



Statement by the Triglav Circle to the United Nations
Commission for Social Development, New York, 4-13 February 2009
Item 1 (a), Priority Theme, Social Integration

Madame Chair, distinguished delegates and colleagues:

Thank you for this opportunity to make a statement on behalf of the Triglav Circle, which was created in the wake of the World Summit for Social Development. The Circle seeks to promote an approach to international relations and public policy grounded in moral and spiritual values and expressed in ethical norms and behavior. To this end we work to broaden the public discourse on global problems with philosophical and spiritual perspectives.

In attempting to apply this approach to the issue of social integration, I wish first to thank and commend the Secretariat for its most excellent report - *Promoting Social Integration*. It deserves large dissemination and careful study.

I would like to anchor my remarks on one of the many good points made in this Report. Paragraph 75, I quote: "*Purely legislative measures do not seem to be sufficient (to advance equity, equality of opportunity, social justice and social cohesion) as the creation of an inclusive society presupposes respect for all human rights and fundamental freedoms*".

To this, Madame Chair, we would like to add that policies for inclusive societies and an inclusive world are, in the long run, effective only when oriented by the heart and when, in particular, the economy is set to serve all human beings.

First, social integration, or the prevention and cure of "social exclusion", depends on reason informed by empathy, love, and an overall change of heart. To succeed, policies require genuine acceptance of the innate dignity of every human being and of the responsibility to recognize the worth of the "other"— such that it be understood that one's own well being lies in the good of the other. To be overcome is the pervasive fear of the "other" as well as the selfish arrogance and pride of power that builds invisible, and sometimes concrete walls between the haves and the have nots, whether the "have nots" – individuals, social classes or nations – be of power, wealth, land, anointed skin color, or religious faith and ethnicity.

If different groups of peoples and nations are to exist as a community enjoying social equality and equity, it must be the result not only of tolerance and mutual interest, but also of an appreciation of each other's merits, and of a joyful celebration of diversity and pluralism. Legislation alone is powerless to eradicate the roots of bigoted instincts or to abolish distinctions based on physical differences or material circumstances. Legislating civil and political rights and inclusion can establish forms of civil and political equality, but cannot forge empathy and compassion. Such "habits of the heart" must be taught in the course of socializing children for life in the "good society", which is indeed the "society for all". It can also be instilled in adults if public and civil institutions make the necessary efforts to break down the prejudices and fears that separate classes and categories of people.

Secondly, the need for rational policies shaped by sympathy, empathy and love is nowhere more obvious than in the organization of the world economy. A world society for all demands a world economy for all. Economic development, modernization and globalization, as practiced during these last decades, have largely marshaled against social inclusion and the building of a harmonious world community. The facts are recalled in the Report, notably the rise of inequalities, of unemployment, and of insecurity. But, Madame Chair, a change of course, clearly imposed by the current crises, ought to be founded on a critical examination of the prevalent ideas and values. How can aggressive competition, greed, narrow self interest, and consumerism, which, combined, fuel the global economy – with the results that we now observe – ever serve the purpose of social integration and reasonable harmony in the world? Rapid depletion of natural resources, commercial reification of human intercourse, and enrichment for the few, surely cannot lead to an inclusive, equitable, and peaceful world society.

The current paradigm of modernity is the construction of Promethean man. It is not a construction in consonance with Nature, nor is it in consonance with the good characteristics of the human spirit. As it is, the Promethean construct does not take into account the social and environmental costs of reducing humanity to a commodity or a cog in a "monetized universe." One of the major failures of modernity, as it has been construed during the last twenty/thirty years, is the failure to recognize that the capacities for love, generosity, solidarity, selfless work and creativity, are intrinsic to human nature and are the building blocks of an integrated, or harmonious society.

Policies that would nurture the good inclinations of humanity and provide peoples with livelihood, freedom, respect, and sense of social and personal accomplishment are not intrinsically more difficult to elaborate and implement than are the failed policies of yesterday. They require a change of paradigm, an attention to the traditional forms of wisdom that need to be applied to a world where survival of humanity is not a given. To repeat, as this is to us a central aspect of this wisdom, happiness of the human person is derived from being needed, from contributing to the well being of others, and from the satisfaction that derives from hard work, friendship and cooperation. This is also true for communities and nations.

The wheels of progress cannot and should not be stopped, but human flourishing should be the first priority. For example, it makes little sense to continue to lure millions of people from the countryside to mega-cities, leaving behind them the humanity that may have existed in their extended families and communities. Sadly, these millions risk settling in situations of artificial and tenuous integration in cities and societies that do not have the means, spirit, and heart to welcome them.

While it is clearly antithetical to prevailing thought, real progress would consist in revisiting the divisive and dehumanizing role of technology that is leading to human obsolescence increasingly evidenced in trends of massive unemployment. We must strive for more frugal life styles that depend on the innate love in each human being for another and on that ground build a new foundation for economic livelihood, one that is consistent with social harmony and in balance with Nature.

Madame Chairperson, the Triglav Circle believes that this was the central message of the Summit held in Copenhagen fourteen years ago. We noted, with great appreciation, that the relevance of the text adopted by this Summit was underlined on several occasions by the current President of the General Assembly. We trust that this important Commission will, under your leadership, further contribute to the revival of this founding text for social development.

Thank you, Madame Chairperson.

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