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The
Global
Round
Table

Declaration of the "2010 Global Round Table" Main Event - 5th November 2010, Budapest

Dedicated to

The President of the Republic of Hungary, H.E. Pál Schmitt

and

The Government of the Republic of Hungary,

ensuring the Presidency of the Council of the European Union January through June 2011.

– Limits to Sustainability –

SUSTAINABILITY – VALUES – RESPONSIBILITY

Change is unavoidable. Through natural processes as well as by intentional and unintentional human intervention, change will happen.

There is an intimate relationship between change and sustainability. It is the capacity to endure, survive and meet the present material as well as intangible needs of humanity while preserving the natural resources, our culture and legacy for future generations.

Consequently, actions relating to sustainability must go far beyond the simple preservation of natural resources. It is about more than economy, more than energy and more than the environment.

Sustainability imposes ethical and moral obligations – including basic human rights – that go well beyond simple material obligations.

1. RESPECT THE PAST

Dialogue and decisions relating to sustainability must include an **honest and unbiased assessment** of past successes and failures. Currently we carry huge burdens and severe historic injuries into the 21st century. These may become political and ecological time-bombs.

2. BASED ON VALUES

Value-centered efforts will make our present and future sustainable. Sustainability is based on the assurance of- and respect for diversity. Diversity can only be maintained through global unity of efforts and the integration of a value-based approach. In this context, integration means to make **common values** part of our inner nature.

3. TAKE RESPONSIBILITY

The strengthening of these values is our common responsibility. Accordingly, we must guide the economic and innovative contest that is determining our modern civilization. We should direct the contest towards such societal, political and economical models that provide us with **sustainable community frameworks**.

The greatest challenge for the 21st century is the peaceful sustainability of our culture and societal choices:

- *Political- and societal leaders must promote the development and use of global value-based decision tools as soon as possible.*
- *These tools will make it possible for societies, cultures and the economy to make appropriate sustainable development decisions.*
- *Such a value-based approach will logically make the ecological dimension a pre-eminent factor in these decisions. Decisions must involve respect, reciprocity and solidarity.*



Hungarian
National Commission
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Limits to Sustainability

Two major issues have arrived with full force on the global arena: the financial crisis and climatic challenges. Resulting from this development, “*sustainability*” has become THE political buzzword.

It has become a wide-ranging term used for almost every facet of life as well as human activities, from local- to global scale and over varying time periods.

Sustainability has become a doctrine in its own right. Buzzwords such as *sustainable development*, *sustainable ecology*, *sustainable economy*, *sustainable energy*, *sustainable markets*, *sustainable public finances*, etc. are used at every possible opportunity. One no longer understands or questions the meaning behind the words. They are used almost as items on a checklist that need to be mentioned without delving into the meaning behind them. The result is inflationary.

The Oxford English Dictionary dates the first usage of *sustainable* to 1965, meaning *capable of being maintained at a certain level*.

According to "Our Common Future (1983)" of the United Nation's Brundtland Commission¹: "*Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It contains within it two key concepts: i) the concept of 'needs', in particular the essential needs of the world's poor, to which overriding priority should be given; and ii) the idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and social organization on the environment's ability to meet present and future needs.*"

The 1992 UN Rio Declaration on Environment and Development² states: "*To achieve sustainable development and a higher quality of life for all people, States should reduce and eliminate unsustainable patterns of production and consumption and promote appropriate demographic policies*".

Sustainability is the capacity to endure and survive. With increasing complexity and globalisation of challenges, sustainability has received a broader meaning. For *humans*, it is the potential for long-term safeguarding of well-being that in turn is influenced by the well-being of the natural world. In *ecology*, it is the potential of biological systems to remain diverse and productive over time. In *energy*, energy sources that are not expected to be depleted in a time frame relevant to the human race. In *economy*, it is the potential to maintain healthy and stable economic- and productive systems with optimal employment levels. For *markets*, it is the potential to continuously operate, while meeting current economic-, environmental- and social needs without compromising opportunities for future generations. For *public finances*, it is the potential to provide efficient and socially just public services for the population.

Sustainability is not an absolute value. Its definition is flexible and relative, and its various forms of application may contain ambiguities. A clear definition is needed.

Related recommendations are speculative and often subject to debate among experts. Their implementation would necessitate either strong political leadership and possibly draconic decisions by all national leaders, or more idealism and voluntarism by the world richest nations. Probably both will be needed to limit human consumptions at maximum on par with what the Earth can support in the long term.

Sustainability must go far beyond simply preserving natural resources. It imposes ethical and moral obligations – including basic human rights – beyond simple material obligations.

At the level of the European Union the concept of *sustainability* has become of particular importance, as it is associated with specific legal obligations. All European Commission's proposals for major new initiatives are subject to international ex-ante evaluation of their possible impact on *sustainable development*.

During the first half of 2011, it will be the privilege of the Government of the Republic of Hungary as the EU Presidency – hand-in-hand with the other EU Institutions – to provide wisdom in leadership and be a guardian of *sustainable development* in Europe. Due to Europe's moral obligations toward the rest of the world, the aspiration must go beyond.

¹ World Commission on Environment and Development laid the groundwork for the 1992 Rio de Janeiro UN summit and resulting documents: Convention on Biological Diversity; Framework Convention on Climate Change; Rio Declaration on Environment and Development; Agenda 21; and Forest Principles - <http://www.un-documents.net/wced-ocf.htm>.

² <http://sedac.ciesin.org/entri/texts/rio.declaration.1992.html>.

“2010 Global Round Table” Main Event

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*This Declaration represents the findings of The Global Round Table.
It does not necessarily represent the opinions of the participants' organizations.*



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