



BN/08/4.1
May 2008

Briefing Note

Mission and Activities of the Club of Rome

The Club of Rome is an independent, not-for-profit organization with an international membership. It draws on the insights and expertise of its members from all regions of the world, from different cultures and histories, from different fields of science and public policy and from academia, civil society and the corporate sector. Since its founding forty years ago, it has been promoting interdisciplinary analysis, dialogue and action on the fundamental, systemic challenges which are determining the future of humanity.

The Club is recognised throughout the world for its early work on the relations between economic growth and the environment which is identified with "The Limits to Growth", a perspective which is even more important today. Over the years, the Club has engaged in thoughtful, interdisciplinary and independent analysis of many critical issues in world affairs. It has clarified threats, opportunities and choices and has advanced practical solutions by provoking debate, by briefing top leaders in government, business and civil society and by disseminating publications – some of them best sellers – aimed at informed opinion and the general public.

The Club of Rome is now in an especially favorable position to break with established concepts and paradigms and to set out the new ideas needed to meet the challenges of the 21st Century. The Club is engaged in a wide range of activities in different countries and regions through its own work at the international level and the efforts of its individual members and its 33 National Associations. Within a new three year programme, 2008-2010, it will focus on critical issues - such as managing and mitigating the impacts of climate change and peak oil, resource depletion, the ecosystems crisis, the impacts of globalisation, sustainable world development and peace and security - within a coherent systemic framework so as to propose a vision for the future and specific lines of action.

The issues facing the world community are increasingly urgent. But humanity has never had greater capabilities and resources to face the challenges ahead. The Club can therefore encourage hope and progress by proposing how these capabilities of knowledge, skill, organization, technology and commitment may be mobilized in practice to resolve the issues which threaten the future and to create a better world for future generations.

By its Statutes, the Club of Rome is independent of any political, ideological and religious interests. Its essential mission is "to act as a global catalyst for change through the identification and analysis of the crucial problems facing humanity and the communication of such problems to the most important public and private decision makers as well as to the general public." Its activities should: "adopt a global perspective with awareness of the increasing interdependence of nations. They should, through holistic thinking, achieve a deeper understanding of the complexity of contemporary problems and adopt a trans-disciplinary and long-term perspective focusing on the choices and policies determining the destiny of future generations."

The Club "will aim at a balanced representation of regions, cultures, professions, age and gender among its members". Its members should be persons of "outstanding intellectual ability enjoying a well-established reputation for their professional work on an international level who are willing and able to actively promote its mission."

The work of the active, international members is complemented by around 50 honorary members and 40 Associate Members and by the activities of 33 National Associations throughout the world. In addition, the work of the Club is enriched by the inputs of carefully selected younger experts, practitioners and activists who contribute their views on global issues through a special think tank, "tt30".

The Club is independent: all the costs of its operations, including the activities of its Members and its National Associations, its Annual Assembly, its conferences and its publications are met from a variety of sources including annual contributions by its Members.

Launching a strong, new Programme

At its General Assembly in Madrid in September 2007, the Club renewed its leadership and its management structure. It is diversifying its membership and strengthening its secretariat and it has relocated its international secretariat to Winterthur in the Canton of Zurich. It is launching a major international cooperative programme on the broad theme: "A New Path for World Development." This will engage thinkers, practitioners and activists in key regions and countries to undertake interdisciplinary and multicultural thinking on crucial global issues. Experts, universities and organizations from major emerging economies, such as Brazil, China, India, Nigeria and Russia will be engaged in the programme, as will leading personalities from Europe, Japan and the United States, and from Africa, East Asia, Latin America and the Middle East.

A high level meeting of the Club was held in Berlin on 6th November at the invitation of H.E. Dr. Horst Koehler, President of Germany on the topic: Policy Challenges in the next Phase of Globalization." This has enabled the Club to make a rapid start with its new programme.

The Programme on a New Path for World Development will be based on close collaboration with experts and partner institutions all over the world. It will be implemented over three years through the following six main activities: dialogue among Members of the Club; web-based collaboration engaging international experts and practitioners on selected issues; policy briefings for top level policy makers in the public and private sectors and in legislatures; outreach to the public and the production of materials for education and public information; a programme to inform and engage young people; and the creation of a global data base on crucial issues and methodologies derived from the programme.

These six activities are mutually reinforcing. They will be strengthened by close collaboration with other on-going activities of the Club, of its individual members and of the National Associations. Thus the programme of the Club of Rome will mobilize worldwide expertise and insights and will lead to well founded proposals for action. It will enable the Club to strengthen its capability for interdisciplinary analysis of the consequences of action or inaction on the critical emerging issues which face our rapidly changing world. The Club will thus deliver on its mandate to alert policy makers and the public to the issues, risks and opportunities ahead and to provoke action, based on a sound understanding of their fundamental causes, longer term implications and essential connections.