

ANUARIO CEIPAZ

2013

Strengthening Democracy **at the Personal and Collective Levels**

*"This sunset is the time for joint action,
because not only is another world possible, it is sure to come".*
José Luis Sampedro¹

1. Justice, peace, democracy: lost opportunities

In the history of absolute male dominance, a few enlightened exceptions –Greece is undoubtedly the best example- afforded citizens a more prominent role. The United States Constitution of 1787² that begins "We, the People...", and the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen of France in 1789,³ which explicitly established the "natural, unalienable and sacred" rights that "the representatives of the French people" recognized for their citizens, are two outstanding examples of efforts at crucial moments in history to raise society above the dominant powers. Nevertheless, those powers still prevail both internally and in international relations. And also in the cases indicated, force, authority, preparation for war, always being true the perverse adage "*Si vis pacem para bellum*".

As I have underscored in previous Yearbooks^{4,5} it was at the end of World War I when US President Woodrow Wilson proposed a “Convention for Peace” in his famous Fourteen Points presented at the Conference of Paris, creating the League of Nations to resolve conflicts through diplomacy and, very significantly, providing for a permanent International Court of Justice. For the first time the concepts of justice, peace and democracy were brought together in a project for governance that could have marked the end to the culture of violence and war, thus initiating a new era. But it was all in vain, because the Republican-dominated US Senate, then as it does now, prevented the voice of the people, which is the essence of democracy, from being heard and taken into account by the decision-makers in power.

- End of World War II

History repeated itself and it was once again a US President, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who at the end of World War II, deeply shocked by the number of victims and the abominable acts of extermination, decided to establish the United Nations System,⁵ comprised of a series of institutions specializing in labor (ILO), food (FAO), health (WHO), education, science and culture (UNESCO), development (UNDP), children (UNICEF)... to ensure the “central” UN Organization’s compliance with the goal of global peaceful and democratic governance, with the International Court of Justice as guarantor of the new paradigms.

The United Nations Charter –and it’s important to underscore the foresight in its content- commences with an assertion that today still provides an essential program of action if we are to achieve that historic turning point from force to word: “We, the Peoples.... are determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war”. The peoples, peace, succeeding generations: these are the three pillars on which the new model of global coexistence was to be founded. Democracy, justice, peace. To make this great project viable, in 1944 a World Bank had already been established “for reconstruction and development” along with the International Monetary Fund. And the Marshall Plan to provide immediate aid to the conquered, together with plans for international cooperation based on the idea that sharing was essential to creating a new “climate” in both domestic and foreign relations.

The UNESCO Constitution⁶ asserts in its Preamble –exclusively in relation to the other organizations of the UN system- that “the great and terrible war which has now ended was a war made possible by the denial of the *democratic principles* of dignity, equality and mutual respect of men, and by the propagation, in their place, through ignorance and prejudice, of the doctrine of inequality of men and races; that the wide diffusion of culture, and the education of humanity for justice and liberty and peace are indispensable to the dignity of man and constitute a sacred duty which all the nations must fulfill in a spirit of mutual assistance and concern; that a peace based exclusively upon the political and economic arrangements of governments would not be a peace

which could secure the unanimous, lasting and sincere support of the peoples of the world, and that peace must therefore be founded, if it is not to fail, upon the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind”...

We must acknowledge that there is no more lucid way of expressing the changes that needed to be made in the power structures that have brought about innumerable conflicts and wars. Those are the same principles that were set forth immediately thereafter in a draft document, with contributions principally from René Cassin and Eleanor Roosevelt, which was widely distributed among representatives of different cultures, beliefs and ideologies for approval at the United Nations General Assembly held in Paris on December 10, 1948. Human rights, whose exercise “would free human beings from fear”, in the words of the Preamble to the Universal Declaration.⁷ However, since three years had passed since the end of the war and given the incipient confrontation between the two superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union, the Universal Declaration didn’t fully develop those “democratic principles” (I will come back to this later) so accurately and opportunely set forth in the UNESCO Constitution.

And soon, in the shadow of the arms race between the two great powers, “the people” were replaced by governments; international cooperation by exploitation; and aid by loans granted in conditions of privatization, and cuts in civil service jobs and the construction of major infrastructures, unfairly referred to as “structural

adjustments”...; while tensions in US-USSR relations rose to dangerous levels.

In the US the most radical McCarthyism led the country, especially when the Republicans were in government, to establish unforgivable relations of dominance, such as the “Condor Plan,” in which military juntas and dictators were imposed throughout Latin America, with tens of thousands of victims.

- End of the Cold War

In 1989 everything pointed to change, a new direction for the whole of mankind, democracy. However, the totally bloodless fall of the Soviet empire thanks to the imaginative efforts of the outstanding President Mikhail Gorbachev wasn’t followed, as would have been desirable, by a rapid remodeling of the capitalist system. To the contrary, President Reagan and Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher promoted the movement toward neo-liberal globalization and the United Nations system was soon replaced by groups of oligarchs and democratic values were exchanged for the laws of the marketplace. Nation-states were weakened by excessive privatization projects that, even worse, often resulted in a transfer of political responsibilities.

When everything indicated that peace was imminent, when everyone thought that at last “*We are the world, we are the children*” might become a reality... conditions for development were restricted, especially from the West, and everything became

focused on “competitiveness”. “It is foolish to confuse value with price” warned the great poet Antonio Machado. But, particularly in the 1990s, the foolish dragged the world into a deep systemic crisis. In the US, the Republican Party, allied with the world’s wealthiest nations, promoted an economy based on speculation, outsourced production and security, including massive expenditures in military hardware and armament.

The outcome is horrendous: the “great (military, financial, energy and media) domain” is concentrated in a few hands that seek to hold the reins of our common destiny. And this economic disaster has likewise been accompanied by an ethical and democratic disaster and, what is even more dangerous, total despair.

- Today there is a new world design in which, in the West, the United States is beginning to show an improvement in social welfare, skillfully guided by President Obama, who has shown himself to be capable of confronting immense Republican influence despite it all. In contrast, Europe, which with much foresight and prudence was able to implement the Treaty Establishing the Coal and Steel Community in 1950, later committed the huge error of implementing a monetary union during the height of neo-liberalism, *without having first achieved economic and political union*. This has resulted in antidemocratic behavior throughout the entire European Union, in which the markets have assumed a major part of political power and now threaten the very foundations of our social welfare.

Asia is showing much incoherence, stimulated by neo-liberal greed that, setting its sights exclusively on profits, has converted the great communist giant into an immense capitalist country where much of western production has been outsourced and which, in turn in the last few months has likewise been outsourcing its own production to even poorer countries offering even cheaper labor. A country with an intolerable lack of transparency in relation to the nuclear arms it possesses, working conditions and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms...

And we should also consider development in India, an immense country that after the “green revolution” was able to continue to consolidate a democratic regime, with a notable degree of intercultural and inter-religious coexistence and scientific and technical training that in a short time has positioned it among the “emerging countries”, together with the Russian Federation, Brazil and China.

And finally, with respect to Asia we should underscore the immense industrial development achieved both in South Korea and Japan, although in a few years both will probably have to make a series of cultural “adjustments”, particularly after the demise of neo-liberalism.

The awakening of Africa is of extraordinary importance because the often merciless and undue exploitation of its extraordinary natural resources will soon give way, as it should, to cooperation that will

facilitate rapid sustainable development in their countries and, above all, for their people who, perhaps more than anyone else in the world, certainly deserve this historical turning point from force to words, this “new beginning”. *Africa, cradle of humanity, was also the cradle in Yamusukro, Ivory Coast of a culture of peace and non-violence.* And not long ago a pan-African conference was held in Luanda to support the adoption of guidelines for conciliation and peaceful conflict resolution. Evidence of this extraordinary change and true maturity –and always mindful of Nelson Mandela’s exceptional example- is the fact that the majority of African countries have either abolished the death penalty or have accepted an indefinite moratorium on executions... which contrasts with the fact that despite recent progress in that regard, in the United States 34 of the 50 states continue to retain capital punishment.

Finally, but perhaps firstly, emancipation has been finally achieved in Latin America, so downtrodden in its recent past, but now so full of strength, resources and imagination. CELAC (Community of Latin American and Caribbean States) will undoubtedly reflect Latin America’s adherence to a culture of peace –already included in the constitutions of Bolivia and Ecuador- and will ratify the supreme right to life, since it should be underscored that no Latin American countries apply the death penalty.

“Western” globalization has become more radical in the last few years, restricting development aid –there were no funds available for the Millennium Objectives- and its “protection” only covers the

20% of humanity that lives in the most prosperous neighborhood of the global village. The United States is the only country that at present has not signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child; the United States and the United Kingdom, leaders of neo-liberalism, abandoned Unesco in 1984 as an initial step toward the progressive weakening of the United Nations and Nation-States. And as if that weren't sufficient, they have declined to submit to international criminal courts, seeking to assert their predominance in the previously-mentioned groups of plutocrats.

Economies of speculation, delocalized production and war have prompted the present crisis that is probably in its last stages, despite the position of the Republican Party in the United States. But this can't last when the citizens of the world can now freely express themselves, and when 1,000 million people continue to live in extreme poverty, subjected to absolute domination. The fundamental pillars on which this system is (isolation, fear, silence) are crumbling.

And in the "developed" countries we cannot tolerate the fact that it is children and the most vulnerable sectors of society who are presently suffering the consequences of this crisis. It is not only poverty, but also increased inequality that will undoubtedly prevent the plutocrats from prolonging their power in the next few years.

- Despite being marginalized, particularly in the 1990s, the United Nations system has provided a noteworthy series of major points of

reference and guidelines for action: life-long education for all (1990); Agenda 21 for the environment (Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, 1992); women and development (United Nations summit in Beijing, 1995); commitment to social development (Copenhagen, 1995); Declaration on Tolerance (General Unesco Conference, 1995); Dialogue of Civilizations⁸ (United Nations General Assembly, 1997); Resolution on the 2001-2010 International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World⁹ (United Nations General Assembly, 1998); Declaration and Program of Action on a Culture of Peace¹⁰ (United Nations General Assembly, 1999); Millennium Objectives (United Nations General Assembly, 2000); Declaration on Cultural Diversity (General Unesco Conference, 2001); Alliance of Civilizations¹¹ (United Nations General Assembly, 2007)...

I would also like to stress the importance of the 2000 “Earth Charter”,¹² for its extraordinary value as a reference work and guide for the future. It commences by stressing that all of the earth’s inhabitants presently have the responsibility to choose their own future. We are aware and have detailed knowledge of present trends and it is our duty to adopt political, economic, cultural and environmental policies... based on universally accepted ethical principles. It is at the end of the Earth Charter that we are urged to seek a “new beginning” in which weapons will be replaced by dialogue and violence by a spirit of consensus. The time has come to fully achieve the “equal dignity of all human beings”.

2. Citizen Power^{4 13}

*“...we can turn to the enormous power and
pressure of public opinion”...*
Eleanor Roosevelt.

I like to repeat that there are three essential reasons for believing that absolute secular male dominance is finally giving way to “the peoples”, and that the time for submission and silence is over:

- Possibilities for expressing ourselves, thanks to modern communication and information technologies
- Progressive increase of global awareness
- Greater numbers of women in decision-making processes

Global awareness with a profound knowledge of reality that renders us capable of “seeing those who are invisible”. In effect, news broadcasts wide spreads what is extraordinary, unheard of, and unusual. Thus it is necessary to look beyond what is highlighted by the communications media in order to get the entire picture. Upon receiving the 1985 Nobel Peace Prize, Bernard Lown underscored that seeing the invisible is absolutely essential for “doing the impossible”. The possibles of today may become tomorrow’s reality if we take everyone into account rather than only a few, and if we look at the whole rather than only at a small part.

We have now progressively become less anonymous and more “identifiable”, less subjects and more active citizens, less merely spectators and more actors.

Stephane Hessel,¹⁴ the young ninety-year old who was capable of mobilizing millions of people, challenging them to express outrage and to get involved, to finally “appear” on the stages of power and facilitate the radical changes presently needed, proclaimed that “Faced with the dangers that challenge our interdependent societies, it’s time for action, participation, to refuse to resign ourselves. *It’s time for genuine democracy*”... Distance participation afforded by new means of communication will strengthen citizen power and the ability to get involved, not only to protest but to make proposals, and to freely express ourselves.

It’s very important to underscore the possibility for “direct democracy” that has increased exponentially in the last few years and that is now unstoppable. The 15-M movement in Madrid’s Puerta del Sol was particularly significant, together with the “Arab spring”, for establishing social networks that today are capable of transforming many formerly subjugated and passive citizens into persons who are fully committed to the great transitions that are currently underway.

Cyberspace is undoubtedly becoming the “Puerta del Sol of the World” and more and more of the earth’s inhabitants will cease to be anonymous and claim their places among the citizens of this new era. The academic, scientific, artistic, intellectual and literary communities will likewise

undoubtedly play a significant role at the forefront of this popular movement.

No one should remain fearful, passive. One of the sayings that has most influenced my life is one of Edmund Burke's when he said: "Nobody made a greater mistake than he who did nothing because he could do only a little!" All of us, each one within his own means, must each day plant a seed or take a step forward, no matter how small. Only then, if we are many, will we reap great harvests and make strides in the right direction.

The time has come for each of us to express ourselves, to build the genuine democracies required at the local and global levels. The time has come to speak up and to listen. Martin Luther King exclaimed: "History will have to record that the greatest tragedy of this period of social transition was not the strident clamor of the bad people, but the appalling silence of the good people". The time for passive citizens is over.

Today the world won't accept imposition, dominance, fanaticism, dogmatism or extremism, and this is another victory of the last few years, the first ones of the 21st century. From now on communication will be the key to understanding each other, and awaiting us will be that great transition from force to words, from a culture of absolute

domination to a culture of equality, conciliation, dialogue and peace.

In summary, the idea is to progressively strengthen democratic participation, giving women the role that they have always been denied. In Spanish and in Catalan the plural of “yo” (“I”) is “nos-otros” (“we”), a term that joins “us” (“nos”) with “others” (“otros”). It’s a matter of ethical urgency to make others (that “otro”) an inseparable part of our future coexistence. *Citizens of the world, concerned about the world’s problems*, who act at the local level from a global perspective. Global citizenship, feeling that we are citizens of the world and knowing that there are no borders for climate change or the transmission of diseases or for exchanging knowledge and information. Citizens of the world who refuse to accept inequality and who promote the democratic principles of justice, freedom and solidarity in their daily lives.

3. The Great Turning Point

It’s time to rise up.
José Ángel Valente

From absolute power to genuine democracy, from force to words, that great historical turning point on the horizon. At all levels,⁵

Personal

Local

Regional

International

it's necessary to adopt "democratic principles" as rules of conduct.

Democracy in each person's daily activities; in the composition and operations of local institutions; in representation at the State or national levels; in international institutions of a regional nature; in a re-founded United Nations system so that it may fully achieve what was so lucidly proclaimed in the Preamble to the Charter.

Education in Human Rights and Democracy as set forth, at different levels and permanently in the World Plan of Action on Education for Human Rights and Democracy,¹⁵ approved in Montreal, Canada in 1993 at a major meeting of educators, sociologists, philosophers, political scientists... convened by Unesco. This Plan of Action was intended –at the onset- for all people, families, groups and communities, educators, educational institutions, students, youth, communications media, employees and trade unions, popular movements, political parties, parliamentarians... From the beginning the idea was to extend education in human rights and democracy to *all of the inhabitants of the Earth*, because this would provide the foundation for a life worth living, and for peaceful coexistence in solidarity and fraternity.

Many of the conclusions of that meeting were adopted at the World Conference on Human Rights held in Vienna in June, 1993.¹⁶ They were included in the Vienna Declaration and Plan of Action whose Article 8 provides that "*Democracy, development and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms are interdependent and*

mutually reinforcing. Democracy is based on the freely expressed will of the people to determine their own political, economic, social and cultural systems and their full participation in all aspects of their lives”.

The World Conference reaffirmed the right to development and the specific rights of women, as well as the importance of promoting and protecting the rights of minorities and vulnerable groups. It underscored the essential importance of education in human rights, promoting understanding, mutual recognition, tolerance, peace and amicable relations.

It also devoted a special chapter to equality, dignity and tolerance, particularly with regard to immigrants and indigenous communities.

Another significant chapter refers exclusively to education in human rights (scope and content).

Equal dignity is the foundation of democratic sentiment and thought. For that reason the *Universal Declaration on Democracy*¹⁷ has enshrined it as its very foundation, as did the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Article 1 of the present version of the Declaration on Democracy states that “Democracy is a political, economic, social, cultural and international regime, based on respect for human beings, the supremacy and independence of justice and law, as well as on the

possibility for any individual to participate in the life and development of society in freedom and peace, *being fully conscious of the equal dignity and interdependence of human beings*, in a favorable cultural and natural environment”.

The remainder of the subsequent articles comprise chapters on *political democracy, economic democracy, social democracy, cultural democracy and international democracy*.

Article 2 states that “Political democracy represents an objective based on values shared by all peoples that make up the international community, regardless of their cultural, social and economic differences. It is, therefore, a fundamental right for all human beings, and it shall be exercised under conditions of freedom, equality and responsibility, ensuring diversity of opinions, beliefs and common interest”.

Within this chapter, Article 3.6 reads “The inevitable respect for diversity of citizen’s beliefs and convictions requires that democratic states remain neutral in that regard. Thus the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion and ideology of all people will be duly guaranteed”.

Not only does the Declaration underscore the best forms of action for achieving a working democracy based on citizen participation, but it likewise sets forth corrective measures for absolute

majorities, urging representatives to continually listen to their constituents.

It is essential to underscore that Article 11.1 on “Economic Democracy” states that “Democracy shall develop economic systems *based on social justice, to which all the other aspects and dimensions of economic life will always be subordinated*, whose aim shall be free and fair competition as well as indispensable cooperation, in order to achieve human and sustainable economic development, shared prosperity,...”

In the chapter on Social Democracy, Article 18 affirms that “Democracy comprises an essential social dimension, in accordance with the conditions established in Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: the non-observance of fundamental social rights threatens equal dignity and opportunities for all human beings, *which is the very basis for democracy*”.

With regard to cultural democracy, democratic culture is highlighted in Article 21.1 which states that it “is essential to understand it as culture, as daily conduct rooted at all levels: personal, institutional and collective”. And Article 21.2 adds: “Also necessary is democratic culture constantly nurtured and enriched by education, by unrestricted freedom of expression, by dissemination of diverse cultural forms and manifestations, as well as by access to a plurality of information”.

And finally, Article 25.1 of Chapter 6 on international democracy affirms that *“Democracy shall be regarded as an international principle to be observed by international organizations and States in their international relations. International democracy does not only imply equal and equitable representation for all States, but rather it likewise extends to their social, economic and cultural rights and duties”...*

4. Genuine democracy: from force to words, the great historical turning point

*They forgot that our days are numbered
and that we must keep vigil day and night...*
Enrique Badosa

Multiple transitions will be required, some of which have already been outlined:

- From an economy of speculation, outsourced production and war to an economy of human and sustainable global development.
- From a culture of imposition, violence and war to a culture of dialogue, conciliation, alliances and peace.
- From having replaced ethical values with the values of the “markets” to granting global preeminence to universal values that will in fact serve to reconcile our many differences, while respecting the individual characteristics unique to each human being.
- From groups of plutocrats to a re-founded United Nations¹⁸ with genuine and effective moral authority. This would include a General Assembly composed of equal numbers of

representatives from member countries and civil society. In addition to the present Security Council there would be an Environmental Security Council and a Socio-economic Security Council. And there would be no veto rights, but rather a weighted voting system.

The World Bank, International Monetary Fund and World Trade Organization would be fully integrated within the United Nations.

Regulation and arbitration would then be made possible at a global level, thus saving “succeeding generations from the scourge of war”.

There would be an International Court of Justice of which all of the international criminal courts would become a part, with a view to efficiently and diligently imparting justice, which is a premise for peace. Matters such as the Israeli-Palestinian peace process or the present situation in Syria would be resolved exclusively within the context a United Nations that would truly reflect the focus and vision upon which it was founded.

This would ensure solutions to the following conflicts:

- Humanitarian intervention: national sovereignty has often been used to shield massive human rights violations. This was the case in Cambodia (1975-1979) and Rwanda (1994). In such cases, and when there are

no government representatives but rather exclusively “war lords”, as in Somalia, Blue Helmets would immediately intervene by interposition.

- Coordination of rapid action in the event of natural or man-made disasters: it is truly scandalous that at present there are no adequate means for addressing catastrophes arising from earthquakes, floods, fires,... while extraordinarily sophisticated and expensive military hardware is readily available.
- End of supranational impunity: the United Nations would prevent trafficking in money, drugs, weapons, people and human organs (!) that is presently taking place with total impunity. It would likewise take action to immediately close down tax havens.
- These United Nations would thus reflect the current strength of civil society and would likewise be capable of coordinating the world’s great priorities⁵ at the global level: food, water, health services, the environment (emission and capture of CO₂ renewable energies); life-long education for all; disarmament (immediately taking action to achieve nuclear disarmament); peace.

5. Applied to the European Union^{19 20}

- Security autonomy.
- Political union.

- Economic union – fiscal federation.
- Regulation of interdependence and immediate corrective mechanisms.

The European Union could play a relevant role in this new world that, as previously indicated, has been designed with special emphasis on the last decades. Progress has been achieved through cooperation, not competitiveness. It is essential the reposition of “democratic principles” as guidelines for all governmental institutions, rather than the “markets” that have yielded such harmful results. The excellent Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (December, 2000) should provide the “ethical axis” on which the European Union future will turn.

6. Applied to Spain²¹.

- Immediate amendment of the Constitution, especially Chapter 8, that “unfinished symphony” of the transition.
- Federal State, with effective self-government for its different Communities.
- Reform of the Senate.
- Measures to ensure that essential supra-political party matters cannot be addressed or modified by parliamentary majorities, but rather through “federal” acts.
- Given that Spain is a peninsula with two island chains and enjoys a geographic position difficult to duplicate, its climate and cultural, human and natural resources make it an unbeatable tourist destination, as well as a place to establish

a second residence, particularly now with the projected increased life expectancy resulting from scientific progress.

- Promoting renewable energies.
- Promoting R&D+i and education at all levels.
- Maintaining quality healthcare, indispensable for attracting foreign investment.
- Given its history of peaceful coexistence and the nature of its colonial regime, Spain could provide an excellent “bridge” to Africa, Latin America and the Arab countries.

7. Diagnostics already made: invent the future. It’s time for action

Leonardo Boff once wrote that “Each human being is a *homo viator*, a walker through the paths of life. ...Each person is tasked with lengthening this path, doing so in a way that improves and deepens the path that was received, straightens what was twisted and leaves to future travelers a path enriched by their footsteps”.²²

It is time for action and active resistance. As Mario Benedetti urged his son: “Son,/don’t surrender,/ please, don’t give up,/... because *each day is a new beginning*”.

Yes: we have to work toward that “new beginning” referred to in the Earth Charter, which today is possible precisely due to distance participation from citizens who in the next few years will give democracy added dynamism and strength that it would otherwise undoubtedly lack. There are more and more people each day who

refuse to continue to be frightened, faint-hearted and passive spectators and who want to show that there are alternatives that could finally do away with our present system based on greed, speculation and imposition and which has immersed the world in this profound multifaceted crisis.

For the first time in history and in a very few years the freely-expressed “voice of the people” will set the guidelines for genuine democracy that will not be left exclusively to the voting box. Democracy at the personal, local, national, regional and global levels.

Yes, it’s time for action, time to refuse to remain silent, to mobilize.

For that reason it is crucial to bear in mind the words of Pedro Salinas in his poem “It’s Clearer Now”: “When tired men.../betray the world, because they fail/ in their supreme duty to carry on”... And he remarked: “We continue to tremble at the future”. Yes, we will tremble at the future because the future— and this is the gist of my contribution- has yet to be created.

The solution is more and better democracy for the full exercise of *all* Human Rights.

A new beginning is possible.

Federico Mayor Zaragoza
April, 2013

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