



SERIES HUMANITY AND BIOSPHERE

People's right to feed themselves and achieve food sovereignty



Proposal papers for the 21th century

The proposal papers are a collection of short books on each decisive area of our future, which assemble those proposals that appear the most capable of bringing about the changes and transformations needed for the construction of a more just and sustainable 20th century. They aim to inspire debate over these issues at both local and global levels.

The term 'globalisation' corresponds to major transformations that represent both opportunities for progress and risks of aggravating social disparities and ecological imbalances. It is important that those with political and economic power do not alone have control over these transformations as, trapped within their own short-term logic, they can only lead us to a permanent global crisis, all too apparent since the September 11th attacks on the United States.

This is why the Alliance for a Responsible, Plural and United World (see appendix) initiated, in 2000-2001, a process of assembling and pinpointing proposals from different movements and organisations, different actors in society and regions around the world. This process began with electronic forums, followed by a series of international workshops and meetings, and resulted in some sixty proposal texts, presented at the World Citizen Assembly held in Lille (France) in December 2001.

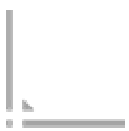
These texts, some of which have been completed and updated, are now in the process of being published by a network of associative and institutional publishers in 6 languages (English, Spanish, Portuguese, French, Arabic and Chinese) in 7 countries (Peru, Brazil, Zimbabwe, France, Lebanon, India, China). These publishers work together in order to adapt the texts to their different cultural and geopolitical contexts. The aim is that the proposal papers stimulate the largest possible debate in each of these regions of the world and that they reach their target publics whether they be decision-makers, journalists, young people or social movements.

Presentation of the Paper « People's right to feed themselves and achieve food sovereignty »

Half the world's population suffers from some form of malnutrition, and the nutritional situation is getting worse for the poorest. The central question is no longer a matter of resolving technical problems to increase overall production. It is about a more complex problem of access to an adequate food, that includes the issues of sharing and managing land, of sanitary and nutritional quality, of respect of dietary customs and cultures etc. The present policies of liberalisation destroy culturally diversified food forms. Resolving these problems requires heading in a new process that treats and manages these complex issues and involves everyone.

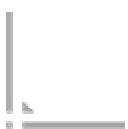
The APM Global Network has gained extensive experience and analytical capacity for ten years. This is the basis used to establish the following objectives of completion that all come with concrete proposals:

- establishing the “right to food and to nutritional and dietary well-being ” mentioned in several internationally ratified documents
- implementing public policies on food security
- access to means of production and to natural resources and their management
- building sustainable food systems
- rejection of patents on living organisms
- a world without agricultural GMOs
- regulating international trade for people’s food sovereignty and security



People's right to feed themselves and achieve food sovereignty

Paper coordinated by APM



HALF THE WORLD'S POPULATION SUFFERS FROM MALNUTRITION

The current global food situation is an enormous problem for humanity.

- 800 million people worldwide are undernourished,
- Half the world's population suffers from some form of malnutrition, diseases arising from lack of or excess food (lack of micronutrients, obesity, etc.) that often have dramatic consequences,
- The gap between rich and poor is widening within both developed and developing countries and worsens the nutritional and sanitary situation of the poorest people.

The FAO has recognized that the commitment made during the World Conference on Food in Rome in 1996, to reduce the number of people that are undernourished in half by the year 2015, will not be attained.

LIBERALIZATION POLICIES THAT DESTROY PEOPLE'S CAPACITY TO FEED THEMSELVES

In the wake of the 21st Century, humanity has accumulated knowledge related to small-scale farming practices and scientific research that has been available for dozens of years and can resolve several technical agricultural problems.

The central question is no longer a matter of resolving technical problems to increase overall production worldwide. We are facing the more complex problem of whether people in rural and urban areas, and in particular, for poorest individuals are able to access to adequate food. We are also faced with the issue of product quality in terms of their sanitary and nutritional value as well as the need to respect dietary customs and culture.

Access to production means and natural resources to be able to develop and manage them in a sustainable manner remains an unresolved issue in far too many countries. These issues include sharing and managing land as well as access to fishing and coastal areas for small-scale fishermen.

The diverse food systems that have been established throughout the past are being completely transformed. In the last fifteen years, they have undergone the following:

- A process of liberalization and global competition between very diverse agricultural, fishing and trade systems that destroy small-scale farming, small-scale fishing as well as culturally diversified food forms.
- A concentration of large agricultural and food producers and trade companies.
- A rapid implementation of biotechnology, in particular in the form of GMOs, that is profit-oriented for large industrial groups at the expense of the population's food safety, environmental protection, and farmers' ability to control their seeds.
- Development, in most societies, of production and consumption methods that care little about the environment and the future of our planet for subsequent generations.

- This liberalization has evolved in particular by the push for large structural plans and WTO agreements (agricultural agreements, intellectual property agreements, etc.)

The issue of food is a global and complex problem that involves private entities (families, companies, etc), NGOs and public organizations, as well as the public sector (local, state and international organizations, etc.).

Finding a solution for food-related problems also requires addressing the questions of agricultural production, fishing, natural resources management, nutrition, health, education, production, and national and international trade.

Resolving these problems requires heading in a new direction that addresses and manages these complex issues. Neither the market, governments, large agricultural and food groups, NGOs, small-scale farmer organizations, fishermen, consumers nor the FAO will solve these problems on their own. We need to find a new approach that involves everyone and look for new international instruments and locations such as the World Forum on Food Sovereignty to offer solutions and try to solve these problems.

The APM Global Network (small-scale farmers, food, and globalization) is structured in various global regions and brings together individuals and small-scale farmer organizations, social and environmental organizations, and NGOs. It has also organized workshops, work programs, meetings and exchanges based on these issues and has gained extensive experience and analytical capacity over a period of ten years. This is the basis used to establish the proposals that will be presented in Cuba at the World Forum on Food Sovereignty, in Lille at the Earth Citizen's Assembly, and in Porto Alegre at the World Social Forum.

ESTABLISHING THE RIGHT TO FOOD AND TO NUTRITIONAL AND DIETARY WELL-BEING

Various internationally ratified documents highlight the right to food and to nutritional and dietary well-being.

- Article 25 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights clearly establishes food security as a fundamental right.
- The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1966 also refers to the right to food as a fundamental human right that should be respected by governments and international institutions.
- Since the World Conference on Food organized in 1974 by the United Nations, following the 1974 food crisis, there is a strong consensus within the international community to unequivocally recognize this right to food and to nutritional and dietary well-being for any individual. This consensus was reinforced during the World Food Summit in Rome in 1996.

As we enter the 21st century, we believe that the time has come to ensure this right not only internationally but nationally as well. This involves:

- 1) Ratification by the largest number of northern and southern states of the Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights so that it takes on greater force.
- 2) In the short term, integrating as reference, at the UN level, the text of the Code of Conduct for Adequate Food drawn up by NGOs, including FIAN,

following the World Food Summit in Rome in 1996, and based on the decisions of the Summit's action plan.

- 3) The United Nations adopting an international convention for food security and nutritional well-being that can be used as a basis for this right and objective of civilization so that this text be subordinated to future decisions made in terms of trade or other sectors.

IMPLEMENTING PUBLIC POLICIES ON FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITIONAL WELL-BEING

Respecting and complying with this right to food and nutritional well-being means:

- adopting a campaign that places access to food and nutritional well-being at the center of the way we live, produce and consume and making the population's nutritional well-being a priority when defining policy, in particular sanitary, social, agricultural, economic and environmental policy.
- mobilizing citizens and communities on social issues accompanied by constant education and training to change production methods, and moving towards a more balanced diet and healthier lifestyles.
- globally promoting sustainable agricultural and food systems that promote nutrition, health and well-being.
- guaranteeing nutritional quality of food whilst respecting dietary culture and preferences.

We propose the effective implementation of food and nutritional policies within the framework of an integrated, multisector and participatory public approach to nutrition by:

- organizing national workshops for defining and following up policy on food security and nutritional well-being, bringing together decision-makers, researchers and other entities: producers, industry professionals, distributors, consumers and NGOs. Examples of this can be seen in some Brazilian provinces.
- continuing programs that have proven effective such as promoting one-person nursing and adequate introduction of nutritional supplements, as well as micronutrient supplements.
- reinforcing food labeling regulation and content of food advertising, in particular advertising directed at children.
- applying taxes to products with poor nutritional quality: a small tax could be applied for managing funds can be used for preventive actions and health promotion or a larger tax to discourage the consumption of these products. This concept could also be applied in countries that implement value added tax, for example, reducing taxes for food that should be promoted for their nutritional value.
- mobilizing the agricultural sector to improve production and consumption of food that is rich in micronutrients, vegetables, fruits, and legumes: Diversifying agricultural products as well as improving micronutrient content, post-harvesting technologies, marketing, etc.
- adopting nutritional quality objectives in industrial manufacturing and restaurant sector: less salt, sugar, fats and more micronutrients, fiber, etc.
- continuing the fortification of food, taking particular care to ensure that fortified food is consumed by the people that most need it, and that it is well-established in the local culture.

- giving preference to the manufacture of supplement food for maternal milk by the small local agricultural industry if there are limited resources.

This also requires implementing nutritional supervision activities involving social entities and mobilizing social, community and individual level entities, particularly young people, women and consumers, based on an analysis of nutritional issues and implementation of actions, particularly in terms of education and communication.

ACCESS TO MEANS OF PRODUCTION AND NATURAL RESOURCES AND THEIR MANAGEMENT

There are several conflicts in the world that are more or less directly related to the issue of land and the access to fishing areas for fishing and aquatic activities. These conflicts are related to the following:

- Insecure access to land and resources: non-recognition of customary rights, lack of guarantee for farmers, sharecroppers, and the insecurity of rights for hunters and pickers.
- Extremely unfair distribution of land that leads to agrarian reforms.
- Claims by social and ethnic groups, such as indigenous people, to exercise their right over a specific territory.
- Pillaging of fishery resources by industrial fishing boats along coastlines where small-scale fishermen from southern countries practice their trade.
- Land conflicts along coastlines linked to the development of new activities, including tourism.

We have five proposals for these issues:

1) Re-establishing agrarian reforms as essential public policy in all countries where there is unfair distribution of land.

We believe that a quick and efficient government-driven intervention for the redistribution of land to landless people, small and medium-sized producers is, now more than ever, necessary and urgent wherever there is unfair distribution of land (for example, in Brazil, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Philippines, etc.). Agrarian reform is therefore the first public policy that should be implemented in the fight against poverty. In fact, most of the poor in rural areas are made up of small-scale farmers that no longer have sufficient means to survive.

Nevertheless, the agrarian reforms to be implemented must take into account past experiences and should not simply repeat what was done in the past. This is the basis of the second proposal.

2) Systematically searching for ways to improve agrarian reform procedures

Favorable contexts for implementing agrarian reform are relatively infrequent because they require a balance of power, whether internal or external, for dealing with large land owner interests.

Improving the agrarian reform process requires, above all, that all small-scale farmer organizations play a lead role and involves the following:

- Search for support from the various social levels
- A combination of individual and collective rights for building viable systems that allow reassuring individual farmers arising from the agrarian reform, and for building collective management methods for shared land

- "Post reform" preparation; avoid creating a reformed sector that is separated from the reality of other small-scale farming producers
- Creation of local capacity for land management, without waiting until the reform process is finished
- Drafting of agrarian reform that includes an agricultural policy that allows developing small-scale farming production

3) Implementing policies for structures and land market regulation where land disparities are less prominent.

This proposal is applicable to countries that do not require agrarian reform as well as those countries that have recently implemented agrarian reform. In both cases, the progress of agrarian structures should be managed so that the greatest possible number of farms be considered economically viable and undergo gradual modernization.

This also requires strong and democratic small-scale farmer organizations that are representative of the main farmer levels.

The measures that can be included within the framework of these structure policies are the following:

- Fiscal measures that apply taxes to large properties and excessive use of land that destroys natural resources
- Measures for regulating and improving land markets (co-management of land market between government and small-scale farmer organizations, like in France), facilitating land loans to those that do not have access to long-term financing for purchasing land
- Policies that facilitate land consolidation.

Furthermore, the rights of farmers to work the land regardless of ownership rights should also be guaranteed. This is one of the only ways to resolve the issues that stem from equal distribution of inheritance between generations in the small-scale farming economy. This involves the following:

- Ensuring rights of tenants, sharecroppers, or legal successors that are not land owners. Nevertheless, laws can only be voted and truly applied if there are strong small-scale farmer organizations.
- Establishing special land-owning authorities whose legal status may take diverse forms, as long as the rights of farmers are guaranteed.

4) Decentralizing the administration mechanisms of individual rights to land

National land registry and property registration systems that demonstrate that the only way of guaranteeing the rights of small-scale farmers is by giving them property titles have proven unsuccessful or inadequate. The cost of operations and how they are carried out - often corrupting legal successors - as well as the absence of local mechanisms for updating rights make these efforts ineffective for small-scale producers in just a few years.

We have to fight for the idea that the reassurance of these rights does not come from the acquisition of property.

The decentralization of rights administration mechanisms at the municipal level, customs organizations or ad-hoc authorities is a priority and considered necessary for establishing viable national land registry systems and updating the rights of all users at a reasonable cost. It is also necessary to combine rights administration offices with other conflict-resolving or mediation offices that are adapted to current needs and can take on different forms.

4) Enlarging coasting fishing areas to avoid pillaging of resources by industrial fisheries.

These fishing areas must be extended to preserve resources and should be managed locally.

This also implies setting up coastal area management organizations with the participation of fishing professionals, including fisherman organizations, that allow reserving spaces for maritime activities.

5) Establishing resource management authorities for shared land at the national level

It is important to also be able to manage shared land (ground, water, forests, biological diversity, fishery, etc.) within a single territory or coastal area.

This is important for so-called indigenous territories as well as other areas and territories.

We believe that the following is necessary in order to be able to implement these proposals:

- Establishment of exchange networks of related experiences between small-scale farmer organizations and fishing organizations.
- Clear indication that the fight against poverty and the sustainable management of natural resources is done through agrarian reform, land interventions and agricultural policies that are favorable to small-scale farming production.
- Lobbying activities to influence financial sector and decision makers.
- Establishment of new alliances outside the small-scale farmer or indigenous community and based on the interests of urban populations (link with urban poverty, inability to become small-scale farmers, underpaid small-scale farming work, the environment, quality of food, management of rural areas, etc.).

BUILDING SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS

Current food systems are changing rapidly, but the following factors remain constant:

- The tendency to concentrate agriculture and food and food distribution industries,
- A standardization and homogenization process of food products at the international level that destroys different dietary cultures
- Creation of food systems that are increasing complex and that depend on longer production, preparation and distribution circuits, making them more fragile and less secure.
- A clear dependence in terms of intense and production-oriented agriculture that destroys natural resources, biological diversity and small-scale farming agriculture.
- Food crisis (mad cow disease, dioxin chicken, foot and mouth disease, etc.) that can quickly take on international proportions given the interrelation of countries in terms of food.

We need to change direction and support production, preparation and distribution sectors that meet durability criteria: preservation of natural resources, quality of products in terms of sanitation and nutrition, and economically viable companies that create fair social conditions.

In terms of agriculture, this requires making a conscious choice, at the national and international level, towards sustainable and biological agriculture. Nevertheless, the situation differs between developed countries, countries that are undergoing a development process, such as Mexico, and developing or less advanced countries. Without state funding, it is difficult to create durable agricultural policies, but it is possible to integrate this concept into policies that support small-scale agricultural production such as in Brazil and Mexico. In general terms, this normally requires a subtle combination of agro-environmental and rural development programs, application of polluting-paying principles, definition of ecological conditions to any aid that is provided, and contracts between the agricultural sector and society to ensure environmental and social services, all this at the worldwide level. This also implies providing countries with the possibility of using specific agricultural policy tools (see the section on WTO) so that southern countries may develop the ability to respond to these issues. In general terms, this requires a re-evaluation of food systems that analyses the entire food chain in terms of durability (energy, transportation, etc.). We are merely at the beginning of reformulating and reconstructing sustainable food systems for the world's different communities and people.

REJECTION OF PATENTS ON LIVING ORGANISMS

The privatization through patents of genetic type biotechnology affects living matter, its reproduction and the knowledge that it provides. The choice of implementing patents on living organisms is a political choice driven by powerful global economic interests. Humanity is faced with protecting the ability of our planet's inhabitants to reject a technological monopoly that excludes them from using vital products such as seeds from their fields, the plants they use for healing, and access to knowledge to which they themselves have contributed.

The patent system created to protect industrial innovation is a legislative instrument that is inappropriate for living organisms and their constituents. The system must be completely revised in order to develop alternative ways of compensating innovators. The issue of patents on living organisms must be adequately reviewed by a large group of representatives from different cultures in order to establish alternative systems that respect ethical and religious beliefs.

It is important to support the position of those communities that have expressed strong ethical views against patents on living organisms, such as those made by the Group of African Countries before the WTO and led by Ethiopia.

Regulation for access to biological resources should be promoted, and countries should have the ability to opt for a national "sui generis" law that would protect local communities' inventions, in accordance with the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Industrial countries have used the WTO as a way of imposing the implementation of an international agreement on intellectual property that affects trade (TRIPS) and forces countries to establish an intellectual property system on vegetable varieties that protects the rights of private ownership and does not recognize communities' rights. Developing countries and African countries show the greatest interest in revising Article 27.3 of the TRIPS.

Whether by modifying this Article or adding this requirement in other texts or agreements at the global level, we demand that plants, animals, micro-organisms, and any other living organism or part thereof, as well as the natural processes of plant and animal development, not be subject to patents.

A WORLD WITHOUT AGRICULTURAL GMOs

GMOs present real dangers to the planet and humanity itself: uncontrollable food risks (particularly, allergies, resistance to antibiotics, etc.), seed sterilization, loss of small-scale farming autonomy, loss of biological diversity, and, in the future, the inevitable and irreversible generalization of GMO cultures.

Our proposals tend to define a transition towards a GMO-free agriculture, whilst leaving the door open to some GMOs within specific cultural conditions (farming, biological ferments, etc) and use (supervised and controlled medical applications), and for specific limited objectives (transgenesis as a lab tool is not questioned).

The most significant risk is the irreversibility of a transgenic world. Today, we recognize the impossibility of completely separating channels; large-scale authorization of transgenic cultures will inevitably lead to their generalization. Therefore, it is time to take action.

We have proposals and key demands

1) Implementation of an international freeze

Given the proven or potential risks of GMOs and the self-multiplying nature of transgenic varieties and species, an international freeze on GMOs is urgently required (as well as a freeze on the dissemination of transgenic animal species such as salmon).

The principles of this freeze are the following:

- a ban on commercial culture, but authorization to research under secure conditions, as long as other sustainable research on agriculture is carried out at the same time and receives the same amount of funding.

In the meantime, local freezes at the community, regional and state level should be established.

2) Reinforcement of regional, national, and international legislation

It is important to use the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety as a basis. This protocol recognizes the precaution that needs to be taken in cross-border movements of all GMOs, but remains to be ratified by the maximum number of countries required for it to enter into effect. It establishes procedures for obtaining prior agreement with full knowledge of cross-border movements of GMOs, requiring the explicit authorization of the importer before GMOs can enter a territory.

Nevertheless, we must clearly establish the ascendancy of the Biodiversity Convention (CBD), which includes the Cartagena Protocol within WTO agreements.

It is thus important to renounce the Protocol on Biosafety in regional and national legislation (application of labeling in all preparation processes) and insist on zero tolerance of GMOs in agricultural products.

A liability clause (for consumer health and the environment) for large GMO producers should also be introduced and applied worldwide.

These changes require the following:

- developing information systems that do not depend on multinational companies or governments
- independent public research of sustainable agriculture free of GMOs
- creating large organizations that include consumers, farmers and public researchers
- opening public research to address social concerns by encouraging exchange forums with researchers.

REGULATING INTERNATIONAL TRADE FOR PEOPLE'S FOOD SOVEREIGNTY AND SECURITY

The liberalization of trade by reducing, or even eliminating, trade barriers was officially adopted by the agricultural sector with the WTO Agricultural Agreement that entered into effect on January 1, 1995. In fact, this agreement affects more than just trade barriers, it affects countries' internal agricultural policies directly because it regulates the instruments that governments may use for agricultural protection and support.

By definition, this agreement is highly discriminatory since it legitimizes forms of expensive budgetary support that can only be used by rich countries (such as direct aid); it does not take into account production methods (whether sustainable or not); it does not take producers into account; it gives preference to producers that export and favors intense agriculture at the expense of small-scale farmers.

Agricultural activity cannot be reduced to merchandise production. The most successful and effective agricultural policies have always been those that protect farmers from international market fluctuations and not those that liberate markets and increase trade. Agriculture is a fundamental aspect of food security. It is a source of employment and rural development and allows managing natural resources and fighting against desertification. Well managed, it can play an important role in environmental protection.

International trade is nonetheless necessary, for example for tropical products or for meeting the food needs of countries with food production deficits that are expected to remain in such a state in the long term.

Principle of Food Sovereignty

The principle of food sovereignty is considered a priority to allow the agricultural sector to carry out its missions and, in particular, to achieve food sovereignty. Countries should be able to freely choose the desired supply method of food products in accordance with national or regional collective interests. Respecting this principle requires that each country define laws that should be adopted globally:

- Freedom to choose agricultural policy tools for each country according to its democratically determined social choices.
- The right to protect trade borders in order to protect small-scale farmers: this right, which has been, and still is, widely used by developed countries must be accessible to all countries.
- Ban on dumping practices. That is, sale of products with prices that are lower than production costs, including social and environmental costs. In

- particular, any form of support, whether direct or indirect, that leads to the sale of products at dumping level prices must be eliminated.
- Alleviate the structural instability of international prices: this implies not only stabilizing small-scale farmer revenues for globally exported products (for example: tropical drinks, spices, cotton) but also guaranteeing supply conditions in global markets at reasonable prices for countries with structural and economic deficits. This requires establishing production control in food exporting countries in order to better regulate circulation.
 - Promote sustainable agricultural practices: to be sustainable, agricultural models must take into account local, environmental and social constraints.
 - The right to reject techniques and technologies that are considered inappropriate: countries must be able to disallow production techniques (or agricultural products arising from these techniques), such as GMOs, growth hormones in livestock, dangerous plant protection products, etc. from entering their territory for precautionary reasons.

Market Regulation

International trade is essential either for the provisioning of certain products or for supplying countries with structural or economic deficits.

Such countries must be able to provide for themselves at reasonable and stable international market prices. Food aid cannot be considered as a way of substituting market failures and must be reserved for emergencies. Subsidy practices for exports, export loans and direct and unlimited aid to developed producers leads to dumping level prices and should be banned. This requires that trade regulations be delegated to a multilateral, transparent and democratic organization with the authority to sanction violations of established laws, without questioning the principle of food sovereignty. This organization could be the World Trade Organization, as long as it undergoes significant reform. It should only be in charge of trade and should be subject to other conventions and international agreements (economic, social and cultural rights, environmental agreements, etc.). Its regulating body must be reformed to create a more independent authority and allow sanctions to can be applied to all member states.

Some organizations, such as Via Campesina, are demanding that the WTO stay out of agriculture in order to break the liberalization process and rebuild another type of regulation that would require another multilateral organization.

In current debates on agriculture and the WTO, it seems that southern countries have, since Seattle, taken a stand and support the proposals we presented in 1996. Thus, a proposal for developing a framework that allows developing countries to use specific agricultural policy tools is appealing. It could have a better response if it takes into account the need to protect small-scale farming communities in developed countries.

We consider it important to create extensive alliances that will move in the right direction, avoid isolation and fight against the complete liberalization of economies and the damages currently caused by the WTO to small-scale farming communities. As such, we consider it important to support the proposals presented by these developing countries that raise the issue of food and small-scale farming sovereignty.

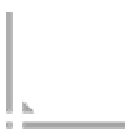
REFERENCE TEXT

This proposal document is the initial result of the work started years ago by the APM Global Network. It is available to everyone: individuals, private social organizations, politicians, or public servants of countries belonging to international organizations.

This text is intended to evolve in accordance with the debates that may arise during upcoming meetings: World Forum on Food Sovereignty in Cuba, FAO World Forum in November, 2001, WTO Meeting in Qatar, Earth Citizens' Assembly in Lille in December, 2001, and the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre in January, 2002.

APM WORLD NETWORK

August 28, 2001



The Alliance for a Responsible, Plural and United World

Working together towards the challenges of the 21th century

Ever since the late eighties of the 20th century, numerous initiatives have been put forward from different regions of the world and extremely diverse contexts. Different social actors were thus put in motion with the aim of organising a vast worldwide process seeking to explore values, proposals and regulations capable of overcoming the modern challenges humanity is faced with.

A large number of thematic, collegial and continental meetings were organised in the early nineties, a process which led, in 1993, to the drafting of the *Platform for a Responsible and United World*.

Regional groups were set up, international professional networks and thematic networks on the fundamental issues of our era were developed: the Alliance was created. It is financially and technically supported by the Charles Léopold Mayer Foundation for the progress of Humankind (FPH), among others.

The Alliance is focussed on inventing new forms of collective action on both a local and global scale, with the aim of shaping together the future of an increasingly complex and interdependent world.

The challenge of the Alliance is to actively support unity in diversity by asserting our societies' capability to understand and appreciate the complexity of situations, the interdependence of problems and the diversity and legitimacy of geo-cultural, social and professional perspectives.

The Alliance, as a space of discussion, reflection and proposals, is built around three main orientations:

Local groups aiming to bring people of a community, a region, a country or a continent together by looking at the realities and issues of their own societies. This is the **geo-cultural approach**. It reflects the diversity of places and cultures.

Groups of socio-professional actors wishing to provoke dialogue and mobilisation within a given social sector or profession (youth, peasants, scientists, local representatives, etc.). This is the **collegial approach**. It reflects the diversity of social and professional milieus, their concerns and responsibilities towards society and the challenges of today's world.

Thematic workshops seeking to create reflection groups centred around the major issues of our common future (sustainable water management, regional integration and globalisation, financial markets, art and society, etc.). This is the **thematic approach**. It reflects the diverse challenges humanity is faced with in the 21st century. Thematic workshops are organised into four areas: Values and Culture, Economy and Society, Governance and Citizenship, Humanity and the Biosphere.

Seeking both to draw on the richness of materials and experiences gathered by these reflection groups whilst networking with other citizen dynamics with a similar focus, the Alliance fixed itself the objective of obtaining collectively developed, concrete proposals. The following meetings were thus organised:

- **international meetings**, for each thematic workshop and each college,
- **synchronized continental assemblies** (Africa, Americas, Asia, Europe) and a regional meeting in the Arab world (Lebanon) in June 2001.
- a **Citizen World Assembly**, held in December 2001 in Lille, France, bringing 400 participants together from around the world.

These meetings together contributed to the drafting of some sixty *Proposal Papers for the 20th century* and a *Charter of Human Responsibilities*, published in several languages in different countries.

The Alliance has been involved in a process of disseminating and developing these outcomes since the beginning of 2002. Networks are expanding, branching out and their work themes are becoming increasingly transversal. They also strengthen links with other approaches aiming to create an alternative globalisation.

For further information, please visit the **alliance website** at www.alliance21.org, where the history of the Alliance, the challenges it is engaged in and the workshops and discussion forums being held can be viewed in three languages (French, English and Spanish).

E-mail: info@alliance21.org

The proposal papers on the internet

Whether in their provisional or definitive form, all the proposal papers and their corresponding translations can be accessed on the website of the Alliance for a Responsible, Plural and United World, at:

<http://www.alliance21.org/fr/proposals>

Themes available:

Values, education, cultures, art and the sciences

Teachers and education - Education to an active and responsible citizenship - The alliance and the media - Art and cultural identity in building a united world - Women - Youth action and proposals for social change - An intercultural cultural diversity in the era of globalisation - Proposals of the inter-religious college - War, genocide, ...restoring humanity in human beings faced by extreme situations - Thinking through university reform - Social control of the scientific production system - Information society, knowledge society: benefiting from change - time and sustainable development

Economy and society

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