

Biopolicy and Global Governance for the Environment and Peace

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STRENGTHENING OUR RESPONSE TO ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES

To prevent further environmental deterioration and promote international co-operation and peace, environmental values need to be placed at the heart of our societal structure^{1,2}. Modern global crises and severe environmental threats provide a sobering indication of a planet in peril. A society based on environmental ethics and values can be a lighthouse of hope, so desperately needed by humanity.

Since its inception in 1985, the Biopolitics International Organisation (BIO) has promoted “bios” (life) and the environment as a unifying vision for the future. Building a society of hope and peace requires a re-evaluation of our priorities in the areas of education and legislation and a profound change in the way we view the issue of “defense.” The aim should be not only to change attitudes but also to motivate and empower people everywhere to act in “defense of the environment.” A new vision in policy and legislation—one based on the rights of all living beings—can assist our society in developing a global appreciation for and protection of life and the environment³.

It is time to move from discussion to action. Humanity is choosing to embark upon pathways of destruction rather than undertaking a coordinated effort for peace. Education can be one of the most effective catalysts for change. By pursuing a truly integrated environmental education effort, we can achieve a developmental framework that places people and the planet ahead of profits.

IMPROVING ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY AND BUILDING A CIVIL SOCIETY

Strengthening our response to worldwide environmental harms requires institutional support and coordination to implement international environmental agreements and enhance national environmental policy making. Although environmentally sound guidelines often are discussed at international negotiating tables, these ambitious directives typically do not inform national decision making processes. An integrated approach is required, which combines popular will with the coordinated actions of national governments and international institutions. BIO works to advance this vision by providing a framework for integrating a broad spectrum of ideas, concepts, and insights in order to achieve a truly “biocentric” society, which respects all forms of life and stresses human responsibility. In its worldwide efforts to promote

¹ A. Vlavianos-Arvanitis (1985) *Biopolitics – Dimensions of Biology*, 16 pp. Biopolitics International Organisation, Athens. <http://www.biopolitics.gr>.

² A. Vlavianos-Arvanitis (1989) *Biopolitics – The Bios Theory*. In: A. Vlavianos-Arvanitis (ed.), *Biopolitics – the bio-environment II*. Biopolitics International Organisation, Athens, pp. 17-31. <http://www.biopolitics.gr>.

³ A. Vlavianos-Arvanitis (1993) *Bios in the next millennium. Reversing the crisis of values*. In: A. Vlavianos-Arvanitis and R. Keles (eds.), *Biopolitics – the bio-environment IV*. Biopolitics International Organisation, Athens, pp. 18-28. <http://www.biopolitics.gr>.

environmental stewardship, BIO encourages the participation of every citizen in the race to save the environment⁴.

EDUCATION FOR GLOBAL RESPONSIBILITY

In 1990, BIO launched the International University for the Bio-Environment (IUBE) to lift interdisciplinary barriers and place the environment at the core of education. Through numerous publications, conferences, and other events, the IUBE has integrated environmental perspectives into the curriculum at many educational institutions. The IUBE's newly released "Bio-Syllabus for European Environmental Education" (available in print and on CD-Rom) addresses environmental dimensions in architecture, diplomacy, energy, ethics, health, technology, legislation, tourism, and economics and business. It provides a rich bibliography and set of cross references based on 18 years of BIO work. This extensive textbook has already been disseminated to universities and libraries around the world in the hope of encouraging an integrated, international approach to environmental education⁵.

GREEN SALARY

Every individual on the planet has an incentive to contribute to the creation of a society based on the values of environmental appreciation and protection. These values enhance the potential of every citizen, since rampant industrialization marginalizes disadvantaged groups and limits regional aspirations for prosperity. Therefore, it is essential to create opportunities for individuals to pursue sustainable livelihoods; the creation of new jobs will alleviate hunger and poverty. Individuals should be offered employment opportunities in the environmental field and earn a "green salary" for their contribution. This integrated environmental protection and economic development program will generate respect for the environment in areas that traditionally have been ambivalent or even hostile toward conservation and preservation efforts.

WORLD REFERENDUM

Access to modern communication technology enables global participation in the race to save the environment, activates entrepreneurial potential, and empowers sustainable development. As first proposed by BIO in 1992, communication technology provides humanity with the unprecedented opportunity to dynamically voice its concern over environmental deterioration. A "World Referendum" would

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ A. Vlavianos-Arvanitis (Ed.) Bio-Syllabus for European Environmental Education (2002) 880 pp. Biopolitics International Organisation, Athens. <http://www.biopolitics.gr>.

enable every citizen on the planet to simultaneously cast a vote for the environment and mobilize a global effort to reverse destructive trends.

BANK OF IDEAS

Global collaboration is essential to respond to the growing set of environmental challenges faced by our society. In the past, poor coordination has resulted in duplication of efforts in the face of continuing environmental damage. Around the world, the knowledge and technology exists to halt further destruction, but there is no means by which to disseminate this information. An electronic Bank of Ideas—into which any interested party may contribute information concerning the environment—can promote an expedient transfer of knowledge, approaches, and best practices.

INTERNATIONAL COURT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

There is a growing recognition that security and environmental justice cannot be achieved without effective institutional support and coordination. Distinguished scholars and legislators worldwide have committed themselves to creating an International Court of the Environment to solve environmental disputes and ensure global environmental stewardship. BIO has been associated with these efforts since 1998 and has repeatedly emphasised that an International Court of the Environment can become an instrument of change⁶.

BIO-DIPLOMACY – 18 YEARS OF “GREEN” DIPLOMACY

The concept of bio-diplomacy—international cooperation for environmental protection—was pioneered by BIO at a time when civic leaders, international organizations, and the world community had not fully recognized the urgency of adopting common environmental policy. Bio-diplomacy focuses on the interdependence of all forms of life and calls upon our leaders to engage in a collective endeavour in defense of the environment. Collaborative efforts to protect the environment can improve international relations and act as a bridge between international decision-making processes and national and local implementation.

Over the past 18 years, ambassadors and dignitaries from many countries have joined the BIO initiative for bio-diplomacy. These leaders have acknowledged the environment as a priority in international law and international relations and are promoting a society that acts in harmony with nature.

⁶ A. Vlavianos-Arvanitis (Ed.) *Biopolitics – the Bio-Environment – Volume VIII (2001) Resolving the Environmental Crisis – The Need for International Court of the Environment* pp. 41-149, 202-205. Biopolitics International Organisation, Athens. <http://www.biopolitics.gr>.

GLOBAL GOVERNANCE AND A RENAISSANCE OF VALUES

Guaranteeing our planet's health and survival is our fundamental responsibility to future generations. To succeed in this endeavor, we need to educate and encourage decision-makers to avoid the mistakes of the past and build a better future. However, such a future is currently threatened by the absence of universal values in policy and governance. Existing global governance structures are weak, and there is a pressing need to create stronger links between environment and development policies.

A stronger global environmental governance regime can play an important role in preventing conflict, restoring peace, and building a society that can resist destructive tendencies. Policies with no consideration for human rights, social welfare, economic equity, or environmental damage cannot be accepted. Bioethics – the ethics of life – must be expanded from the realm of the medical sciences to inform every human endeavor.

ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE PEACE

The world seems to be witness to an endless stream of conflicts, wars, hostilities, civil disturbances, and violence. Many of these conflicts stem from differences in religion, ethnicity, and culture. Some countries have adapted to cultural diversity and enabled a variety of ethnic, cultural and religious communities to thrive in harmony. In other countries, however, internecine violence seems to be the rule rather than the exception. On occasion, physical separation appears to be the only possible response to the violence and hatred demonstrated in these areas. However, separation is neither always possible nor desirable.

We believe that the world must find new approaches to achieving peace. The differences that often separate peoples—culture, ethnicity, language and religion—serve as the social wealth of humanity and should be cherished and protected. In order to end the continuous state of conflict that has enveloped the world, differing cultures must view one another with respect and tolerance rather than hatred and mistrust. The key to this transition lies in the youth of society.

Green “buffer zones” for peace

BIO proposes that in areas of conflict, green zones or buffer zones be established between the warring parties. Within these zones, which will be administered by an impartial, international body, young people from the two sides will be brought together to work collaboratively on environmental restoration projects⁷. Programs in environmental education or cultural

⁷ BioNews 34 (2003) Green Buffer Zones for Peace, p. 1. Biopolitics International Organisation, Athens. <http://www.biopolitics.gr>.

exchange could also be organized in order to strengthen cooperation and mutual understanding.

OLYMPIC IDEALS AND CEASE-FIRE

The diachronic ideals of the Olympic spirit and a cease-fire during the Olympic Games can help society transition into a new renaissance⁸. The Olympiads should once again be periods of world peace and occasions for all citizens to celebrate the unifying concepts signified by the Olympic spirit. Recognizing the values of a harmonious coexistence is a first step to achieving freedom, opportunity, and a better quality of life.

To succeed in eradicating poverty, development policy must work to promote peace and humanity's fundamental freedoms. Peace cannot be achieved in a world ravaged by pollution, starvation, and disease. A "bios"-promoting policy, which addresses the mutually reinforcing problems of poverty and environmental degradation, can provide the necessary framework to end wars and civil strife and achieve a world in which poverty is eliminated.

MILLENNIUM OF PEACE

*Can you hear the gong
resonate the dawning of the new era*

*Can you see the bright stars
send messages of light and hope*

*Can you feel the breathing
of every creature on our planet*

*the waves of love
the whispers of life*

*Can you listen to the beat of your heart
embrace us all with warmth*

*Share the new vision
of joy, peace and harmony*

(A. Vlavianos-Arvanitis, 1998)

⁸ A. Vlavianos-Arvanitis (1993) Environmental Olympics - Bios Prizes - Biocentric Vision – Cease fire during the Olympic Games. In: A. Vlavianos-Arvanitis and R. Keles (eds.), Biopolitics – the bio-environment IV. Biopolitics International Organisation, Athens, p. 28. <http://www.biopolitics.gr>.