



Confronting climate change: The necessity of social solidarity

by Stavros Damianidis and Yannis Tsakos*, May 2008

Each and every one of us is a guest on Planet Earth; this is where we live, being all members of an ecologically interdependent society. We often though tend to forget that we are only simple guests. Our interaction with the planet forms a strong bondage amongst us. This includes all societies and all planets' environments, since an environmental issue may have transboundary, regional or even worldwide consequences. This interdependence is not only spatial, but also temporal; we are also affected by our past, since the environmental status of the 21st century is our heritage from the 20th century. Unfortunately, these two dimensions of interdependence have been only realized by the developed societies in the last decades.

Being aware of such interdependencies does not necessarily lead to the quest for mutual solutions on large-scale environmental problems, such as climate change. The Kyoto Protocol refers to both common and differentiated responsibility, incorporating both the equity principle and the "polluter pays" principle in a single binding script and promoting efficient measures. Still, the actual confrontation is moving at a very slow pace. Developing countries ride the wagon of growth, unaware of the mistakes already made by the developed countries, which now possess both the know-how and the financial assets, having confronted a variety of environmental problems.

In respect to climate change, the modern developed societies now master the knowledge and the technology to mitigate climate change and environmental pollution effects. Still, the organized state is namely the leader that will orientate and legislate on the directions of economical growth and social evolution. A lack of will is often noted, when a practical solution to a problem is in quest; this is an unfortunate result of the complicated social and economical structures of modern societies. Information and education, along with environmental consciousness, have to aim at bridging the gap between knowledge and application, theory and practice, observance and action.

A key aspect of this "bridging" process is the collaboration of all parts, indicated as the three dimensions of sustainability: society, economy and environment. Social solidarity in confronting large-scale environmental issues refers to all guests of Planet Earth: state structures, enterprises, the production sector, social structures. Unless our actions are collective, the battle against climate change will be lost.

A precondition for the success of such collective actions is the possession of knowledge along with the ability to apply it in actual cases through specialization and experience gained. Currents trends indicated specific actions connecting economical growth and environmental protection: energy saving techniques, "green" buildings,



environmental friendly business, social liability actions, environmental certificates for products and services, environmental economics. In confronting environmental degradation and climate change we all have a clear task: improving the quality of our own life creates a sustainable society of healthy growth for the future generations.

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