

## **On the 60th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: Human Life and Dignity Require the Recognition and Satisfaction of Human Rights to Peace, to Development (to Food, to Water...) and to the Environment, and They Require that NOW!**

On this 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and at the initiative of the World Forum of Civil Society Networks - UBUNTU, we, the undersigned, wish to emphasize that all Human Rights are universal, indivisible and interdependent, in full accordance with the Declaration of the World Conference on Human Rights made in Vienna (United Nations, 1993). And so that none may claim not to have heard our call, we also wish to raise our voices to proclaim that in view of the scale and gravity of the challenges faced by humanity, it is urgent to recognise and satisfy Rights emerging as imperative needs, and thus needs on which decision-making is now essential and can no longer be postponed. There is no other way to attain the fulfilment of the Right to Human Life – the sine qua non for the exercise of all other Human Rights –, a right that is daily violated through growing violence and poverty.

Hence this is what is required NOW!

### **1. The human rights to peace**

Though not yet explicitly regarded as a human right<sup>1</sup>, it cannot be doubted that if this Human Right to Peace is not established, the other human rights cannot be realized. With the United Nations («We, the peoples...») being sidelined by the most prosperous countries («We, the powerful...») and with the democratic principles being replaced by the laws of the market («We, the rich...»), our tragic inability to resolve conflicts peaceably is persisting. Resorting to force brings ignominious profits for industry's colossal war machine, fuelling war economies. We shall not desist from denouncing this, nor from endeavouring to build a world system of democratic governance precisely to put an end to this intolerable situation. We cannot refrain from demanding just solutions for the dramatic conflicts such as those raging in Gaza, Darfur, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Congo... among the forty-plus armed conflicts estimated to exist now.

The force of reason should always prevail over the reason of force. «If you want peace, prepare for war»: the conviction that being armed is the best assurance of security is one of the most tragic of our age-old

<sup>1</sup> In the UN document A/HRC/6/NGO/34 of 5 September 2007, see the initiative of the Spanish Society for the Advancement of the International Human Rights Law, supported by the Catalan Agency for Development Cooperation, on the «Luarca Declaration on the Human Right to Peace».

irrational beliefs. It is evident that worldwide disarmament, under the control of the United Nations, is fundamental for scaling back violence and strengthening peace. If disarmament is a prerequisite for peace, and thus for life, then it too becomes another Human Right that must be recognised and adopted forthwith. Yet the fact is that now, after a ten-year period (1988-1998) in which world military spending had been decreasing, we are witnessing renewed escalation in arms spending, which is once more exceeding 2,700 million dollars a day... and this at a time when attaining the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 requires 500 million dollars a day!

Specifically, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) is going through its bleakest, most contradictory period since the cold war: some countries are given de facto authorisation to produce nuclear weapons, while others are the object of sanctions on account of their nuclear-energy programmes... and, most alarming of all, the United States, with its anti-missile shield, is prompting the Russian Federation to threaten non-compliance with the Reykjavik agreements, with both countries in fact confirming the existence of programmes to renovate and modernise their nuclear arsenals, in violation of the NPT.

International civil society must make its voice heard to break the current deadlock of the Disarmament Conference and, in this context, transform the forthcoming NPT Review Conference (2010) into a definitive and irreversible turning point on the path to the Human Right to Disarmament, as Freedom from War and Violence are essential for peace.

## **2. The human rights to development (including food, water, the satisfaction of basic needs, ...)**

The Right to Development is implicitly recognised in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (United Nations, 1966), which establishes among others the Human Right to «be free from hunger», to «the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health», and so on, while this Human Right is explicitly recognised in the Declaration on the Right to Development (Assembly General of the United Nations, 1986, and confirmed at the Vienna Conference of the United Nations, 1993). The commitments reached at the Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development (United Nations, 1995) stress the importance of development being in all cases integrated, sustainable, endogenous and human. The implementation of all these rights would actually lead to the full realization of the article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights<sup>2</sup>.

Nevertheless, 50% of humanity is still living below the poverty line, and the problems over food for the world are worsening alarmingly. Sixty thousand people die of hunger and poverty every day. The Right to adequate food, the Right to drinking water and the Right to satisfy

<sup>2</sup> Article 25 reads: «(1) Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control; and (2) Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection».

basic needs, including infrastructures, now clearly demonstrate the global urgency of something that morally can no longer be postponed. Only meeting those Human Rights effectively can ensure the right to human life. In this sense, it is particularly important to avoid that new sources of energy (bio fuel, etc.), which attract much investment, do not reduce the production of food, nor put up its price.

In this year of 2008, the international community will devote much effort in many directions to reviewing what is known as the Monterrey Consensus on Financing for Development (United Nations, 2002). Civil Society must mobilise so that measures enabling progress to be made once and for all on meeting those rights may be adopted at the Summit, which is to be held in Doha during December of 2008. For that purpose, the indispensable increase in financing for development, among other things, must be the result of redistributing world wealth justly and equitably. Specifically, it is necessary to define and to implement, WITHOUT FURTHER DELAY, international levies on the foreign-exchange market and other financial initiatives, with the funds so collected being channelled directly into the United Nation's multilateral funds for financing development. Other measures such as the cancelation of external debt as well as the increase of official aid to development continue to be essential.

### **3. The human rights to environment**

Equally urgent and undeferrable is the need to put an end to the destruction of the environment that the current economic model has been causing at a particularly speedy rate since the Industrial Revolution. Life in general and human life in particular may find themselves having to inhabit the earth under increasingly difficult conditions.

However, the document approved at the recent Bali Conference on Climate Change (to replace the Kyoto Convention in 2012) is geared more towards adapting to climate change (essential in developing countries in the South) than to countering it. Humanity seems to be in the process of condemning itself to suffer, instead of dealing with or palliating the causes behind this situation.

The fundamental commitment of all generations is to assure sustainable development: Meet the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. In effect, since Rio the rights to development and to environment are inseparable.

The great challenge is thus to decouple once and for all the notion of sustainable human development from the notion of economic growth in the form of increased production and consumption. As was established at the Rio and Johannesburg Summits, «present-day production and consumption patterns are unsustainable».

It is thus imperative that civil society brings a decisive influence to bear in the forthcoming Conferences in Poland (2008) and Denmark (2009) so that the steps that the future of human life on the earth ineluctably requires may be taken with the indispensable efficacy.

For all the reasons set out above, the UBUNTU Forum calls upon all representatives of society to claim these Human Rights without further delay and in a spirit of urgency, and will continue to promote its «World Campaign for in-depth Reform of the System of International Institutions», out of the conviction that only a new world democratic governance can take the decisions for halting the most negative global trends while also providing for the universal satisfaction of Human Rights, beginning with the rights most closely bound up with the Right to human life.

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