



Programme on a New Path for World Development

CS/6.3
31st March 2009

International Conference on Concerted Strategies to meet the Environmental and Economic Challenges of the 21st Century

*(National Bank of Austria, Vienna,
Thursday 16th and Friday 17th April, 2009)*

Policy Note 1: Background to the Conference *(R. Martin Lees, Secretary General)*

1. The world community confronts two profound and interconnected crises: the worst financial and economic crisis since the 1930s and the accelerating threat of irreversible climate change. Leaders in both government and the private sector are challenged to restore financial stability and achieve economic recovery while taking measures to avert the threats of ecological breakdown and irreversible climate change. And they must respond to these two crises in a global context of rising inequality and increasing hunger and poverty of a growing world population.
2. We have clearly reached a turning point in world affairs where previously entrenched ideas and policies are no longer effective. The goal of policy cannot simply be to recover to the previous path of economic growth and globalisation as this has proved to be unstable and clearly unsustainable. The economic, environmental and development problems we face are profoundly interconnected. They can only be managed through a coherent strategy and international cooperation. We cannot therefore postpone effective action on the increasingly threatening issues of climate change and ecosystems breakdown, poverty and alienation while we focus on a response to the financial and economic crisis. We face intellectual, moral and political challenges to define and implement a new path for world development which is more fair and inclusive, more stable and environmentally sustainable.
3. It is within this context that the Club of Rome is convening the small, high level conference in Vienna, under the patronage of H. E. Dr. Heinz Fischer, Federal President of Austria. The Club of Rome then has a unique opportunity in June 2009 to present the conclusions and proposals of the Conference to the Annual General Assembly of GLOBE International, bringing together 100 senior Legislators from all G8 + 5 countries in Rome. (GLOBE International is an organisation established at the Gleneagles G8 Summit to engage senior legislators from the G8 and G5 countries in support of the negotiating process towards a post Kyoto agreement.)

4. The Club is positioned to convey the insights of science and analysis directly into the policy process in preparation for the meetings of the G8 and the G5 in July and also into the negotiation process leading to COP 15 in Copenhagen in December which should define a post Kyoto Treaty.

The Club of Rome

5. Over the past forty years, the Club of Rome has been concerned to understand and to evaluate longer term challenges and opportunities and to take account of their inter-relationships, within a systemic view of the realities of today and of the prospects for future generations. In a new phase of its activities, approved at its 40th Anniversary assembly in Rome in June 2008, the Club has launched a three year, international programme of collaborative research and consultation to define the content of “A New Path for World Development.” (*Supporting Document 13*)

6. The NPWD programme takes account of the complexity and interconnectedness of critical global challenges by focusing its analysis on five manageable “clusters” of interconnected issues within a coherent systems framework: Environment and Resources; Globalisation, Economics and Finance; International Development; Social Transformation; and Peace and Security. (*For further information see website: www.clubofrome.org. and Supporting Document 14*)

7. The threats of climate change have become a priority issue in recent years both for the public and for decision makers. And it is increasingly understood that climate change must be addressed together with other related issues which threaten the future, for example with the ecosystems crisis, with the availability of fresh water across the world and with emerging issues of the security of energy supplies related to “peak” oil. None of these critical issues can be understood and resolved in isolation: the linkages between them must be properly recognized in the search for solutions.

8. As the first step in its new programme, the Club therefore convened a small, high-level expert conference on “*Managing the Interconnected Challenges of Climate Change, Energy Security, Ecosystems and Water*” in Winterthur on 6th and 7th November 2008, drawing on its independent status, its worldwide networks and the expertise of its international and interdisciplinary membership. (*Supporting Document 15*)

9. The analysis and proposals developed at the Winterthur Conference were then used as inputs into a Policy Dialogue convened by GLOBE International and the Club of Rome in the Palace of Westminster, London, on 26th and 27th January where Members and experts invited by the Club presented their views directly to senior Legislators from the G8 + 5 group of countries. Adding a new economic dimension, the London Conference focused on the topic: “*Framing 2009’s Global Challenges in the Context of Global Economic Crisis: Developing a Response to the Interconnected Challenges of Climate Change, Energy Security, Ecosystems and Water.*” The Chairman’s Summary was presented to Prime Minister Gordon Brown in his capacity as Chairman of the meeting of the G20 held on 2nd April. (*Supporting Documents 16, 17 & 18*)

10. It has become clear in recent months that strategies to stabilise and reform the international financial and economic systems must be consistent and mutually reinforcing with strategies to respond to the challenges arising in the fields of climate, energy, ecosystems and water, all within a broad perspective of sustainable world development. It is the main purpose of the Vienna Conference to clarify these relationships.

11. After reviewing the most recent data and projections on critical issues which will determine the future, the participants will explore the roots of the present crises and consider new models and strategies. They will then outline the elements of an integrated approach and suggest practical lines of action to resolve the economic and environmental crises within a concerted strategy for sustainable development.

12. The insights, conclusions and recommendations of the Conference will be deepened and formulated into a presentation which will be made to the Annual Assembly of the Global Legislators Forum, (GLOBE International), in Rome on 14th June 2009. In this way, the conclusions of the Vienna Conference can contribute to the preparations for the G8 summit in Italy in July and to the process to prepare the COP 15 to be held in Copenhagen in December.