

THE CAVTAT DECLARATION

Members of the human race have never been so united by a common destiny as they are today. Humanity is threatened both by the risk of total destruction, which would result from nuclear war, and by a growing danger of worldwide economic collapse, brought about by the arms race and the ruthless exploitation of natural resources. On top of these dangers there is now, for the first time in history, the threat of global ecological disaster that could engulf all of us. Our forests are dying, our rivers are poisoned, the seas are dying. The climate itself is being modified; the ozone layer, which for millions of years has maintained the equilibrium of the biosphere, is being destroyed. As scientists, who must bear some share of responsibility for this situation, we plead for a hearing from governments and statesmen, and all those who hold power- and the future of civilization -in their hands.

As members first and foremost of the human race, we neither expect nor desire that one single political or social system should prevail on the whole Earth. A disappearance of cultural differences would make our world poorer. But we have to live with diversity in a manner that does not threaten the security and prosperity of all people. This requires above all tolerance and respect for human life, freedom from political, economic, or religious oppression, and the will to remove present injustices in the global distribution of the resources necessary to ensure an acceptable standard of living for everyone. For millions, the basic needs of food, clothing, shelter, health, freedom, education, and opportunities for cultural development and leisure time remain unsatisfied. In many parts of the world starvation and disease are common- place; and the exponential growth of populations' aggravates such problems to the point at which mortality, and particularly infant mortality, is the only control.

Against this background, which offers a very gloomy prognosis for the future, we see that the misuse of scientific progress is leading to global catastrophe. The scientific revolution witnessed in this century provides immense possibilities for progress, but requires for their realization a radical change in the politico-economic systems and in the aggressive ideologies, which have so far left us with only an arms race, lethal pollution of air, water and soil, poverty, injustice, and the prospect of international bankruptcy. To ensure that the use of science and technology not be perverted in this way, every citizen of the world should be aware of the issues at stake and should challenge the prejudice, vanity, ignorance, and greed which have certainly contributed to our present dilemma.

We believe that a United Nations organization still offers the best hope for the future of humanity, but that its present Charter may need modification: the new need is for a structure based on the fundamental principle of human solidarity, whose primary goal is to serve the basic needs of the human race. The role of sovereign states should be balanced by an increasing emphasis on specialized international agencies with the authority and capability of protecting member states not only from military threats, but also from monetary and economic insecurity and exploitation. Such agencies could prevent the indiscriminate flow of armaments of all kinds; they could also be charged. with the formulation and implementation of recommendations for combatting the degradation of the ecosystem on a global scale.

We plead for a substantial decrease in military expenditures accompanied by increased investments in science, education, and development. Programs designed to promote social and economic goals must guard against environmental destruction. Particular emphasis should be placed on the development of clean sources of energy and ecologically responsible methods food production. A portion of all military budgets should be diverted into the improvement of social conditions and health programs. Last but not least, effective population control is a necessity because our planet is simply- becoming too small. It is obvious that only concerted actions on a world-wide scale have any chance of success. We therefore call upon our fellow scientists, and upon national, religious, and business leaders to creatively promote these goals and to support vigorous enforcement of effective programs once they have been agreed upon. There is no alternative to international cooperation if global catastrophe is to be avoided and life on Earth to be saved.

*Signed by the Participants of the
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