

THE IDC-CDI AND NEW CHALLENGES IN THE WORLD

Mexico D. F. 9-10 July 2015

THE 21ST CENTURY IS ONE OF GREAT CHALLENGES

The challenges we face are our daily circumstances in relation to our needs. We create our own challenges by pursuing goals. In recent decades, the world trend has been for information to be spread and disseminated across the five continents, while economic progress has become more uniform. However, the rapid changes engulfing us have also led to a polarisation of wealth and a concentration of well-being. The current era is one of higher production and greater wealth but also, paradoxically, more inequality.

We must find ways to link our technical and scientific rigour with humane values and the principles of solidarity and the common good that are essential in a world of plenty.

Centrist Democrat International (IDC-CDI) promotes dialogue between cultures, peoples and governments, based on a mutual recognition of dignity, where the objectives of the common good call for creating institutions that build consensus and hence trust between citizens and governments. We do not support force as a means for creating strong and legitimate states, but rather trust as the foundation of authority and of national and international unity.

Our principles and values, human dignity, our concepts of democracy and freedom, our quest for equality, complete fulfilment of human beings and fraternity as the way forward.

In place of the global agenda currently imposed by multinationals and the power wielded by various forces where these principles are lacking, we propose an agenda of principles that we can use to reach out to governments, to ensure that governments negotiate a global framework for the new equity.

By adopting an approach of relationships between people, between families, between businesses and between nations and their governments, we would be building a future of peace. There are no ready-made solutions, only universal insight and the commitment of our humanist values, which do not involve sharing religious dogma but instead sharing the legacy of Western culture, which draws on the Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian traditions, among others.

The world is facing old problems, such as hunger, lack of education, poor health, poverty, migration flows, inequality, violence, the rise of terrorism and religious wars, but the causes are not the same today, because the world produces enough food to feed everyone, because it has generated enough knowledge to make everyone a whole person, because we have the tools to ensure the physical well-being of every citizen, because never have economies generated so much wealth. In the old days, the problem was scarcity, whereas today the problem is social justice. The ideology of dissociation and rejection impoverishes globalisation, an economic and financial globalisation of humanity.

The world is facing a migratory crisis in which governments have a huge responsibility and must have the right to regulate with their laws these migration flows. People's mobility affects specific regions as the Mediterranean, North America and Asia. We plead for immigration to be treated at the origins with specific help programs and collaboration in the democratization and consolidation of the democratic institutions and financial help.

The CDI-IDC also proposes a positive secularism agenda with clear values. Peace cannot be built on a foundation of injustice, nor will the world's problems be resolved without respect for human dignity and the common good, or without giving everyone access to a state of well-being.

As the premise of freedom is responsibility, freedom to conduct business necessarily means doing so with social responsibility. We must therefore promote "freedom in solidarity", based on the principles of human dignity and the common good.

Peace cannot be limited to a mere absence of war, the result of an ever precarious balance of forces. Peace is something that is built up day after day, in the pursuit of an order that implies a more balanced and perfect form of justice among people. In short, we advocate a peace that flourishes as a result of the comprehensive development of all.

Equal opportunities are built with respect for citizen opinion, with increasing civil participation in affairs of state, and civil society involvement in the design of government plans. Increasingly parties have become partial expressions of civil society and, all too often, ideological expressions of exclusive or partisan interests.

From such a standpoint, the Earth is seen as a raw material, as a source of accumulation, and for this reason it is no longer respected, is abused and plundered, destroyed and polluted. It is also the reason why environmental conservation and remediation programmes fail to achieve the expected results. The greed for money overrides commitments and the conscience of conservation. But this is the very crux of our challenge. If we are unable to spread awareness about sustainability, as a way to tap resources without destroying nature or exceeding its recovery capability, we will be complicit in the demise of the human race. That is a real possibility.

In the economic sphere, we have to propose and immediately implement an alternative route to an economy with a huge environmental impact. As Rifkin, Martínez Allier and other contemporary theorists argue, we can already set out on an alternative path to economic growth that preserves resources and limits carbon dioxide emissions. As stated recently by Zou Ji, Deputy Director General of the National Centre for Climate Change Strategy and International Cooperation: "The developing world has learned a lot about commercial models, infrastructure and technology from Europe and North America. Those patterns worked well economically, but the world's carbon capacity cannot allow us to continue on this path."

In this sense, we adopt the recent beliefs and contributions of the Pope Francis I's encyclical "Laudato Si", of the moral imperative that suggests the protection of the environment for the present and future generations.

We are building a new civilization. We are not only strengthening democracy because today democracy calls for sustainable development, and this means replacing technologies that harm the environment and cause global warming. We support the scientific advances made in recent years to conserve water and replace fuel-burning power generation with renewable energy.

THE NEW ECONOMIC CHALLENGES: THE SOCIAL MARKET ECONOMY IN TODAY'S WORLD

The social market economy must serve as the basis for dialogue on economic governance. Economic governance must be built on freedom and responsibility and must be legitimised with human concepts and attitudes. We must start from the belief that every individual has the right to develop his or her personality while remaining responsible to the community and it underpins the values of freedom, solidarity and justice.

The inherent meaning of the social market economy remains a combination of free markets with the principle of social equilibrium and the ethical responsibility of individuals for the common good. Those who remain outside the system for reasons of age, sickness or unemployment should be provided with the basics of life, including health care.

Well-defined economic goals, which vary from country to country, can be effective only when they serve the public interest. A social market economy also means competition and that remains our task, by defining the rules, conditions and framework of action for ensuring fair competition. Governments tend to intervene when structural reform is needed to prevent collapse. All this enables providers of goods and services to make their decisions. Freedom of choice is a cornerstone of this economic order.

A social market economy protects the weak and disadvantaged because it offers them the opportunity to participate. Moreover, as it does not discriminate socially, society wins. A clear example is globalisation in which the participation of all is required subject to improving education systems. The social benefits include redistribution of income received from taxes, subsidies and social security contributions. Social benefits open the door to competition.

We at IDC-EDI continue to argue that the linchpin of the social market economy is human beings that are responsible for themselves and others, while safeguarding individual freedoms. We are aware that the social market economy is an evolving concept and there must be scope for changes in society.

IDC-EDI proposes the overall goal of development based on what the United Nations defines as human development, as measured by indices of well-being and citizen participation. We consider that the social market economy should be the basis for the growth and sustainable development of our societies. We believe in economic growth only to the extent that it is accompanied by values and principles that give it a human and social content. We must continue correcting the financial causes of any future crisis and the predicaments faced by the world today because it is not just a market issue. IDC-EDI therefore proposes dialogue, debate, ideological confrontation and negotiation, leading us to a global consensus, where globality becomes more humane, the

world unites, and the economy takes the form of human development based on the social market economy.

The first challenge facing us today is to overcome the contradiction between the enormous capacity of economies to generate wealth and the current unfair trend of wealth concentration. The state bears a huge responsibility for this because the market has already shown its contribution to be inadequate.

Overcoming inequality is a factor of job creation but jobs cannot be created with capital that only moves in speculative activity or with capital that flees from one country to another depending on interest rates or to avoid shared responsibility for taxes. What is more, short-term, high-yield investment has no impact on productive activity and therefore fails to create permanent jobs. Drugs, altogether, constitute both a vicious circle for the youth, the families, some governments and the financial system in general. This problem must be resolved with coordinated international efforts.

If the goal of our parties is inclusion and to expand and renew their representativeness, they must be open to the pluralist society and incorporate its spokespersons and representatives. Centrist democracy must act not only as a citizen forum, a pluralist forum of debate and proposal, it should also work to design social reorganisation and establish the social market economy.

These private entities are driving a concentration of power that allows them to guide and manipulate legislative spaces, as well as to use multinational or multilateral regulatory agencies to intervene in every country in the world.

Latin America is one of the most socially inequitable regions in the world. This is a dual problem of poverty affecting more than half the continent combined with the inability of state administrations to ensure that the benefits of development are distributed fairly among the different social sectors. What is more, no agent exists to represent the exercise of solidarity by production system managers.

According to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), 43.4% of Latin America's population was living in poverty in 2000, a situation that had remained stagnant since 1997. However, since then, wealth distribution has worsened, with 40% of the overall population receiving only 13.6% of total resources, while the richest 10% receive 34.4% of resources.

The situation is even starker in Brazil, where the highest-income group receives 46.8% of resources. Therefore IDC-CDI supports the political declaration by the European Union (EU) and Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) and welcomes the Brussels Declaration.

THE DANGERS OF EXTREMISM

Today the world is facing one of its biggest challenges since World War II, with the escalation of terrorism and extremism all around the world, especially the Middle East. We are all under threat. There is an urgent need to identify emerging extremist trends in order to tackle them appropriately. However, before we can embark on this process, there needs to be a shared definition of what extremism is. The more appropriate term “political violence” is a manifestation of extremism. However, the latter cannot be reduced solely to its “terrorist” dimension. Extremism shares characteristics of terrorism and radicalism but is not limited to these concepts. It has deeper and wider dimensions; it may be associated with personality traits and, from that point on, becomes a behavioural problem. In this case, individual “extremism”, through a process of socialisation, integrates the community and adds a social dimension to the psychological dimension of extremism. What is more, if the "extremist" cry emerges as a collective tendency within the community, it becomes cultural. This transformation of extremism from individual behaviour to common behaviour marks the beginning of a political momentum.

In times of crisis, especially where there is a serious threat of violence, extremism becomes associated with defending one’s very existence. The realm of existence, over and above physical security, is elastic and defined only by opportunity. Thus it is accompanied by the notion of the sacred. In this context, extremism is gaining converts, to the detriment of the art of political compromise.

We must ask decision-makers to make a rational diagnosis of this irrational issue that calls for the extremism problem to be addressed at all levels of analysis: individual, social, national, transnational, international and global.

Moreover, fair and rational thinking requires the response to focus on: raising awareness through communication; acquiring dialogue skills through formal or informal education; promoting development strategies to ensure job security; stabilising rural areas and social safety nets; carrying out political reforms to increase participation; promoting economic inclusion by alleviating poverty and creating real opportunities; establishing health systems to give concrete expression to human dignity; combating major income disparities and discrimination against women; and fighting for good governance and the rule of law.

IDC-CDI will continue to be firmly committed to the fight against extremism, supporting "de-radicalisation" in its countries of origin and in leading countries by implementing community plans and projects in close cooperation with local communities. The counter-radicalisation of small cells through large-scale online programmes has proved its effectiveness.

We need a more in-depth review and decisive steps to tackle the continuing trend of extremism based on the following five pillars.

1) The new citizenship: this is both global and local, a "global" citizenship where citizens are aware of their complex identity, ethics, religious status, geographic origin, gender and professional, regional, linguistic and other status, but at the same time citizens are proud of belonging to such

a citizenship. This new citizenship should be more inclusive, e.g. respect the right to differ and the obligation to reach agreement.

2) Interfaith dialogue: there must be a religious answer that puts an end to political violence and extremism. It is both a dogmatic review and a way to consolidate the rapprochement between religious leaders. It is a global responsibility to encourage and accommodate such manifestations, to ensure that they are not solely the responsibility of religious authorities. Religious dialogue has become an integral part of intercultural dialogue and both seek to promote a culture of peace.

3) The democratisation process: the threat to stability posed by extremism should not prevent or discourage people from aspiring to and achieving democracy. The escalation of extremism is not a result of freedom but rather a direct consequence of injustice. The transition to democracy should provide more justice through the population's genuine acceptance of it. The rule should not be "chaos or dictatorship". For this reason, the role of international organisations and the reforms agreed in international forums, such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, European Union or CELAC, should be implemented.

4) The security approach: a global commitment by world leaders to tackle the problem of extremism as a major threat to civilisation and to mobilise all necessary efforts to continue fighting violent extremism. Popular support for democratic states in their struggle against terrorism is essential. The erosion of that support could lead to self-defence and the disintegration of the state system in favour of subnational entities.

5) The development approach through the so-called Marshall Plan for the Middle East: this plan is intended to be a moderate alternative to encourage Arabs, especially Arab youth, to embrace democratic ideals as a prelude to democratic systems, instead of joining the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) or other terrorist groups. Other priorities include physical reconstruction and economic development, as well as new systems of government, both locally and at the regional cooperation level.

THE FIGHT AGAINST TERRORISM

The world is under threat. In the current situation, terrorism marks the lives of both modern societies and the countries suffering it and, in recent decades, nobody has been free of this scourge anywhere in the world. Maintaining terrorism is a very costly business and maintaining its infrastructure requires sustained sources of funding. Financial resources still come from the customary sale of drugs or arms or from criminal acts carried out to order or revenue raised directly from human trafficking and the kidnapping of innocent citizens. We realise that we must strengthen international mechanisms and agreements to eliminate sources of funding.

In social terms, terrorism has a highly harmful and perverse impact, with its actions undermining the rights and freedoms of the societies where it operates; such actions are unjust and always have an opposite effect to the ideals they claim to defend.

Terrorism has now diversified, with narcoterrorism, nuclear terrorism and mass destruction, cyber-terrorism, state terrorism and international terrorism. We must be aware that more young people are attracted to terrorist activities every day because of their affordability, anonymity and big media (and hence psychological) impact, which is as alarming for the international community as it is attractive to terrorist organisations.

In the past, “professional” terrorists used to be nationalists, anarchists and extremists of the left and right but, regrettably, the new era has brought fresh inspiration, has added to the old, to those who practice violence. Previously terrorism tended to be the domain of militant groups backed by political forces. In the future, terrorists will be individuals or like-minded people working in small groups or even alone, as in the case of "lone wolves". An individual can have the technical skills to steal, buy or manufacture the weapons required for terrorism.

The ideologies embraced by such individuals and/or mini-groups are likely to be even more aberrant than those of larger groups. Terrorists working alone or in very small groups will be more difficult to detect.

Cyberterrorism or internet terrorism refers to the use of information technology, electronic or related forms of communication to violate people’s free will, and will be one of the great challenges of the future. Damage to electronic communications produces more dramatic and lasting results than indiscriminately killing people. Governments and institutions should lead the control and legal process for dealing with this exponential threat.

We at the IDC-CDI must continue to renew our commitment to the victims and their families, as it is they who suffer the daily pain and injustice of losing their loved ones. Our member parties should always remember and convey the message of rejection and condemnation of this scourge plaguing our democratic societies.

CONTRADICTIONS ON THE CONTINENTS OF LATIN AMERICA, ASIA AND AFRICA

We see equitable wealth distribution as an imperative for genuine human development and must continue to push for it. Although access to welfare is supposed to bring economic growth, such growth is not real unless it is accompanied by the corresponding policies for redistributing resources.

In this region of the world, Latin America, there is no doubt that our policy should be directed towards addressing poverty and social exclusion on the basis of job creation programmes. We should consider shifting the focus of economies onto productive work, while transcending purely financial considerations.

Latin America blends the indigenous traditions of community spirit with the best traditions of pluralism and experience of a mixed economy, but we will vigorously oppose governments with extremist ideologies or leadership founded on doctrines of hate and exclusion. We must therefore address the situation in Cuba, Venezuela and other countries with populist regimes, where

fundamental freedoms are being seriously violated and the people endure economic and legal injustice.

In Latin America, we must also oppose and confront the recent manifestations of corruption in the public and private sectors. Such practices, founded on unitarian individualism and egotism, pose a threat to democracy, the political party system, governance and society's collective development within a framework of legitimacy and equal opportunities.

In Asia we can identify three major powers of the future. China, with what could be considered a "mixed" economy with massive economic growth, vast export capacity and huge demographics. While India suffers alarming levels of poverty and social exclusion, it is a nuclear power and a country with powerful cybernetic technology and a strong industrial sector.

Since its recovery from World War II, Japan is the country that has leveraged its territory most effectively, has the most modern economy and has travelled furthest along the path of modernity.

Maintaining the balance between these three nations does, of course, require a commercial and cooperation approach and unconditional respect for their different identities, with each of these nations characterised by age-old traditions, religious diversity, its own market structures and differing government policies.

IDC-CDI must strengthen ties to ensure that there are like-minded parties in this region. However, the Western IDC-DCI parties could play an important role in designing trade, economic cooperation and the overall relations making up international coexistence.

Africa is the continent where well-being is the least widespread and whose lag in development poses the greatest challenge to incorporating the continent into the modern world. Millions of Africans are living on the brink of poverty and starvation, and millions lack access to safe drinking water. They have to contend with epidemics and large flows of migrants fleeing from poverty, violence, long-term armed conflict and terrorism.

IDC-CDI and the international community are committed to true democracy on the continent, supporting free and fair democratic elections and contributing democratic proposals that strengthen the rule of law in favour of citizens. Naturally this requires investment and technology but what is needed most of all are proposals for prosperity, productive products, economic organisation, and business and educational models.

We must push for the eradication of violence, respect for human rights and pluralism. It is therefore essential to demand respect for ethnic, religious or other minorities that suffer harassment and persecution, in both Africa and Asia, many of which are Christian communities that regrettably have not received the backing and support of the international community.