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FREEDOM FROM FEAR

AND THE
UNITED NATIONS

An Appeal

We live at a moment of heightened transition, in which only a collective effort can produce prosperity and peace. Individual action alone, however well-meaning, can no longer achieve the goal. Human interdependence and the interdependence among all living beings, including humanity, are now at the core of all processes of human transformation and destiny. The meaning of "collective" now encompasses far more than the arithmetic sum of separate and independent contributions that are based on personally defined aims or objectives. Our collective future is much greater than the sum of its parts, in quantity, quality, and distribution.

This is also a time when the traditional material and external instruments and solutions to our collective challenges have reached their limits in terms of both effectiveness and availability. Technological change, as we have conceived it for the last several centuries, can only provide partial solutions to people's problems. Banking on technology alone, without first creating a major expansion of human awareness and coherence, is not only inappropriate but also possibly the cheapest ticket to human suffering and self-destruction. In this new era, inner development— the holistic union between our material and spiritual natures—and human self-realization, create the foundation for the architecture of our future.

Many people are currently embracing this inner direction as the ground for their transformation. Increasing numbers of people around the world now have an enhanced awareness of the roles and impacts of internal development and higher levels of human consciousness and coherence. This reflects a universal change that is taking and will continue to take place, and has nothing to do with the categories being used in today's global system.

In the present state of deep duality, most of the existing world institutions are unfortunately too far behind even to be able to

peek into this new future, nor can they command the types of energy needed for the new forms of change. Re-formed global institutions will not come about from old methods and procedures. They will arise out of a new wisdom that is still unfolding, that we will come to know more fully at the right place and time. The same applies to the ways in which humanity will open the door to new kinds of leadership. Systems based on one-country-one-vote, or on political notions of sovereignty, are simply parts of the past or, at least, will not dominate our future. If they did, as history shows, this domination would continue to produce conflict, war, and suffering. I believe we can and are choosing a different kind of future.

While these shifts touch every human activity, a look at economics, finance and material-based globalization offers an important perspective that can help us set immediate priorities for change. Today, the first two, economics and finance, are the outgrowth of our individualistic values and tendencies, while the latter, material globalization, demands that we act for human welfare as a whole. Consequently, it is of central importance that we change the approaches in economics and business and mainstream spiritual and humanistic (universal) values into them. Broadening our understanding and transforming our attitudes and actions in areas such as the environment and human rights are also central to advancing the frontiers of new patterns of growth and the refinement of our options and priorities.

However, as we consider all these spheres through which the currents of growth and change push and flow, it is essential to establish this fact: Any success we have in supporting any and all forms of freedom is directly related to how we address fear. Fear, in truth, results from the expectations that we hold in relation to suffering. To be free from fear, we must therefore go deeply into the causes and conditions of suffering. Until we remove the ultimate causes and conditions of suffering, we will never attain lasting freedom.

Suffering arises out of limited knowledge or options, and

uncertainty created by ignorance, increased erosion of inner and outer power and the destruction of all forms of interdependence— within humanity and between humanity and all other living beings. Current failures at the level of our human collective intensify expectations of continuous suffering. These failures include such phenomena as poverty, aging, death, hunger, rejection, lack of opportunities, and insecurity. Attachment—making wellness and happiness dependent on external factors or actors, both material and non-material—also compounds fear and therefore suffering.

Freedom from fear on a collective level demands a major shift in our present economic, business, and social systems, including their power structures and communication strategies, all of which promote fear to capture material gains. Both communism and capitalism create material growth through fear. They purposefully produce an atmosphere full of risks and insecurities, in part by controlling the flow of information. While interacting under conditions of material scarcity, these systems thrive when people continuously face uncertainty and when their values, self-esteem, and inner knowledge are vacuumed away.

Today, we find fear both in those who are meant to benefit from transformative processes and those who are meant to deliver the transformation, i.e., our leaders. This state of affairs creates deep uncertainty about whether we, as human beings, can really embody and live from a core of universal spiritual values, e.g., respect for life, love, generosity, and compassion. Feeding on this insecurity about our capacity to find peace within ourselves and live in peace with each other, the existing socio-economic system perpetuates many forms and sources of fear, some of which are so subtle and pervasive that people cannot clearly identify them.

At first, it might appear that to address this situation, we should create the necessary conditions for people to identify these fears and recognize them as catalysts or motivators for

transformation. However, a focus on fear is the wrong motivation for a transformational process that is meant to unfold inner and outer peace and coherence everywhere on the planet. Instead, we must manifest the conditions, instruments, actions, teachings, and critical paths to shift the transformation process away from the energy of fear and insecurity and towards enlivening a kind of energy that heals, strengthens, and uplifts. The upsurge of this kind of energetic resource within each person and in the collective awareness not only quells fear but also builds inner confidence and wisdom. As people become aware of these underlying transformational forces and energies, the fear to become who they really are (fear that their true self be known), the fear of indifference, and of being disconnected from their core values, and all other forms of fear will dissipate. To be simplistic, if we want to get rid of the darkness in the room, instead of analyzing the darkness, why not just turn on the light?

The Role of Business

Notwithstanding the individual efforts we each have to make, we must understand that the elimination of fear in its many modes and appearances is a shared responsibility. We need to create new alliances that include all development and political actors and embody a clear experience of our undeniable interdependence.

In addition, the issue of eradicating human fear must become part of the theme of corporate social responsibility (CSR). To do so, the whole debate on CSR must be examined on two grounds: first, the meaning of responsibility; and second, the development of a unified vision about the sort of society in which we want to live, though this might involve addressing a number of seemingly esoteric topics.

We need a communal vision or consensus on the nature of the society that we want to build, not only for ourselves, but also for our children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. Without this, it is difficult to fully understand the role of corporate social responsibility in dissolving human fear. For one thing, responsibility is a relative concept. We can advocate some abstract, theoretically right form of responsibility, but we also need to have some concrete agreement on the right things to do.

Indeed, we may be forced to ask ourselves a fundamental question: Is it possible to live in societies without clarity about rights and responsibilities? Today, we have six billion people in the world, and our world is only becoming smaller and more intimate, even as we approach a likely population of ten billion in a few decades from now. Most people would agree that it is not possible to live in any society, much less in an increasingly connected world, without having some universal agreement on rights and responsibilities. Yet, despite this, most people, knowingly or unknowingly, violate the rights of others or ignore

them, or do not want to assume personal or collective responsibilities. This is a primary source of fear and insecurity in our societies.

The collective responsibilities are the most complex and difficult to assume. For one thing, they require broad agreement on objectives and methods. For example, it is impossible to resolve the problems of the Amazon with just one country's efforts. The Amazon's geographic location in Brazil and other countries of that region is just one factor in the puzzle. Many other nations and multinational corporations are directly invested in the fate of the Amazon by extracting or consuming its resources. Therefore, resolution of the dilemmas that we all see in the Amazon is not feasible unless all the players share the responsibility. HIV/AIDS and all the other diseases that are rapidly spreading around the world provide another instance of the need for shared responsibility. These diseases cross many political frontiers, and treating and controlling them cannot be the work of a single country. Problems created by environmental destruction—ozone layer depletion, global warming, pollution of water, air, land, and space, resource degradation, waste elimination, and so on—provide a host of examples for the need for global cooperation and participation

Thus, we have to acknowledge that this is the millennium of the human collective. The issue, then, is how to manage this collective as a collective, and how to determine who has the responsibility for the quality of the collective and its capacity to provide the welfare that we all need and deserve.

Fear is an inevitable byproduct of all the troubled situations just mentioned. Economics and business institutions have played and continue to play a role in the perpetuation of these dilemmas, and they can also become key partners in the progressive resolution of both the problems and the fear that they produce.

Business can, in fact, be a powerful instrument to eliminate our individual and collective fears. Corporations are, after all, not

isolated entities. Corporations are inserted in human, social, and material environments. They have souls and bodies. They also have behaviors, and they are fully capable of changing those behaviors. We need to challenge the view that corporations exist only to generate material profits. Corporate managers themselves typically no longer hold this view. In fact, today, corporate managers spend a lot of time in non-material related activities. Few CEOs spend their time counting bills; they deal with workers' unions, civil society, politicians, government tax bureaus, etc.

Today's CEOs must focus as strongly on human issues as they do on profits, because the two are inextricably tied together. In addition, as contemporary CEOs start to recognize that their corporations are part of social and natural as well as economic systems, they become increasingly aware of the need to reconcile their enterprises' objectives for growth and material development with responsibility for the external and internal impacts of the corporation.

We need a fresh, comprehensive, shared vision of what human reality should be on planet Earth. As the material and spiritual components of life knit together, as inner growth catches up with external expansion, our collective sense of that vision is growing in clarity. This gradually unfolding sense of life's possibilities can and must facilitate the development of a new approach to the creation and accumulation of material welfare. Moreover, to build the proper grounds for our collective future, governments, corporations, unions, etc., must be understood as comprised of living people and as functioning in complex, living environments. As this becomes clear, an awareness of shared responsibility for attaining our collective freedom from fear will gain strength and be understood as the missing link in all our plans and efforts.

Since the current business and economic systems, strongly influenced by an unbridled profit motive, have produced so many of our fears and problems, this new approach to material welfare is vital to freeing us from fear and resolving our current dilemmas. Regarding business actors, CSR's new agenda must

support the integration of material and spiritual welfare, both for consumers and employees. The current universal direction of change will no longer support the separation of these two forms of welfare. We can no longer sustain institutional or human structures that give rise to societies that are materially rich and spiritually poor. Therefore, the quest for efficiency, profitability, material welfare, etc. must not contradict the need for inner and outer health and well being for individuals and the human and natural environments in which any business exists. To dissolve fear, this amalgamation of the spiritual and material factors must be permanently included in corporate value systems and agendas.

The Communication Strategy

Any effort by actors, whether they are corporations, civil society groups or governments, must be accompanied by a coherent and powerful communication strategy for the elimination of fear. This is a mass communication era, and thus all media—Internet, radio, film, TV, music, etc.—can rapidly accelerate fear or inner peace. This is a choice, not an immutable fate.

Communication is not something abstract. Its content significantly affects its containers, namely us. Today, the international debate on communication and media is mainly concerned with how to create content to induce human transformation. While communication content is an important condition for collective change, its capacity to facilitate change is limited by the ability of its containers to receive, understand, and integrate the content. Experience in communication demonstrates that good information alone is not enough. The recipients of the information need to be able to assimilate and benefit from it. Thus, a debate on environmental degradation must not only address the facts about pollution (content), but also the nature of the polluters, the prospective containers of the information. A successful communication strategy in this case must therefore focus in part on why people pollute in the first place. It must ask why people are numb to the destruction of the natural environment and find ways to alleviate and change that numbness into lively awareness and sensitivity. Otherwise, the message may fall on deaf ears.

For the moment we live in a duality between how we see ourselves and what we actually contribute to the collective. It is a duality between what we believe we are and what we really do. This duality produces fear and instability worldwide and must be healed. New communication structures, concepts and practices that refine content while also supporting growth, strength and receptivity in its recipients can support a shift that dissolves this duality. CSR demands that corporations and their members be

able to understand the reality of the poor, the uneducated and the minorities. To embody and grow capital—the commonly understood role of corporations—the business and communication sectors must actively create and build human capital, or enhance the containers.

Spiritual Dimensions of Politics and Entrepreneurship

To eliminate fear, it is essential to mainstream spirituality into politics. Spirituality brings compassion, sharing, caring, and respect for others, as well as vital recognition of others' needs. Politics must always be understood as the art of decision-making for others. Politicians must be understood as servants of others; therefore, more than anything, they need to have a strong spiritual self-realization. By self-realization, I mean the ability to become the other without losing our own identity. Self-realization is a state of being in which we can tap into the development of each person and the collective inner soul, focus on the sacred aspects of our lives, and, little by little, embody the higher values of the human collective (peace, love, compassion). For example, one cannot be a true minister of health without understanding and personifying the self-realization of the fundamental values of life in all its dimensions. A health minister should both possess and exemplify a clear, deep, and comprehensive notion of wellness, a quality that belongs to a self-realized human being. Likewise, a minister of justice is to be so if they have not self-realized the human and spiritual values of justice. For this article, we can define spiritual justice as the self-realization of opposites. To impart justice, one therefore needs to self-realize—i.e., become—for example, both love and hate.

Interestingly, in the area of entrepreneurship, many corporations are now hiring managers and CEOs as much for the way they are and who they are as for their traditional business skills, such as finance and marketing. In particular, these corporations are going beyond business

entrepreneurship towards what we call social entrepreneurship. Social entrepreneurs are business leaders who are fully aware of the people who work for them and the social environments within which their corporations operate. Inwardly empowered social entrepreneurs are acutely conscious of and responsive to people's needs, and hence are motivated to work to eliminate their fears.

Social entrepreneurship has recently become an important theme in business administration curricula. Its growing acceptance represents a significant step towards a new kind of corporate leadership. Today, we see growing evidence that future corporations will be directed by self-realized beings, who embody the higher human values of peace and compassion. The level of this embodiment (another way to understand self-realization) will be much more important in tomorrow's managers than the number of university diplomas they may have earned.

UN Reform: One More Time?

Very few organizations in the world were created and designed to behave as a collective entity, collectively owned and collectively managed. The United Nations is certainly one of the few. Remember that its charter begins with the words: "We the people." However, is the UN living up to its intended purpose to represent the people as a whole? Within this context, two questions remain relevant:

Is the UN today capable of eliminating human fear and its sources?

Is the UN today an effective instrument to address the fears of humanity as a whole?

Now that the UN is under scrutiny and pressure to reform, it is important to debate these questions.

I think reform is good. The word reform means to change the form and reform is an important component in human transformation. However, the new cycle of reform at the UN must be a healthy one. For that to be the case, we must ask whether we are simply reforming the reform of the previous reform, etc. Are we, in fact, just continuously reforming failed reforms? If so, we need to ask ourselves why this is happening. One possibility is that reform tends to come externally to the soul of the UN. It is generally a response to an issue that comes up somewhere else. This kind of reform tends to be piecemeal in the end, rather than holistic, organic and broadly effective. The UN needs strong, inner mechanisms for transformation that make ongoing change and transformation coherent with the nature and purpose of the UN. Change and growth need to

be a way of life rather than a mutation, as past reforms have often been.

The UN does not currently posses the inner mechanisms for continuous transformation. Thus, reform is always executed when the organization is already ill. No preventive actions are taken so that change occurs at a time of strength. Most often, transformation takes place at an ineffective time, after the critical moment has passed. Every institution, every organization, should have the means for transformation built into its structures and processes. Contemporary styles of reform are justified only because organizations do not have the mechanisms for ongoing, organic transformation.

How can we create such a mechanism at the UN? The first fundamental step is to restate that the UN is about the people. It must be the place where people think about people, where people think about nations, and where nations think about people.

Who are we selecting as secretary general? Who are we selecting as staff members? What is the role of these staff members? How do they serve the people? In my experience, I have encountered tremendously dedicated people at the UN, who truly embody the values that can eliminate human fear everywhere. I have seen UN employees who exert tremendous effort to maintain vigilance over the welfare of the collective. This is a source of hope.

The UN's sixtieth anniversary should not be just a time of celebration. It should also be a time of contemplation that deeply explores the new, inwardly empowered reality that is arising in today's world. Only in this way can the UN

recognize the entirely new directions and kinds of change that the world now demands and the ways to meet those demands. This celebration should include a strong reflective component that facilitates institutional self-realization of the world in which we currently live. With this, the UN can become stronger in terms of its own consciousness, its own awareness of its nature and mission, and its ability to support and strengthen the consciousness and self-realization of all people.

For the UN to help lead the way to a new way of being and living on earth for people everywhere, the next Secretary General should be a person who embodies the future, a self-realized human being. Such a person will have experienced within her- or himself humanity's tragedy and pain, as well as its happiness and triumphs. Without this, the UN's next leader will have neither the credibility nor the capacity to resolve the people's collective issues.

We should not be limited in our vision and goals by how the world has been. We should make our plans and implement our programs based on how the world should and can be, plans and programs that are collectively conceived. The UN reforms must be developed within a vision for the future and not the past.

All people need a new UN for a new world, for only a new seed will yield a new crop. I believe that for a new, revitalized United Nations to come into being, we need a general assembly of NGOs, and not just the rich NGOs. Assembly members would be elected on a country basis. Thus, the Chilean NGOs would have a chair, as would those from Mozambique, and so on. This proposal does not challenge governments; their role is unquestionable. Governments must exist because they are an entity of the

public good and the global collective good. Instead, this proposal would complement and enrich the present structure.

To free people from fear, the other essential reform for the UN is the creation of a United Nations world spiritual forum. Very solid proposals in these areas have been made and the time has come to remind the UN of its own charter dedicated to "We the people."

Naturally, whether or not these new assemblies would have voting power as it is now defined, is subject to more debate. In my view, it does not matter whether the members vote or not. These new assemblies would be part of the UN structure so that its members could make contributions—conceptual, strategic, practical, people-based—to whatever document, policy or activity the UN addresses.

In the past, the UN drafted the Agenda for Peace and the Agenda for Development. Today, I believe that it is essential to draft an agenda for empowered development. This will be the agenda for social justice. Assemblies of spiritual leaders and NGOs will be critically important to the definition, character, and content of that agenda. The debates that give rise to this new agenda will ultimately redefine our understanding of the role of the UN Security Council, as the future of human security does not actually depend on the Security Council's votes. In truth, their votes are often a reflection of human insecurity. The quality of security for humanity that we must seek and create is much deeper than the one that we now actively and institutionally support. An assembly of NGOs and a spiritual assembly will change our concepts of human security, health, and empowerment. Our beliefs about what makes

social stability, protects families, fosters equal rights for women, children, and the disabled will also evolve with their help.

In a society that discriminates and that is willing to give up on its rights, this is the serious part of the reform of the United Nations, and this is part of the United Nations that I would like to see in the future. An assembly of spiritual leaders will enrich all policies and institutional arrangements being addressed by governments. Advocacy for the sake of advocacy will not work. However, development and human transformation without the right advocacy also will not work, so civil society and spiritual leaders must be an indispensable part of a new UN.

Finally, I would like to see a reform of the Trusteeship Council. I believe that it should become a council for the global public good. I would call it the Collective Council, the council for collective issues. I see the current Trusteeship Council as a non-functional entity, and we have an incredible opportunity today to create a new council to address public collective challenges.

Options for Human Transformation

To be free from fear, major inner and outer transformation is needed. Certainly, any number of factors and conditions can motivate change. For instance, a person may be forced to change due to violence, crisis, natural disasters, etc. Some people who lived through the Asian tsunami see this disaster as a major transformational force in their lives. However, as mentioned earlier, a large-scale shift towards increasing self-realization should not be motivated by disaster or fueled by fear. Fortunately, we have another potential engine to drive human transformation: the creation of our own shared vision. Our intent and motivation are essential in this process.

Next Steps. Human fear will not go away simply by expanding our material being. To dissolve fear and touch the core of freedom, the United Nations must embrace the following:

• Move from competition and independent behavior (e.g., consumer sovereignty) into cooperation and enhanced interdependence.

• Move people from dispossession to inner and outer empowerment, emphasizing the empowerment of the human collective as a collective.

• Move from focusing solely on material growth to embracing spiritual growth, strengthening both our material and spiritual well-being together. Being materially rich and spiritually poor diminishes the benefits from material gains. Both types of growth must

go hand in hand.

- Move from societies in which human rights and responsibilities are just a choice (a residual of economics, finance, politics and development), to societies that are actually built on rights and responsibilities (as the point of departure).

- Move from supporting individual interests to supporting a shared vision of our collective future, aligning macroeconomic and social policies to strengthen, rather than weaken, the materialization of those visions.

- Move from societies in which populations are largely isolated and/or marginalized to societies in which people feel safe and supported to live according to their personal, shared, and traditional beliefs, cultural and religious institutions, and systems of governance. This will help shift people from loneliness and lack of hope into empowerment and a commonly shared identity—a ground for a new human destiny.

- Move from issuing/creating new processes into the expansion of individual and collective wisdom. More processes without increased wisdom create more fears and the space for larger gains by a few.

- Move from just the proclamation and advocacy of values (freedom, peace, love, compassion) to human self-realization of those values via formal/non-formal education and other means of material and spiritual growth.

- Move from societies that extol material acquisitions—particularly when these are acquired in

unjust, exclusionary or exploitative ways, or through the destruction of the environment—to a society that acclaims social justice, transparency, diversity, sustainability, cooperation and respect for all sentient beings.

These next steps must be taken in the context of a different kind of energy, movement, form, and flow than we have generally known in recent human history. Though as yet largely undiscovered and unused by most people, more and more of us are now awakening to a universal energy that is the source of our inner empowerment. This increased awakening is something that is meant to be. It will reconfigure the process of human transformation and bring people into an inner and outer environment of personal and collective fulfillment and self-confidence. Because this energy is universal, we can tap into it within our own depths or find and draw upon it in all living forms. It is not just another field of knowledge. It is something that we must experience, enliven, and integrate into our daily lives both through our intent and any practices that we find personally, spiritually, and culturally comfortable and effective.

This new (but infinitely ancient) and increasingly available energy underlies all experience. As it grows livelier within and around us, it will progressively enrich all human exchanges, including those that take place in economics, business, science, art, raising a family, farming, etc. It is the common denominator of all life and spontaneously fosters unity and heart-to-heart connections across all cultures. It builds bridges between one person and another, one family and another, one village and another and one nation and another. With an increased experience of connectedness, the glasses through which we view the

world and learn are colored by love and compassion. In a world unified by our personal and collective vision, fear cannot grow roots. It ceases to exist. If I truly love my neighbor as myself, who and what do I have to fear?

This universal energy must be the ground for all our actions and interactions. As it wakes up within and between us, we will find ourselves experiencing previously latent levels of awareness or states of being that bring unshakeable inner peace and freedom from all forms of fear. The organizations, leadership and transformative processes of the future will emerge from and express the resultant ever-expanding inner wisdom.

The steps and suggestions that I have offered are an organic expression of the wisdom currently made available by our deepening collective consciousness. At the same time, they push the boundaries of that current state and pave the way for ever greater and wiser steps of growth and transformation. I believe that freedom from fear, though it is a tremendous and essential objective, is just the beginning of what we can achieve. Every new level of awareness to which we open ourselves will be embodied in a new wisdom that will in turn give rise to new socio-economic systems that support higher and higher levels of inner and outer welfare for the many children of Mother Earth. In truth, our capacity to create lasting inner and outer fulfillment is limitless.