



**A CLUB DE MADRID CALL TO ACTION
FOR LEADERSHIP ON SOCIAL COHESION:
BUILDING SHARED SOCIETIES AND A WORLD SAFE FOR DIFFERENCE
ROTTERDAM, 14 NOVEMBER 2008**

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, particularly those who bring richness through difference, 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, though, 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 it 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

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.

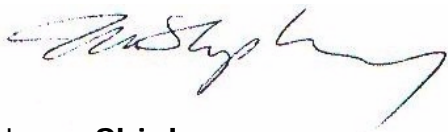
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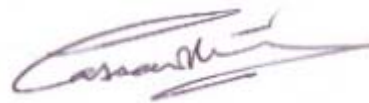
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