

**6. Spiritual awakening**

Technology and pragmatism alone will not meet the above challenges. For an effective response more is needed. In our present culture economics are the dominating force. The equilibrium between matter and spirit is lost. A fundamental change in attitude towards man, matter and nature is required. A widely spread spiritual renewal is needed. This implies a fundamental awareness of the basic ground of human existence, accepting as guiding principle the basic law in life: love for mankind and nature.

The colossal forces developed by science and technology rest in frail human hands.

This calls for an active dialogue between scientific institutions, major religious bodies and other humanitarian organisations. Such a dialogue should contribute to a more responsible use of technology. Partnership between science and religion is a must.

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