

CALL TO ACTION
For leadership
On Shared Societies



**The
Shared
Societies
Project**

**Democratic Leadership
for Dialogue, Diversity &
Social Cohesion**

Building a World Safe for Difference

CALL TO ACTION

The Club de Madrid – whose members are 72 current and former heads of state and government from 51 countries – meeting in Rotterdam 12-14 November 2008, reaffirmed its commitment to promoting leadership for social cohesion and shared societies as a key priority for the world today.

LEADERSHIP REQUIRED

We call to action all peoples, leaders and organisations in all sectors of society and walks of life to redouble efforts towards building understanding and tolerance. Beyond that, we call on leaders to show by example that when societies' dominant groups recognise and fully include others, who bring richness through difference, it will be for the betterment of all. We call on leaders to ensure that no-one is excluded from opportunity or left behind in the journey to Participation, Progress and Prosperity.

We call on them to use their spheres of influence – at the community, local, provincial, national, regional and global levels – to work together to promote and ensure social inclusion and cohesion. We call on them to recognise that achieving social cohesion and creating a world safe for difference is essential for the well-being of individuals, states and the world as a whole.

NO 'PLAN B'

We declare that there is no other option – no plan B – if we are to avoid a world continually wracked by identity-based tensions, inter-community divisions, inequality, and injustice. Without action, tension will continue to beget conflict, and conflict will breed violence.

If individuals and peoples are not able to express themselves in their language, enjoy their culture and traditions, and pursue their aspirations, they will not live freely nor fulfil their dreams. As such, they are a loss to the potential of their society and the world as a whole.

If we are not able to accept difference and to learn to understand the unfamiliar in others, and are not helped to engage with others, barriers are created between people and communities which fester and lead to social disintegration with devastating consequences.

ACTION PARTNERS

The Club de Madrid believes in building shared societies, based on co-operation and welcoming the contributions of all. We reject attempts to build homogeneous societies, in which difference is discouraged or even forbidden.

At a time when global financial, food, and energy crises will exacerbate the tendency to seek scapegoats among those different from us, this work is more important than ever. We make this Call to Action too at a time of hope, when barriers are being brought down and change may come from new directions, leading us together from difference to shared societies.

BASIC PRINCIPLES

We have identified basic principles on which true social cohesion and shared societies can be created. We call on all leaders to uphold and apply those principles and measure progress towards social cohesion against them.

The basic principle we cherish is respect for the dignity of every individual.

We equally value the principle of respect for human rights and the rule of law.

No section of society, either the majority or the minority, can expect to have license to act in any way it likes, ignoring others and their rights. Central to the vision of a shared society is a social equilibrium in which all members of society, while expressing their own identity and aspirations, are expected also to do so in ways that accept the dignity and rights of others with different identities. Critical also is the principle of rule-of-law, adhered to by leaders and all members of society.

Equality and fairness are essential principles in building shared societies and they cannot exist where there is discrimination, marginalisation and lack of opportunity for all.

The Club de Madrid was founded on the principle of democracy and we believe that democracy enhances the possibility of building a shared society if all sections of society are able to express their aspirations and needs. However, we recognise that many democracies fail to promote social cohesion, and that the importance of building social cohesion also applies to authoritarian states. We are clear about what has to be done and we in the Club de Madrid have prepared a Portfolio of Policies and Practices that document the ways in which it has been done by others.

CALL TO ACTION

We have identified 10 areas of policy commitments that complement one another towards achieving a shared society and to which we call all leaders to commit themselves to action. We call on all other sectors of society to support leaders to make and implement these commitments.

At our Global Forum for Leadership on Shared Societies in Rotterdam, we have invited principal sectors of the global community to contribute key ideas for taking forward this Call to Action – see annex.

URGENCY TO ACT

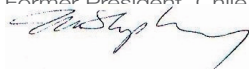
We believe there is no excuse for avoiding the imperative to build social cohesion. Oft-cited excuses such as resource scarcity or the presence of conflict are in fact reasons to make increased efforts to value all people in society and respect their diversity.

The issue cannot wait. Action is needed now. The process of building social cohesion starts at the top and we call on all leaders to endorse and act on this Call to Action.

Signed:



Ricardo Lagos
President, Club de Madrid
Former President, Chile



Jenny Shipley
Co-Chair, Shared Societies Project
Former Prime Minister, New Zealand



Mary Robinson
Vice President, Club de Madrid
Former President, Ireland



Cassam Uteem
Co-Chair, Shared Societies Project
Former President, Mauritius

SECTORAL RESPONSES

TO THE CALL TO ACTION

The Call to Action was agreed at the General Assembly of the Club de Madrid in Rotterdam, 11 November 2008 and invites all sectors of society to support it. The Call to Action was launched at the Global Forum on Leadership for Shared Societies the following day after sectoral meetings prepared the following statements of support:

GENDER EQUALITY

The working group on gender equality calls on leaders to implement international agreements already reached such as SIDA, the Millennium Development Goals and the U.N. Security Council Resolution 1325.

The group advocates a transformation of gender relationship as the basis of inclusive democracy because transformed gender relations are essential to teach future generations the basic values of democracy in the public and private fields.

The working group calls on leaders to ensure that at least 40% of corporate, social and political decision makers are women, using all available means including education, a responsible media, quotas and inclusive democratic processes.

MIGRANT GROUPS

The working group on migrants stresses that organizations which support migrants play an important role in building shared societies by assisting migrants to feel secure in their identity and recognize their own capacity and potential so that they have the confidence to connect and collaborate across the whole society.

The group calls on leaders to strengthen minorities' social and economic structures emphasizing that this strengthens society and as such is in the leader's own interest.

The group asserts that the advancement of immigrants is not a threat to society but a necessity.

EDUCATION

The working group on education identifies education together with nutrition and health as the most powerful instruments to reduce the levels of poverty inequality and social exclusion.

The group draws attention to the need for education to operate within a framework of respect for culture diversity and to facilitate the retention of the cultures and languages of the learners.

RELIGION

The working group on religion recognizes that religion can play a positive role in building shared societies through interreligious education, where there is fair representation of different religions and lifestyles.

The group calls on religious communities to demonstrate, in schools and the popular media, the positive contributions and the values which each religion has to offer.

YOUTH

This group calls upon both religious and political leaders to foster a climate of religious tolerance, and respect including through religious dialogues and by establishing interreligious councils at national and local levels

The working group on youth calls on leaders to actively listen to the issues and strategic recommendations of young people before they respond;

The group calls on leaders to provide space for young people to be included in planning processes, activities and decision making.

SECURITY SERVICES

The working group on the security services stresses that every unit of the security services should be a place safe for differences and, in order to be so, they should aim to reflect the diversity of the community in terms of gender, ethnicity, religion and social groups. They should also maintain professional ethical standards.

The group expects Governments and political leaders to provide a sound political framework to enable the security services to function in a way which protects diversity and guarantees the correct use of force

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The working group on local government believes that local authorities play a key role in building shared societies by promoting diversity and equality in its policies, and reflecting the composition of its population in its decision making structures.

The group calls on leaders to personally engage with members of the local community and to strive for legislative and institutional frameworks that promote participation, inclusion and social cohesion.

INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

In order to fulfill the potential role of intergovernmental agencies in promoting social cohesion, the group proposes a review of the structures and mandates of institutions to allow the fulfillment of their role in supporting individual states to build a shared society.

The working group on international organizations calls on all states to recognize the importance of social protection as a framing concept in developing strategies to build shared societies.

MEDIA

The media working group recognizes that the media should play a role in building shared societies by taking up diversity as a creative opportunity and taking full responsibility to implement diversity in all its activities.

The group expects political leaders to take full responsibility to address society in its diversity in a positive way and work out a clear vision and overall strategy for achieving shared societies which the media can then share with the public at large.

The group calls on leaders to establish a legal framework that guarantees the diversity of the media.

CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

The working group on civil society invites NGOs and other civil society organizations to acquaint themselves with the Call to Action agenda and use it as a vehicle for lobbying, education, and other concrete actions in all relevant fora, within their own societies and in relation to their own governments in order to further the achievement of a shared society.

The group calls on government agencies to develop and implement concrete benchmarks for promoting inclusion.

The group also advocates consultation between government and NGOs and other civil society organizations to ensure co-operation in building shared societies.

***We all help create the political
and cultural climate in our
societies. We must therefore
be willing to overcome and
correct stereotypes and
prejudice and defend the
victims of discrimination
and humiliation.***

Mary Robinson
Former President of Ireland
Vice President, Club of Madrid



The Club of Madrid is an independent organization dedicated to strengthening democracy around the world by drawing on the unique experience and resources of its Members - more than 70 democratically elected former Presidents and Prime Ministers from more than 50 countries. In partnership with other organizations and governments that share its democracy-promotion goals, the Club of Madrid provides peer to peer counsel, strategic support and technical advice to leaders and institutions working towards democratic transition and consolidation.

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