

LET US NOT FORGET THAT WE HAVE BORROWED THE EARTH FROM OUR GRANDCHILDREN

THE WARSAW APPEAL for the Sustainable Development of the World

Gathered on 20th March 2017 at the conference on the theory and practice of sustainable growth, held on the occasion of the 30th Anniversary of the release of the Brundtland Report, we are speaking on behalf of circles of intellectuals and entrepreneurs, non-governmental organisations, government and local-government administrations, the media and students. Aware as we are of the challenges that humanity faces today, we believe it is necessary to pool the efforts of all people of goodwill to act towards the sustainable development of the world – as a safe place to live for the present and future generations. Moreover, we are convinced that only accurate theories on the environmental crisis will help us develop practical strategies effective in overcoming the threats. The necessary condition for the success of this enterprise is, then, consistent cooperation based on answers to the following questions. Where are we? What threats are we facing? How can we overcome the adverse megatrends? And what is the situation of Poland in this context?

Where are we?

The thirty years of influence of the Brundtland Report on the direction of the world's development is twofold: on the one hand a growing interest in sustainability is observable, but on the other hand there can be seen to be a disturbing increase in threats to the environment, as well as to the social and economic order. Encouragingly, the UN has announced the Sustainable Development Goals, adopted on 25th September 2015, which should be achieved by 2030. What is worrying, however, is the ever-faster depletion of natural resources, the loss of biodiversity, unsustainable consumption fuelled by the linear economy, the growing emissions and concentrations of pollution,

the growing pockets of poverty, the curtailing of the role of local communities, and the intensifying scale of exile.

What threats are we facing?

An analysis of the current megatrends helps to determine the direction the world is heading in, confronted with increasing challenges. Particular attention in this regard should be given to the growing disparities in the age structures of the world's regional populations, the growing urbanisation of the world, the susceptibility to diseases and pandemic risks, increasingly rapid technological changes with divergent consequences, the growing polarisation of the world, increased competition for resources, the mounting pressure on ecosystems, the ever-more-serious consequences of climate change, and the increasing environmental pollution.

How can we overcome the adverse megatrends?

The condition for overcoming adverse megatrends is the creation of such a vision of civilisational development in the 21st century as would include in particular:

- introducing a circular sustainable economy;
- providing access to goods which would enable all people to enjoy decent living conditions;
- devising a socially, economically and naturally effective allocation of resources;
- promoting a participatory manner of decision-making which facilitates the engagement of companies and civil society;
- promoting the quality of life of the present and future generations, on the basis of clear-cut, non-egocentric, systems of values;
- providing access to education to all citizens throughout their lives.

What is the situation of Poland?

The political transformation of 1989 had a positive impact on Poland's approach to sustainable development. The introduction of the market economy has, on the one hand, contributed to a more-efficient use of natural resources and energy and has brought about a decrease in environmental pollution; on the other hand, at least during the initial period, it has intensified social tensions due to the persisting unemployment and intensifying poverty. Development of the democratic system has also shown the need for the growth of a civil society able to harness the positive impact of environmental changes and to neutralise the adverse influence of social changes. The positive trends in the development of Poland, revealed in this regard, have been enhanced thanks to accession to the European Union in 2004 and the funds acquired from it. Also due to the EU, significant amounts have been spent on protection of the environment, which has contributed to its improvement.

Social transformations in Poland were accompanied by economic transformations, which resulted in an improvement in living conditions for the greater part of society, and in turn led to an increase in consumption, environmental footprint and waste production. In addition, the natural environment and people's health have been exposed to the danger of chemical pollution caused by environmental pressure and the lack of sufficient environmental awareness. Moving away from this unfavourable direction requires the consistent introduction of the elements of the so-called green economy, as characterised by the development of renewable energy sources, the improvement of resource and energy efficiency, the development of ecological farming and food processing, the adding of value to rail transport, public transport and non-motorised transport, and the development of eco-tourism and eco-innovation.

In this situation, Poland's development strategy requires the development and implementation of such measures as, pursuant to Article 5 of the Constitution of the Republic of Poland, will facilitate sustainable development based on the equal application of three principles: social, economic and natural capital. This means, among other things:

- in the social sphere:
 - fostering social capital as the capital of mutual trust;
 - securing quality of life for our generation and future generations;
 - consistently respecting the principle of subsidiarity and participation at all social structure levels;
 - pursuing systematic activities in education for sustainable development.
- in the economic sphere:
 - moving from an ineffective linear economy to a moderate-consumption circular economy;
 - creating sustainable consumption, stressing the significance of intangible goods;
 - striving for an increase in resource efficiency and more effective use of resources;
 - implementing a new generation of innovation, promoting smart solutions;
 - taking social costs and the value of ecosystem services into consideration in the economic balance.
- in the sphere of nature:
 - planning the dynamics of the use of resources, especially non-renewable ones, as a manifestation of intergenerational equity;
 - identifying and complying with pollution limits;
 - improving the country's natural infrastructure and protecting biodiversity, as care is also taken to preserve ecosystem (services) functions;
 - creating spatial order.

The signatories to this Appeal would like to encourage all citizens to initiate a debate concerning the ways in which the message could be put in practice, and its content disseminated across various circles.