Pragmatic Idealism - *Pragdealism*

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Pragmatic Idealism

Lady Mayor of the City of Stockholm,

Mayors and Political Authorities from many other Cities of the World,

Leaders and managers of finalists projects,

Ladies and gentlemen,

There is a wonderful and deep feeling about your presence in this imposing Hall - the Blue Hall of the beautiful City of Stockholm. It is a feeling of something really positive and good about humanity and the potential to face successfully the challenges staring at the world in this 21st century.

And YOU, all of you, are the source of this feeling! The vibration rises from inside each one of you, from inside the persons next to you, and next and next, and invades the full architecture of this place like a gentle invisible mist at the dawn of a peaceful morning. Because you have brought to the Blue Hall the vision, creativity, solidarity of your work with information and communications technologies for the benefit of all fellow human beings and the planet. You have brought your dreams of a better world and, above all, the reality of your achievements, demonstrating that an *Information Society for All* needs not remain at the realm of rhetoric. It can indeed become a reality -for this and the coming generations- if only we are all pervaded by the imagination and the will to do so!

And here lies the farsighted gift of the City of Stockholm to the world: the Stockholm Challenge Award that not only has brought us together today but, for almost a decade now, has been stimulating and celebrating the marvellous dreams and achievements of pioneers of the *Information Society for All*.

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It was way back in 1995 when the City of Stockholm launched the first European Challenge and, since then, six global Challenges have helped nurture and spread the spirit of "enlightened self-interest," of learning together, sharing and collaborating in order to build a better world taking advantages of the opportunities created by the development and exploitation of the new technology.

It is not surprising then that the spirit of the Challenge has spread to other parts of the world, with similar experiences emerging in Rome, USA, United Arab Emirates, Chile and potentially the Baltics and India. In addition international awards have emerged also carrying this spirit such as the European "e-Citizenship for All" Award, the Global Knowledge Partnership Award during the recent World Summit for the Information Society, the Petersburg Prize of the Global Development Gateway, and the Latin American "Ciudades Digitales" Award, and other efforts in the making.

These awards may vary in their formats but they all share the Spirit of the Challenge, a force and inspiration for good that we must nurture and multiply because, today, we need it more than ever.

Because, ladies and gentleman, we live uncertain times and we see an uncertain future, a future blurred by the complexity and the speed of so many processes intertwining local and global realities and creating feelings of powerlessness among the vast majority of people across the planet. Above all, a future blurred by the stark contradictions of humanity's own behaviour, by the deep conflict between the governances of power maximization dominating the planet and those of social responsibility we desperately need to survive and realize the potential of technology and the knowledge society for ALL.

We have all witnessed in recent times staggering manifestations of greed and corruption; the spread of terrorism, fear, war, torture, environmental threats, large numbers of people dying from starvation, lack of water and diseases that could be treated, if only we had the will to do. We have seen the near collapse of the international system of dialogue and of

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the trust in political behaviour dominated by the logic of politics as simply the "art of remaining in power."

One can ask. Is this sustainable in the scope of the 21st century and a world that's globalizing and bringing ever nearer all peoples in the planet - not the least because of the new technology? I don't think so. Indeed, most people already recognise that a different form of economic development - sustainable development is necessary. But we need sustainability not just for economic development. We need it for all dimensions of society: social, political, ethical sustainability, and this implies taking the difficult step of implementing a holistic and critical revision of the "power-maximizing" governance of societies, starting from deep inside the values and governances that guide our own behaviour as individuals.

Is this possible? Or is it just a hopeless dream, an exercise in *idealism,* that may be nice to imagine but far-fetched from the "**real** reality" with its today's fashionable *pragmatism* that, for some reason, seem rather frequently to end up by re-producing the problems we already face.

Again, I do not think so. First I think that these poignant realities are truly not sustainable in this century and, whether we like it or not, humanity will eventually learn that there is little alternative to adopt more and more the governance of social responsibility.

But most importantly, I see the wonderful concepts and spirit of your projects, and of the many, many others around the world that are seeking to tackle the roots of the problems by placing people and the planet at the centre of reflection and endeavour. I see in these projects the embodiment of the philosophy needed to tackle the great issues of this century, a philosophy that embraces the apparent contradiction between *idealism* and *pragmatism*, choosing neither one nor the other, but both together in a "pragmatic idealism" or, simply, "pragdealism" that takes us to do two things simultaneously.

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On the one hand to dream and aspire for a better world, for instance, in the form of a knowledge society for all: a world in which environment and people are at the centre of developments; a world without poverty, free, just, democratic, transparent and peaceful. On the other hand to seek to advance the realisation of the dream in a practicable way, in accordance with the magnitude of the resources, difficulties and opportunities available.

I believe that the finalist projects in this Hall and many people and organizations across the world are inherently pursuing *pragdealism* in thought, emotion and action. In fact, I believe that all movements that have helped change the world have had these two components; and this is as valid today as it will be in the future. I believe that *"pragdealism"* alone can ensure humanity's effective response to the great challenges of the 21st century such as those posed to humanity by the noble goals of the United Nations Millennium Summit!

For this reason, each one of us must continue to be, or become *"pragdealist,"* by blending dreams of a better world with practical actions to advance them, by sharing the achievements and the lessons with others, by working together to avoid fragmentation and eventually give rise to a great global movement for e-inclusion, very much in the spirit and the vision of the Stockholm Challenge Award.

Ladies and gentlemen, as I come to the end of this speech, I cannot finish it without thanking all the people who have made the Challenge such a wonderful and valuable gift and experience. First, I thank the City of Stockholm, the Lady Mayor and the people from the Stockholm Office who have worked to make the Challenge a reality. I thank my generous fellow members of the jury who have donated their time, experience and wisdom to produce results of the highest standards of quality and fairness. Last but not least, I thank all of you, the projects, the pioneers of the information society for all, the pragdealists of this century, for dreaming and making a reality of a better world!

Thanks very much!

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