

*"A New Paradigm for Human Transformation:
Respect For Nature, Solidarity and Shared Responsibility In
The 21st Century"*

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Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

This meeting is one of the most valuable initiatives of the United Nations.

Let me congratulate Mr. Sarbuland Khan, Executive Coordinator, and all of those who organized this event, for their vision and wisdom. Rests assure that no matter what happens here, you have already created a powerful echo of positive energies as a result of your intent, now reaching the hearts and souls of every person in the world.

Thank you for the invitation to speak in this event.

To me, the unique feature of this meeting is not really to have organized yet another debate on the merits or the state of play as regards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Its merits rest on what *The Concept Paper* refers to as **"a common set of values and principles"** that must become the true realization of the Millennium Declaration and its goals. The values and principles cited in that paper are: freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance and respect for all human rights, respect for nature and shared responsibility.

This is a breakthrough in the thinking about development issues.

It is a breakthrough because more often than not, the attention is only paid to the peculiarities of material instruments or development outcomes, with little attention paid to **the ultimate causes and conditions** that are responsible for those outcomes. Thus, for example, while it is certainly relevant to focus on poverty as an outcome of development, it is also essential to focus on, and be very clear about, the ultimate causes and conditions of poverty including, also, who creates it. Thus, whether we attain the targets set around poverty, I believe it would different if we base our actions on solidarity and shared responsibility –the theme of this last panel—than letting the values of the market dominate the process. This is to say, the values of exclusion and money.

The same applies to the destruction of nature. It is essential to establish the ultimate causes and conditions. And, as seen later on, there is no doubt that our value system plays an essential role in this destruction.

A good example is that of pollution. While it is important to focus our attention on the **'what'** pollution is all about and **'how much'** pollution is being generated or reduced, it is also essential to focus on **who pollutes**.

To focus on our value system represents an essential first step in moving towards the root causes of the situational aspects around all the MDGs.

The links between the outcomes and the generator of those outcomes is essential and must be made explicit. I know that this is not a practice in the UN, particularly if the who is a specific country or a well specified group in that country.

But, today, I see that this meeting is even going one step further, by focusing not only on **'who'** pollutes, but **'why'** such a person, group, nation, or any other entity, pollutes.

The **'why'** of pollution opens new understandings of the actors, makes them responsible for the solutions and sheds lots of light on behavioral issues and developmental ones. This is a theme developed later on in my presentation.

Going beyond the **'why'**, as the concept paper put forth by the UN, it suggests that one important reason the MDGs are not yet attained is because the values and principles are neither being self-realized nor practiced yet (or not enough). Thus, if we all were moved by the values of respect for nature, solidarity, and shared responsibility, for example, most people, countries, corporations, international organizations, and other relevant entities will engage themselves in a different process and will select different instruments and conditions so that these MDGs are fulfilled.

If we add another value, the value of interdependence with all living beings and nature, and we had the full realization of this interdependence, we would not allow nature to be destructed the way we are doing it now. We will soon realize that the destruction of nature is our own self-destruction. Nor we will allow one person in extreme poverty or to go hungry. Because their state of poverty and hunger greatly affect our own processes of human transformation. But few have indeed realized this value of interdependence.

Thus, this meeting has anchored the **'why'** people or nations do what they do on the nature and self realization of human and spiritual values. These values and belief are supposed to be the ultimate determinant of today's behavior, decisions and actions around the MDGs.

Respect for nature is a value and it must be self realized.

It is the insufficient self realization of these values that explains the duality between saying that we embrace those values in our personal life and practicing them in the life of the collective. This duality needs to be exposed and special means are to be developed to get rid of it.

Nevertheless, the new paradigm for human transformation in the 21st century does not end there. One has to go one more step. The full expression of this new paradigm demands that we close an important loop, as if we were going back to the very beginning of my presentation on causes and conditions. In particular, we have to close the gap between our capacities for the self-realization of those human and spiritual values and the nature and scope of development outcomes.

Let me emphasize the word "nature", or the quality of our outer environment. \Which brings us back to the issue of this panel: respect for nature.

This next step is to be understood in the following manner: that the full self-realization of these values –both individually and collectively—is essentially conditioned, and totally interdependent of, the material outcomes behind the MDGs, like poverty, gender inequality, health, pollution and environmental degradation, and the like.

In other words, this paradigm holds the view that these relationships –outcomes, actors, values and beliefs-- are part of a continuum and that they are neither hierarchical nor linear in nature. These relationships belong to singularly and interconnected layers of life's experiences in the material and spiritual realms.

Furthermore, the above affirms that it is essential that the value of respect for nature, solidarity and shared responsibility be self realized, and that the self-realization is to pass through, and it is interdependent of, the state of the natural environment (see below). Thus, the implication is that if we live, for example, in a decayed natural environment we will never be able to fully realize the outer and inner dimensions and expressions of all the human values that are identified in this

event. And, this applies to shared responsibility, solidarity, peace, freedom, love, compassion or any other human and spiritual value.

To sum up, it is essential to understand that the quality of the environment greatly defines and influences all our abilities to self-realize our values.

Just think for a moment how would your mind and soul feel when you reach one of those few pristine environments left in the world. Your chest expands, your breath gets deeper, and the clock of life stops to give the right of way to your solidarity, compassion or freedom. By contrast, also think about a process of human transformation in a world that looks like a garbage dump. It will seldom lead to the full self realization of human values.

This connectedness that it is intrinsic to the self realization of values and to the state of our outer environment is true for most, if not all, the human and spiritual values.

In many ways, the quality of our outer environment is inseparable of our inner environment. It is like one of my Hindu Teachers once told me: *the outer is like the inner and the inner is like the outer.*

This is why we must not remain on the sidelines when we see how much destruction is caused by the present economic system, accompanied by rapid globalization. It is not just a matter of material welfare but spiritual evolution as well.

Therefore, let us reach an important conclusion at this very early stage of my presentation: that the deficient attainment of the MDGs will, in fact, have a huge impact in the inner and outer processes of human transformation. Concretely, we will never be able to self realize those spiritual and human values if our external environment –nature and all living beings–is inadequate and, as a consequence, we will continue feeding into the systems we live in what we see as a vicious circle of human degradation.

Thus, the violation of human rights, gender discrimination, environmental destruction, inadequate levels of education and health, hunger, high mortality rates, and more, are all like powerful hand brakes to the attainment of higher levels of consciousness and coherence, both by human beings and all living beings.

This is why failing to attain the MDGs is tantamount of keeping the process of transformation and evolution of all living beings to its most incomplete and truncated expressions.

The fact that a person does not see these linkages, or feel nothing about these connections, is not a good reason to invalidate the above proposition. The test is not at the conceptual level. It is all experiential. In fact, many aspects of what I am sharing with you today come from my own personal experience in the realm of self-realization of these human and spiritual values.

This theme requires much more explanation, reflection, integration, and mastery. The time allowed for this presentation is not long enough.

Those who have never felt these connections do not have the moral power to deny or invalidate such interdependence.

I will come back to these matters later on.

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This meeting takes place at a very complex moment in our human history. A moment,

- When the global architecture (international organizations and their policies, programs and processes) seems to be profoundly questioned by a good majority of world citizens.
- When the leadership of the UN is changing, and the political tones and overtones move the attention away from the key daily challenges we are facing today.
- When the criteria and instruments for human transformation are invaded by materialism, and we feel a suffocating gillnet thrown over us by the superpowers and, thus, trapping each and every aspect of our individual and collective lives.

My friends, in addition to the above, we all know that:

- This is the time when we have to create the conditions for a great and clear human awakening, to avoid a collective tragedy of significant proportions.
- This is the time when a unique opportunity is in front of us to benefit from as a result of developing a new paradigm; the paradigm of consciousness and collective coherence.
- This is the time when we are called to move into other forms of human interactions and, therefore, also to listen and act differently, which will be either the response to conflict or it will be a reborn as children of peace.

This is a moment of choices. It is you and I who have to choose individually and collectively.

Nobody can or should choose for us.

But, how do we choose the right collective path for human transformation?

One traditional way is to base our choices solely on economic and financial grounds.

Within this context, for many years I was concerned about the financing of the MDGs and as many of you know, I was one of the senior persons in charge of presenting and defending the record on these matters of one international organization. The record not only in the area of financing but on issues related to its development impacts as well. Not an easy task.

It is also true, and to the astonishment of many, at that time, I stated within the confines of this building, more than once, that the MDGs could actually be attained with an insignificant amount of financial resources. That, within people's realities, within us, there was something more powerful and subtler in attaining those goals, all going far beyond traditional financing issues. Fundamentally, my call was for the self recognition that more money was not the condition for attaining the MDGs, and those who put all their hopes on such idea will witness how those goals will actually never be attained.

We have already spent trillions of dollars in the name of poverty alleviation, and there still are so many people in poverty, going hungry everyday, and suffering from exclusion, ethnic cleansing, diseases, and so much more.

A meal in the mountains of Guatemala costs \$.25 cents. One dollar could eliminate the hunger of four people during a day. And, the monthly income of many of us here in this room may eliminate extreme hunger of many thousands of people. If we just make a calculation that everyone in this room makes at least 1000 dollars a month, just by sharing our wealth equivalent to a month salary we could eliminate the suffering of millions of people.

- Is this a utopia?

- Is it an absurd idea to think that we, present in this room, may eliminate the suffering of thousands of people?
- Is it better to wait for development organizations to do so, and shift our collective responsibility to those organizations?

To me, these are not trivial questions.

At the core of these questions is the failure to address ourselves as a collective.

We still see ourselves within the confines of so many physical and non-physical boundaries. Even the very old notion of “Nation States” has to be revisited and brought into the true realities people live in this new millennium.

- A new paradigm must go far beyond national boundaries, because human transformation does not recognize those boundaries.
- A new paradigm must be truly global and founded on the collective because human transformation has a powerful collective nature.

The paradigm we see today, even at the center of the UN, is bound to generate conflicts and increase the contradictions between the Charter of the UN and its practices. The symbolic draw down of the Berlin Wall has proven not to be enough to shift human reality to the collective.

- We are not only building more physical walls, but we have become incredibly sophisticated and creative to bring up many walls through economic weapons, financial monopolies, elimination of cultures and languages, and through the thunder that characterizes our consumption society.
- We are creating psychological walls through the invasion of our private lives, the destruction of the family unit, and the artificial creation of human insecurity.
- We are creating all sorts of other boundaries by moralizing to the extreme and, then, embracing fundamentalists principles to dominate decision making even at the science, political, and institutional levels.

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Let me turn now to the role of international development institutions.

To start, none of these organizations are truly global, as “the total” of what they do is very much less than “the sums of the parts”. If it were different, we would not be here today fighting for the attainment of the MDGs.

- The fact that we have to plead the donors and other stakeholders in order, for example, to stop the destruction of nature and to eliminate absolute poverty by half is the vivid proof of my statement.
- The fact that we are desperate to have countries to protect their natural environment for the benefit of humanity, as a collective public good, and we often see a very conditioned response, it is also another proof of my statement.

All the larger mechanisms of development are based on ‘*the country*’ as its unit of account, and whatever seems to be part of the collective it has either meager resources or does not get done.

And, it is a fact that what is allocated into one country does not necessarily results in significant benefits to other countries of the collective as a whole.

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The closest to a global organization is the UN.

However, let me say a few things that some of you may not agree with. I ask you please do not close your hearts to what I am saying, as I have nothing personal against the UN. On the contrary, it is my intention to see that the UN becomes a truly global institution.

The proposition here is that because nature is by definition global, the UN must be global too.

First, we need to remind some UN staff and other collaborators that the global nature of the UN is written all over it and, thus, this is the most important and unique asset of the UN. This means that the UN must not try to imitate or become like the other non-global international institutions.

Second, it is essential to ensure total integrity in the processes of reform. I have the feeling that this may be one of the last opportunities for the UN has to reform itself into a global institution.

- The integrity depends crucially on the actors involved as well as on the value system guiding such a reform. I strongly suggest that the value system guiding many of the proposals for reform be explicit and transparent about how these values will be self realized during that process.
- The integrity depends also on the degree of attachment of such reform process to the financing instruments of the UN. Today, these instruments are corrupted at its core, as those countries that dominate the financial structure of the UN tend to call the shots.

Third, it is imperative that the people, we the world citizens, take charge of the UN if there will be lasting peace, security, and prosperity for all.

The UN cannot be run by individual country interests alone or by the influences of the big economic and financial actors that dominate the global economy.

Let me repeat, being truly global it is the unique asset of the UN. This asset is now heavily discounted by ill reforms, improvised reorganizations, and staff policies that are intrinsically non global and non collective in nature.

- A precondition for the UN to become truly global is to have leadership and a staff of global citizens, who understand this to the core of each and every action.
- Another precondition is that its Councils must operate based on global values like those of solidarity and shared responsibility, with a global vision, and within global processes. Today, those Councils are far from being global. Individual country interests dominate and blocks countries are not necessarily global in nature.

If the UN will not become a truly global institution, it won't be needed.

But, it is up to us to decide.

As I said publicly many years ago, I believe that *The Trusteeship Council* must be converted into the **Council of the Collective**, with participants/actors that are really global citizens and who support the collective interest, so that the total indeed becomes much larger than the sum of its parts. A Council where civil society, indigenous peoples, unions, private sector, academia,

spiritual leaders, and other stakeholders of the collective do not have to beg entry to participate and contribute to the betterment of humanity.

Who is to be this Global Being?

A truly ***Global Being is someone who has the ability to become the other without losing its own identity.*** The big emphases here are on “*becoming the other*” and “*not losing its own identity*”.

To become a Global Being is not just the result of one's self proclamation. It is complex process of human transformation that brings about, in a very natural way, love, compassion, peace, caring, sharing, fraternity, and many humanistic and spiritual values. This process does not involve conflict, domination, imposition, or any other form of boundaries.

This is the true foundation of a new paradigm of human transformation. This type of support we should give to the UN.

Support to the UN should engage all of us in creating the paradigm of the collective. The paradigm of a global society.

I do not want to be misunderstood.

This quasi exclusive attention to gather material resources still is important, but it is not less important that we radically shift our attention --and the attention of the whole United Nations System (UN) -- towards a new horizon. A horizon --whose content and scope-- must be defined by the self realization of humanistic and spiritual values.

Values that are far beyond the material nature of life.

Today, our horizon and ethos seem to be based too much on the elements of our *material existence* and, as such, being material, every aspect of our lives become bounded and limited.

The sky is not the limit any longer. For most people the limit is much closer to where we are standing at this moment.

The materialistic values prevailing today are those of possession, competition, exclusion, hoarding, etc., and these continue to dominate us as a human collective.

In all of this, the tragedy and human drama is that we repeat the same mistakes, time and time again, until they look like they are not mistakes any longer.

- We accept now that we may live life at higher and higher levels of toxicity and, then, all of us behave like the drunk driver that always insists that he/she can drive.
- We adapt ourselves to pain, suffering, the sub-optimal, and the incomplete and unhappy realities we live in.

We do not address the root causes of our existing pains and sufferings and, instead we treat symptoms at the very surface of our existence. For example, while we know that pollution causes many of our headaches, instead of getting rid of pollution we buy more expensive and stronger pills. And pharmaceuticals thrive as a result of this phenomenon. The same applies to security, now a trillion dollar business. And this is true for other states of our existence.

The question is: to whose advantage is it to have a world at war, to have as many sick people as possible, and to create a lot of insecurity in every aspect of our lives? The simple answer is: those whose business and, therefore, whose profits, depend on war, ill health, and insecurity.

The values to embrace are those we are here to debate today. But we must complement them with the values of love, compassion, caring, sharing, security, etc.

The simple advocacy of human values, just for the sake of advocacy, will have no impact in our lives over the longer term. Therefore, we should not only advocate freedom, peace, caring, sharing, compassion, love, etc.; we must also self realize those values to be credible in such advocacy. One should not advocate what one has never experienced.

- We are devaluing our respect for nature, solidarity or freedom when we proclaim it but we, ourselves, are not 'that' (e.g., we are not free).
- We are devaluing peace, when those who are negotiating for peace, or proclaiming peace, have never experience inner peace.

It is clear that anyone can memorize the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, but if we do not have the inner experience of the values enshrined in that declaration, one will never be a net instrument in the realization of those rights.

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When I was professionally very close to the UN, I stated then, and I would like to re-state the same right now: that we are not getting closer to attaining those goals because of a major crisis of human and spiritual values.

It is a crisis in the sense that we are failing to properly address and nurture the issues of all the collectives.

Yes, there is more than just the *human-beings collective*. In particular, we must consider:

- The Human Beings Collective (HUBC),
- The All Living Beings Collective (LIBC), and
- The Nature Being Collective (NBC).

This is what I call "**The Triangle of Collectiveness**", which is at the core of our collective destiny. A triangle that embodies both material and spiritual dimensions.

The Human Beings Collective is not the only collective and its welfare critically and fundamentally depends on the other two. And, this interdependence applies in all directions. This is an inseparable, interdependent and all encompassing reality that lies at the foundation of transformation and evolution, materially and spiritually.

The true meaning of "*our common humanity*" –the central theme of this event-- must not be understood and lived as if the collective of human beings is unique, the only one, separate, superior, more intelligent, or more indispensable. The foundations of human transformation are deeply rooted within the three components of that **Triangle of Collectiveness**, and the same applies to the collectives of living being and nature.

To see, feel, or isolate the collective of human beings is simply a huge and costly error of the intellect.

However, there are important reasons why human beings see themselves separate and privileged in relation to the human beings collective.

Two of them are important to mention quickly.

First, the imposed cultural and religious values and concepts that proclaim the superiority of human beings over the other two collectives –living beings and nature. This is simply absurd and it responds to an error of the intellect. However, this view is so prevalent that we are numbed in relation to the impacts the destruction of the other collectives have in our lives. Some believe that technology will do the trick. I am sorry to say that our intelligence, which is at the foundation of technological change, is also drifting slowly as a degenerated natural environment limits that intelligence.

Second, we live at higher and higher levels of toxicity; e.g., psychological, emotional, physical, and spiritual toxicity.

- We intoxicate ourselves with medicines that are supposed to cure us.
- We intoxicate us with air and water pollution. We intoxicate us with bad intention and negative thoughts.
- We intoxicate ourselves with bad human interactions.

The UN Charter begins with “*We The People*” and it is we the people that must not relinquish the responsibility of our individual and collective actions in resolving, once in for all, each and every MDG. We should wait no longer.

It is you and me who will resolve the problems facing humanity. It is not some sort of organization, or bureaucratic entity that will do so, unless the people in themselves, and their policies, self realize, embrace, and put into practice the core values that are to lastingly contribute to the reality of the have not.

Among those in “*We The People*”, it is you and me, privileged ones, who are here attending this event at the United Nations today. We are the ones who have the opportunity to speak up for the collective. But, I am fully and humbly aware that there are billions who are poor and hungry, and who are not here speaking for themselves.

We are all masked in obscure statistics.

The other day I was looking at the MDG reports where some countries of Latin America have the highest score in terms of the Social Development Indicators, while the number of poor people is increasing, the Gini Coefficient is showing significant inequality, and when, for example, the poorest 20% consumes an insignificant amount in relation to the richest 20%.

This distortion of statistics is not only dangerous but it is becoming explosive.

There is nothing worst than listening to wonderful statistics when, at the same time, everyone on the streets is complaining of a bad and unfair economic and social situation. When the people see the economy of a country globalizing but not their own society. When there is a major feeling of disempowerment, and the realization that something major is wrong despite the statistics.

- It is not only bad but unacceptable that the MDGs are attained at the expense of other citizens or other development goals that were not explicitly brought up in *The Millennium Declaration*.
- It is not acceptable that the attainment of the MDGs is carried out in a moral and ethical vacuum, or just responding to economic and financial values.

- It is unsustainable to attain some of the MDGs via the destruction of any of the collectives outlined above. It must benefit all the collectives.

Today, our lives are invaded by so many **economic diseases**. In some cases, these are the causes of great and profound moments of desperation, personal depression, and a disconnect between your mind, body and soul. These economic diseases move us towards the excessive consumption of pharmaceutical products. And, some of these products, as we all know, have huge negative secondary effects.

My friends, a supermarket of material collective goods is not going to do it.

This crisis will only be resolved:

- When we truly see the other human beings as ourselves.
- When we recognize the equal intelligence of all living beings.
- When we not only respect nature, but we embrace and integrate within it, as we are intrinsically components of nature too.
- When we focus heavily on healing each other and healing the world at large for world peace.
- When we begin to look inward for real solutions and not just outward into material instruments and material aims.

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Let me turn back once again to my beginning: the importance of humanistic and spiritual values. A careful reading shows that in addition to the values identified in this event, it is important to note that there are other values referred to in *The Millennium Declaration*. Examples are: diversity, dignity, sovereign equality, territorial integrity, shared future and inclusion.

There is no doubt in my mind that if one self-realizes those values and puts this self realization to the service of humanity, we would not be here heavy lifting for the MDGs. It would be natural to give, to share, and to ensure that we all have a decent and happy life to live.

Perhaps, this is the time when we have to make some categorical statements about what is happening just in front of our eyes.

• **The first** is that the material solutions we are seeking for the attainment of the MDGs are only a minimal portion of what needs to be done. In addition, most material solutions will be transitory palliatives and will not create the foundations for sustainable solutions. Think for a moment that if the first MDG was attained, we might take nearly a billion people out of poverty. However, another billion people will become poor in the same period of time.

• **The second** is that we must create a decision-making system, a governance structure, and a process founded on human and spiritual values. It will be the strength of these spiritual values, and the self-realization of these values, that will change the direction we have wrongly taken on the road towards fulfilling the aims of the *Millennium Declaration*. And, it is this group of that must be fully convinced that this is the case. I am talking about the values of universality, inclusion, identity, love, caring, sharing, fraternity, compassion, and many more. These are the values that will breakdown existing power structures, fossil forms of governance, etc.

• **The third** is that implementation of these MDGs must not be conceived as a mechanical process. It is a process of complex human interactions, anchored in institutional arrangements, cultural aspects, man-made assets, financial considerations, human and social values, and spiritual dimensions of our human reality.

• **The fourth** is that these MDGs, as new expressions of human betterment, will demand new and higher levels of human consciousness. Otherwise, societies will end up doing more of the same. But, more of the same will yield more of the same. It is essential that we focus on the role that individual and social awareness and consciousness play in the attainment of the MDGs. It is important to unleash our infinite human potential and put it at the service of these MDGs and more!

• **The fifth** is that there are two ways in which we may actually make progress in human betterment. One is through action of the type we see everyday. Work more, earn more, spend more, and work more, and so on. We may follow this material routine with the view to attaining some material progress. Yes, it is possible to advance like this. However, there is another way: to use the power of our wisdom and free will. And, through that power generate the type of energy that is needed to mobilize each and every citizen in the world. Without this energy the MDGs will continue to be the residual of "other things" and the outcomes of "other processes." Processes with plenty of rules but without wisdom, will simply not do.

• **The sixth** is that we, (yes, you and I), will have to make some fundamental and irreversible decisions, and I wonder whether we have the valor and the courage to make them. In particular, to embrace, adopt, and live fully the spiritual paradigm in its entirety, and stop being on the sidelines. The other option is living bits and pieces of this way of life, these principles, and those fundamental dimensions of our non-material life.

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Let me close this presentation sharing with you a major moral and ethical dilemma.

Does anyone have the right to limit the evolution of an individual or the evolution of one of the collectives enunciated above, like the nature's collective?

Is it right to say that limiting them is a way to give me the chance to evolve?

Evolution in the realm of the spirit and our divine existence does not sacrifice anyone for the evolution of another living being or nature. This economic notion of **trade-off** only applies to the narrow confines of economics and finance and to the additions and subtractions we make in this material world.

This is not only a reflection that has to take place at the personal level. This must take place at the corporate, government, and at every level of decisions making.

The alliances of information will work when the human consciousness is at a level that information will be beneficial to everyone in this planet. For the moment, the advances in ICT are benefiting a few and contaminating millions of young minds who innocently enter in the era of information.

My friends,

There is only one path to the betterment of humanity. It is the road towards peace. It is the road towards a healthy population. It is the road towards equality and respect for human rights. It is the road towards solidarity and shared responsibility. It is the road for the respect for nature.

There is no other choice. And those who come here to tell us that war is a necessary evil. Or that it is normal to live in conflict, they simply do not know what are they talking about. They are defeating human existence at its very core.

Those who put as a condition to go to war in order to attain peace should not govern this house.

There will be no peace without healing the world. There will be no healing of the world without the respect for nature.

The nature of every one of us is peace, because we come from the organized order that embodies nature. We are born out of peace because we are also born within nature. We are peace because we are nature too.

Thank you very much.