

## Let' s not fight but construct !

There is growing concern that increased globalisation of trade would further complicate achieving environmental goals while good environmental management and regulation is said to drive innovation, induce industry to reduce resource inefficiency and create business opportunities. This is the predominant thinking of today' s political and business leaders supported by a large array of non-governmental organisations and academia. A carefully crafted and balanced trade off between prosperity and environmental protection is regarded as the best answer to the world social, economic, developmental and environmental challenges.

The most important battle that is exemplary of such trade off is the fight against climate change. The international community and its principal public and private actors are committed to such overarching goal and, with everyone' support, humanity may overcome one of its main peril. Such a convergence of opinion and action to combat climate change is unique in the history of environmental protection.

Fighting climate change is to fight against the way nature and her ecosystems react to human activities. Protecting the environment becomes a way to reduce nature's effects on human beings. But there are basic things that people cannot stop doing, like eating, consuming or producing. And because there are more and more inhabitants on the Earth, our environmental footprint will increase and will force nature to further react which in turn will force human beings to increase their fight against nature.

What we do not know yet is how nature would react to our increase fight against the way nature reacts to our doings. That is why it is critical to act meaningfully while gathering a comprehensive picture of people' s impact on the dynamic equilibrium of nature. It is not enough to be committed, genuine or candid. Nature is proceeding at her own pace and is careless about human beings. So nature cannot take care of humanity nor can we take care of nature because we are not above her but depending on her.

We should abandon terminology like « fighting, combatting ». Nature is not the ennemy. People are at the source of their own difficulties. We know that we are trapped in a never-ending inflation of consumerism. We know our limitations and are convinced about our ability to overcome them. Fine, but have we asked nature about this ! Are we too presumptuous about our own intelligence ? And whereby we can send a satellite to the moon, we are unable to stop the massive proliferation of jellyfish in the oceans. A proliferation made possible because of pollution, unsound waste management and over-fishing in a context of the warming of oceans.

« Fighting » against climate change does not provide an optimal conceptual framework conducive to finding innovative solutions. A fight is always something happening when all other options have failed. Reducing carbon emissions is necessary and critical. But it should not deviate our efforts from looking at the broader picture. Once we witness what we call « climate change » it is too late to restaure a pristine time. Nature dynamic will dominate the play. Then, we find ourselves in a situation where we look for adaptive measures. Once changes are underway we cannot stop them. We need to reduce undesirable effects and be visionary enough to mitigate a further deterioration and degradation of our vital environment.

At the same time, we should invest in preventive measures where we believe the breaking point has not been reached. And there are plenty of such examples, although some of them do not attract public attention or fall outside the radar screen of politicians. Waste issues are waiting to bring us all into a world crisis. Ocean pollution, deforestation or extension of biofuel production could imprint ecological disequilibrium that may undermine food security. The massive destruction of coral reefs, mangroves or semi-arid areas will impede people's ability to adapt to climate changes and limit opportunities for long term solutions.

Human beings have shared their existence with nature for milleniums, but we are at a turning point that requires vigilance. Being vigilant in ensuring that future crisis do not occur at a magnitude where humanity is left with the only choice to adapt more or less to a problematic situation which may aggravate social disparities and bring the world into a period of unstability; remembering that people surviving in poverty would be most vulnerable to any further degradation of their environment.

Continuing the building of civilisation requires the construction of links between nature and people.

When we pollute, contaminate water and soil or destroy natural resources we are eroding, weakening or breaking the links and damaging our life support systems. Nature will react in a way that makes our existence even more difficult. We should understand that humanity has engaged itself in an irreversible path leading to a worsening of our relationship with nature. And it will come a time when we will have to question the direction we have taken to boost prosperity while increasing societies' fragility and vulnerability.