

## Rio + 20: Sustainable development. Do we have time to prevent the barbarism?

The world still stumbles to try and overcome the current financial crisis that burst in the United States in 2008. People all over say it is necessary to recover the economic growth in developed countries so that the catastrophe does not reach unbearable proportions. Greece, Portugal and Spain are in economic depression due to the high unemployment rate, thus making cuts in social programs that were built after the Second World War. Among the managing elites and the world economies, protectionist and conservative positions are increasing, and the doom of the welfare state is spread as being one of the crisis focus. Financial restriction cannot be implemented. Fiscal paradises and unrestricted circulation of capital are still unregulated. The rich can become richer, even during the crisis.

The concentration of wealth and power in the world and the current consumption patterns are incompatible with the expected sustainability to insure “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (COMISSÃO MUNDIAL SOBRE MEIO AMBIENTE E DESENVOLVIMENTO, 1991). Twenty percent of the world population gathers three quarters of the wealth produced in the world. Eighty percent of the world population lives with less than ten dollars a day. Half of the ecological footprint, which is an indicator of the consumption of the planet's biocapacity, is provided by only ten countries. The ‘current needs’ have a direct relation with these consumption patterns. If we were to meet all the ‘current needs’, in order to balance the world with United States patterns, today we would need the capacity of four Earths and a half.

The point is: nowadays, the equivalent to one Earth and a half is already consumed every year. Recovering growth as it used to be will rapidly lead the planet to exhaustion. As there are 7 billion of us, if the previous model were to be adopted, two Earths would be necessary by 2030, and five by 2050.

Since there are 2.6 billion people living in poverty in the world, it is impossible to consider that we can be able to meet their needs without radically changing the consumption patterns in rich countries and in the elites of other countries. If we cannot do that, and if core countries retake the current scheme, we will go towards the terrible increase in inequalities and the end of poorer populations due to the depletion of production capacity in our planet. The increasing restrictions in the free movement of people between countries, whose most embarrassing example is the wall that separates the United States and Mexico, will correspond to the increased segregation of poor populations and armed conflicts in the world.

The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, Rio + 20, is close, and it can be a great opportunity for us to bring up such concerns. If it is restricted to the United States agenda and its ‘green economies’, or local initiatives of local range, which are important, but do not concern the current dilemmas of the planet's sustainability,

we will be watching its failure. It is important to give the United Nations real power to implement decisions and charge commitment. Brazil should also deeply review its consumption patterns, especially the elites that model and emulate the patterns of its new rising social segments. The voices that discuss and search for radical solutions for the crises are suppressed.

We should reaffirm our commitment to health and equal quality of life for the people in the world. Nowadays, Brazil is a relevant international player that should be leading this changing process, and CEBES can play an important role in this fight! In this sense, we convene the Sanitary Movement to participate in this debate, also by producing articles for *Saúde em Debate* and for CEBES website. This process can result in the preparation of a critical document, with strategies to face the environmental issues. We hope it is still time to prevent the barbarism.

The National Board

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## References

COMISSÃO MUNDIAL SOBRE MEIO AMBIENTE E DESENVOLVIMENTO. *Nosso Futuro Comum*. 2. ed. Rio de Janeiro: Fundação Getúlio Vargas, 1991.