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Proposition d'intervention de Grigori Lazarev

Gouvernance locale et gestion durable des ressources naturelles – Une réponse politique commune pour changer un modèle de développement insoutenable

Local Governance and Sustainable Management of Natural Resources – A Common Political Response to Change an Unsustainable Development Model

SYNOPSIS

1. Global scenarios, such as those produced by the UN (Millennium Ecosystem Assessment), the Intergovernmental Panel for Climatic Change, the Center for Strategic and International Studies, the Earth Policy Institute and other, all show that a business as usual scenario (or continuing present trends) is unsustainable.

2. Our development model may be brought on by ever worsening environmental degradation. It may collapse as a result of irreversible effects of climate change, food shortages, poverty and inequalities, and increasing State failures.

3. Food shortages would be a most critical feature as agriculture will not likely be able to meet present trends demand. Climate change will reduce yields while increasing soils degradation, water resources depletion, competition between food and fuel, as well as protectionist policies, will dramatically penalize agricultural output available for humans.

4. Food and water shortages will result in inflating political instability, increased poverty, deteriorating health and higher mortality. Climatic change will modify present ecological and agricultural geography, implying extended desertification, sea level rise in coastal lowlands. This will bring on lands abandonment, settlement pattern mutations, increased number of eco refugees, conflict upon lands and shared water resources, massive exodus to towns. Many more countries will be at risk of becoming failed States. Developing countries will suffer most, particularly in Africa, Asia and many Latin America countries, but developed countries will also be affected.

5. Only a global world reaction can halt and reverse this doomsday perspective. As stated, for instance, by the Earth Policy Institute, responsive strategy would be based upon a massive mobilization for acting simultaneously in four directions: cutting carbon emissions

by 80 percent from 2006 levels by 2020; stabilization of world's population at eight billion by 2040; eradication of poverty; and the restoration of forests, soils and aquifers.

6. Such goals would seem unrealistic but strategists provide markers and indicators which prove that we cannot wait any longer for acting massively. We are living with an ecological time bomb but we do not realize yet how near it is to dramatically harm us. It is time for a surge in our awareness and for being finally conscious that our future is on a red alert level.

7. Present world financial & economic crisis comes at the right moment. Because of its suddenness, it has given governments and society an acute sense of urgency. For the first time, people have realized that our economic model could really collapse. Never, ecological activists were able to communicate a similar sense of urgency for the ecological risk, despite efforts such as Al Gore's – *may be because it lacked the dramatic suddenness of the financial crisis*. Because of this economic crisis, governments and societies are discovering that they are now ready to consider previously unthinkable alternatives. For instance, regulating global finance, changing our consumption patterns, downsizing our energy consumption, looking for more balanced income distribution, etc. We have to grab this opportunity to fully link it with actions to face the global ecological threat. This is not an opportunistic move as, in the long run, the ecological crisis and the economic crisis are intrinsically part of the same global crisis.

8. We have to fight against time but we have also to fight against numbers and space. No global strategy will be implemented if not with millions people changing their consumption patterns, managing sustainably the natural resources they depend upon, adopting alternative agricultural, energy and technology processes, expanding their action over considerable tracks of space.

9. Such changes in societies are only likely if based upon a widely shared common sense of responsibility. But, this, on turn, would only be possible provided political systems give a voice and a decision making power to those actors who are operating at the most basic level, that of local territories. This means enforcing local democracy processes and promoting new systems of local governance.

10. However, pre conditions for promoting local governance are daunting. Democracy has to progress in many nations, education has to be enormously developed, health and population control have to be dramatically strengthened, equality in gender has to progress considerably. Expanding demands for improved knowledge and technology transfer have to be met. Massive international aid is also needed to save failed States and to prevent other to run that risk. Effective local governance is at this price.

11. Meeting this overall change challenge has a tremendous financial cost. Education, health, technological transfer, agricultural productivity enhancement, natural resource management, all that requires financing. New funding mechanisms have to be conceived. Among them, a taxation system which reflects the true cost of ecological degradation, including carbon tax, replenishment of international development aid, etc. Expenditures would also have to cover RD and knowledge transfer, payment of services provided to environment, etc.

12. Military expenditures amount annually some 1200 billion \$. A part of this would suffice to promote ecologically oriented local governance at large scale. Our main threat, to day, cannot be fought with armies and weapons. The threat is inside our societies and in our inability to shift away from an unsustainable development model.