

# THE KRAKOW DECLARATION

## on a Sustainable Future for Europe and the World

May 2010

We, over seventy participants from 14 EU member states plus Croatia, representing many different European, national and regional networks and organisations, meeting at the SURE Conference in Krakow 20-21 May 2010, have focused on the issue – **how to connect citizens, organisations and policies to sustainability.**

We are convinced that the world is indeed faced by what has been called *An Inconvenient Truth*, namely that climate change is accelerating, that it is substantially caused by human actions, notably emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases; and that, if the process of climate change is not halted, there will be devastating consequences for the climate and ecosystems of the planet and for humankind.

We believe that human activity is also making unsustainable demands upon the earth's resources of land, soil, water, minerals and biodiversity.

We believe that the human actions that are contributing to climate change and to the drawdown of the world's limited resources are driven by a global human attachment to consumption and to economic growth (as measured by GDP and other indicators). This paradigm, supported by most people and driven by industry and commerce, is broadly endorsed and encouraged by governments and promoted by conventional education systems.

**We are convinced that this paradigm is essentially unsustainable.** If it continues to be the main driver of human activity, it will lead to continuing acceleration of climate change, to devastation through flooding, weather extremes, rises in sea level, loss of biodiversity and desertification; to the drawdown of natural resources of all kinds; and, equally important, to a failure to tackle the other grave ill in the world, namely widespread poverty and human suffering.

### **Moving towards a sustainable Europe in a sustainable world**

We support the proposals that have been made for a new paradigm, which is both sustainable and equitable, and which must embrace:

- Radical reductions in emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases
- Radical reduction in use of non-renewable (fossil and nuclear) fuels
- Halt to deforestation, particularly of tropical forests
- Sustainable management of water resources throughout the world
- A radical shift in the present economic systems, to enable investments of all kinds – public, commercial, non-profit and community-based – to be focused on the creation of sustainable growth in the places and for the people who need it, while eliminating unsustainable external effects.

This shift of paradigm will demand a massive and challenging human endeavour. To realise it, we must face the *Uncomfortable Reality*, notably the current worldwide dependence on consumption and growth; the selfishness and self-protection of many interests; and the understandable ignorance of most of mankind about the impact of our collective activity.

To transform that reality into a new collective commitment to sustainable and equitable visions for the future will demand a major and sustained worldwide campaign, in which Europe should be ready to give leadership. This campaign should actively involve all citizens and organisations, and should include:

- New styles of leadership at all levels – global, European, national, regional and local
- Widespread adoption of ethical and sustainable practices and investments in commerce and industry
- Widespread actions in public education, awareness raising and debate, because citizens will not accept behavioural changes or new regulations until they understand the reasons for them
- Identification and support of ideas and initiatives from people at local level all over the world
- Stimulus and initiative from civil society in all its forms
- Support for exchange of ideas and experiences between all involved in this great endeavour
- Exploration of new and innovative forms of governance in all sectors.

### **A collective responsibility**

The campaign that we call for must be pursued by collective action - both globally and within Europe – involving government, commerce and industry, civil society organisations and citizens everywhere. With such collective action, we believe that the human contribution to devastating climate change can be halted, the draw-down of the world's resources can be reduced to acceptable levels, and that the present unsustainable patterns of production, housing, lifestyle and mobility can be transformed into enriching, sustainable ones.

We believe that Europe, a relatively rich continent which has contributed heavily to the depletion of natural resources and to the human causes of climate change, should take a lead in the global campaign. This lead may be expressed by the following actions by the different major players.

### **European Union and national governments**

The EU and its member should establish a clear and challenging policy framework within which all other actors can operate. This framework should offer solutions to the great challenges that were revealed, but not fully resolved, at the Copenhagen Conference of November 2009. It should include:

- Setting ambitious targets for reduction of emissions of greenhouse gases, for conservation of energy, and for generation of energy from renewable resources
- Reflection of those targets in fiscal, financial, legal and regulatory measures, including those which ensure that the external social and environmental costs caused by large-scale production and distribution methods are internalised

- Extension and improvement of cap-and-trade policies and the Emissions Trading scheme, with strong and stable carbon prices, so that industry, commerce and communities have a clear basis for long-term investment decisions and for self-discipline in their actions
- Support for rapid development and application of technology for carbon capture, in order to cut emissions during the period that will be needed to phase out the use of fossil fuels in energy production.
- Participation in the growing global effort to halt deforestation.
- Expansion of aid to developing countries, in a form that enables them to achieve economic growth and social development in sustainable ways
- Review of the system of money creation in the Union, being open to the creation of regional currencies which have the potential to raise the resilience of communities.

### **National, regional and local governments**

Within this broad policy context, national, regional and local governments have the responsibility to set a clear framework for action by all within their territories, and to do what is needed in order to connect people and organisations to the great challenge of sustainability.

In doing so, they should recognise that the **problem may be global, but a very large part of the solution must be local**. Citizens relate first to their family, their neighbourhood, their community. Europe may be seen from Brussels as a common market, with free movement of labour and of trade, but it also contains a multiplicity of local economies. It hosts many companies which operate on a European or global scale, but also millions of small enterprises. Decisions made by consumers, producers and others at local level are integral to the search for sustainability. Localness itself can be a crucial strength in this great campaign, for example in reducing the need for travel or speeding up the process of disseminating good ideas.

Taking this perspective, we call on national and regional governments to:

- work to increase the participation of civil society in policy decision making
- present policy ideas and proposals in clear and simple ways, so that citizens and local practitioners can assimilate and respond to them constructively
- promote policies which support community development and social equality, to meet public aspirations
- promote sustainable and resilient methods of production, processing and distribution of food, with particular support to organic and low-carbon processes
- identify, support and subsidise traditional methods of agriculture, because of their benefits in terms of sustainability and in the protection and use of cultural heritage and local knowledge
- review and apply hygiene and other regulations related to agriculture and food processing in ways that ensure that small scale operations are not disadvantaged
- support the creation and action of local partnerships to pursue bottom-up territorial development in rural and urban areas
- use public procurement policies to support the strengthening of local economies in sustainable ways

- give leadership in the fields of education, training and awareness raising related to the great challenges stated in this declaration
- adapt their processes of service delivery (health, transport, social services etc.) to strengthen urban-rural linkages and ensure equitable access in sustainable ways
- be open to new forms of governance, service delivery and public participation.

## **Commerce and Industry**

The private and commercial sector is a major force in the existing paradigm: it can be no less powerful in driving forward the new paradigm. We need the energy, the acumen, the innovation, the financial resources and the risk-taking ability of commerce, industry and the related financial institutions. Crucially, we need their commitment to a sustainable world.

We call on private entrepreneurs and companies to:

- recognize that economic entities are not democratically legitimised actors only because of the market power they represent
- integrate, as far as possible, social and environmental concerns into their business strategies
- respond creatively to the opportunities which are opening up in fields such as renewable energies, carbon capture methodologies, and added value to local resources
- direct their innovation strategies towards environmentally sound and need-responsive solutions
- take an active part in local partnerships aimed at territorial development.

The media have a crucial role in raising public awareness of issues connected with sustainability and of the organisations who are striving to give leadership.

## **Civil Society**

We see civil society (that is, non-government organizations of all kinds) as a lubricant in the process of connecting people and organizations to sustainability. It can act as catalyst between institutions and people, and give leadership in awareness raising, training and all forms of community initiatives: this can include the exploration of new values and belief systems. It can be the means through which citizens can take ownership and accept responsibility for the transition into a sustainable future.

We look to civil society to:

- take up the concerns of citizens who want (for example) access to good food, green energy supply and sustainable transport, and express those concerns to public authorities
- act as networker and informant, offering practical solutions and alternative options for acting
- innovate and disseminate ideas for new forms of creative and sustainable action.
- In these processes, make use of information technology, including social media, in innovative and responsible ways

## **Citizens**

The move into a new paradigm does not depend only upon organisations. The initiative can lie with citizens everywhere. We believe that people have the collective ability to conceive and achieve the great change that we are advocating.

We appeal to citizens to be prepared to rethink their view of the world and to move into increasing sustainability in the actions that they take as consumers, householders, parents, travelers, employers and employees, investors and voters. To stimulate this change, we offer these thoughts:

- Don't ask what public authorities should do. Ask yourself what you can do!
- Learn about the impacts of your own actions and help others to understand those impacts.
- Use your power as a consumer to push providers of goods or services towards sustainability.
- Join with others who care about these issues in order to have a collective voice and to influence the policies and activities of public bodies and the private sector.
- Remember that you are a citizen of Europe and the world.

## **The following organisations were represented at the Krakow Conference:**

### **European Organisations:**

ECOVAST – European Council for the Village and Small Town  
ERA - European Rural Alliance  
ERCA - European Rural Community Association  
Forum Synergies  
PREPARE Partnership for Rural Europe

### **National and regional organisations**

Austria -

IFZ – Inter-University Research Centre for Technology, Work and Culture  
ÖAR Regionalberatung GmbH  
ÖIR - Institute for Regional Studies and Spatial Planning

Bulgaria

Fair Chance - National Association for Sustainable Development

Croatia

Croatian Rural Development Network

Czech Republic

*Centrum pro komuniti praci* (Centre for Community Practice)  
*Sdruzeni Ruze MAS* (Local Action Group)  
National Network of Rural Community Schools  
Rozmberk, o.p.s.

England

Cheltenham Connect  
Open University  
University of Gloucestershire

Estonia

*Kodukant* - Estonian Village Movement

Hungary

Hungarian Rural Parliament

Latvia

*Latvijas Lauku forums* (Latvian Rural Forum)

Poland

Centre for Business Development  
Cooperation Fund  
Foundation Institute of Public Affairs  
Institute for Rural Development  
Polish Rural Forum  
Stowarzyszenie Agrolinia  
The Crown of Northern Krakow Association  
Krajna and Paluki Association  
*Uniwersytet Rolniczy w Krakowie* (Agricultural University of Krakow)  
Warsaw University of Life Sciences – SGGW

Romania

ADEPT Transilvania Foundation

Slovakia

Slovakian Rural Parliament,  
Slovak Environmental Agency – Rural Environment Protection

Sweden

*Hela Sverige Ska Leva* (Swedish Village Action Movement)  
Transition Sweden