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Another year brings another U.N. summit – this time the World Summit on the Information Society, to be held in Geneva in December this year, under the auspices of the ITU, the umbrella body for national telecommunications carriers. Remarkably the first versions of the WSIS agenda made no mention of Sustainable Development in any form at all – as though sustainability was only an issue for sustainability summits, the Information Society for Information Society summits, and so on. However, much has already been achieved (by, among others, the CoR) in achieving a more holistic view, and this edition focuses on the efforts made in this respect and to be made in the year to come. Beyond this year, there will be a WSIS ‘round two’ to be held in Tunis in 2005 where both the timing and the location may prove more amenable to the creation of an accepted agenda for a Sustainable Information Society.

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On the participation of the CoR at the 2nd PrepCom of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) in Geneva.

A short Report by Raoul Weiler (03.03.2003).

1. Why a participation of the CoR to the WSIS?

The Statement of the CoR to the Summit in Joburg concerned the future knowledge society. In this paper the CoR was already ahead compared to the contributions of other publications of NGOs and governments. It stressed the impact of ICT on the future of the world society especially on poverty and education. The Millennium Declaration, the Doha and the Monterrey conferences and the previous Summit on SD in Joburg complete the picture and altogether are the basis for the present summit. This perception was not yet present in Geneva. This understandable for the NGOs are not necessarily the same, the business community is a totally different one and even the governments are represented by other cabinets and ministries.

From this perspective the CoR has acquired some expertise and knowledge with some of the world conferences, even in the Brussels-EU Chapter there is a member who participated at the Porto Alegre social forum. We are in a very good position to express outstanding point of views to this Summit.

2. Power struggle during the preparatory phase at the Summit.

The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) will take place at the end of this year December 10-12, 2003. The WSIS runs under the umbrella of the UN. The ITU (International Telecommunication Union, located in Geneva) is in charge of the practical organization of the summit.

As with the previous Summits of this kind, the preparation is to be seen as an immense process, divided in steps: the PrepComs. In case of the WSIS, three official PrepComs are planned: July 2002; February and September 2003. In between informal meetings take place, more or less open.

This World Summit is the first of its kind. The ITU is basically a professional organization and launched the idea some years ago (1998). The UN accepted to put the initiative on its agenda.

By the start of the preparatory process some difficulties appeared as to the participants -the stakeholders- of the Summit. Somehow it seemed difficult for the professional organization to accept contributions of the governmental side as well as from the civil society. At the 2nd PrepCom, this one, from February 17-28, this discussion went on and it was not clear how the final outcome would be. Besides the acceptance of the governments, the latest to be integrated in the process were the NGOs -called the Civil Society- and apparently this problem seems now to be settled. It is considered to be a victory for the CS. These debates led to a -de facto- shift of power towards the stakeholders, and is quite significant for the future. It is an example which will have more and more followers in coming international affairs.

The CoR applied early for accreditation, which it got easily. The accreditation allows the participation to the all process inclusive the Summit itself.

On the participation of the CoR at the 2nd PrepCom of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) in Geneva.

The 2nd PrepCom was spread over two weeks, two colleagues of the Brussels-EU Chapter represented the CoR: Pol Descamps partly in the 2nd week and myself in the first week.

2. Position of the CoR

During the first week, every morning the Civil Society had its general meeting. The objective consisted in agreeing on the set up of a Civil Society Bureau (CSB) which would have the mission to channel the wishes of the different 'families' of the CS to the organizing committee of the Summit. Each family had to elect a person who will be the focal point in the CSB. The CoR joined the NGO family, the Think-tank family and the environmental group as a part of the multi-stakeholders partnerships family. With our limited resources of the CoR on the spot, it was impossible to accept the role of a focal and to have a place in the CSB.

The organizers of the Summit seem to have accepted this way of doing, which is considered as a success for the CS, at least compared with the starting point of the process.

How this will work during the period between the 2 PrepComs is yet unknown. Anyhow, the Brussels-EU Chapter will play the game as much as possible and the networking which will always have its benefits.

3. Topics of the Round Tables

The following topics were discussed in round tables and parallel sessions during that first week –at least the ones I participated in:

- poverty and illiteracy and the digital divide,
- cultural diversity,
- linguistic diversity,
- privacy and security in cyberspace,
- infrastructure for ICT in the developing world,
- technological impact on the media and the press.

The concept of sustainability was seldom mentioned and certainly not discussed.

4. Election of the Chair of the Subcommittee of the Summit

At the end of the first week a new chair was elected, which will be in charge of the remaining part of the Summit. The content of the program and agenda of the Summit were published after the election of the Chair. Now that these two decisions have been taken, the process got its final form.

All the information is to be found on the website of the WSIS.

5. Second week

The CoR participated at the joint initiative of UNEP, WWF and GeSI (Global e-Sustainability Initiative) on Tuesday February 25th: Sustainability Implications of the

On the participation of the CoR at the 2nd PrepCom of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) in Geneva.

Knowledge Society –the environmental dimension. Our colleague Pol Descamps contributed to the presentation.

6. Action and participation of the CoR

6.1 the CoR is listed in 3 families: Think tank, NGO and Multi-stakeholders (environment & sustainability).

6.2 associated membership should be applied to 'CONGO' = *Conference of Nongovernmental Organizations in Consultative Relationship with the UN*, in Geneva. This should allow the CoR to be closer to the organization of this Summit and other activities of the UN.

6.3 The Heinrich Böll Foundation (HBF) is preparing a Charter of Civil Rights for Sustainable Knowledge Societies. Since the Brussels-EU Chapter is in contact with the HBF in Brussels, a participation to this initiative is envisaged.

6.4 The Brussels-EU Chapter has set up a Work group on WSIS and is chaired by Mrs. Fr. Mestrum. The preparation of a Statement to the WSIS has started.

Orio Giarini
Member of the Club of Rome

1. Introduction

The major social characteristics, gradually extending to the whole world, concern today the extension of the life cycle. In this process, older people are gradually and sometimes abruptly excluded from being full active participants of society. Old ideas and habits concerning ageing, derived from another era and obviously inadequate, are still regulating social policies and public attitudes. A major cultural revolution has to take place as a consequence of which at least those between 60 and 80 years of age have to rethink themselves as being mature but not "old" and as such destined to be segregated.

The process of segregation of the elders is old in human history: those segregated very often accepted their secondary status until they were able to react and reconquer their full position within society. This is the case for women, minorities identified by the color of the skin and many other characteristics. One can easily add to the list of discrimination the one concerning population up at least 80 years of age capable of productive activities, of learning and more and more in the need of adequate integration and educational programs.

It is on this issue that we concentrate these notes.

2. An Ageing Society? No, a Counter-Ageing Society!¹

The best indication of the success of the Industrial Revolution is the increased, and continually rising life expectancy that obtains in almost all parts of the world.

This phenomenon is frequently described in traditional terms. It is, for example, said that *society is ageing*. If what is meant is merely that most people today achieve an older age than they expected to 50 years ago, then the statement is acceptable. But in itself, the expression "ageing society" is both inappropriate and misleading. We must first recognize that there has been an increase in the length of the life-cycle which probably counts as one of the greatest achievements of the 20th century. Second, it must be observed that what is really becoming *older is* the notion of age itself. We only need to read the European literature of the last century to learn how people felt at 40 years of age. It is also clear that the onset of physical and mental decline has been pushed back far later than was hitherto the case. In other words, at 50, 60 or 70 years of age, we are much younger today than we would have been at those ages in the not so distant past. Therefore *our societies are getting younger*, because we live longer and better. This phenomenon concerns the majority of countries around the world.

¹ Most of this text is based on the report in English to the Club of Rome by Orio Giarini and Patrick Liedtke on, "Employment Dilemma and the Future of Work" (1998). This report has not been published in English, but in German (Bestseller), French, Italian, Spanish, Korean and Bulgarian.

1. Cf. Delsen, L./Reday-Mulvey, G. (1996): Gradual Retirement in the OECD Countries, Macro and Micro Issues and Policies. Aldershot (UK): Dartmouth.

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Failure to understand the situation in these terms can lead to serious mistakes: on one hand, we tend to marginalize far too early a growing part of the population (those over 60) while, on the other, we quickly run aground in the political debate about how far the younger generation should pay for the older. On both accounts, we find we have entered a dead end street!

We need to turn the proposition on its head: the *older* are today *younger* and because the value of human beings is linked to their productive activities and endeavors, the key social and political challenge of the coming decades will be to what extent society succeeds in involving people from 18 to 78 years of age in the global venture of creating and sustaining the wealth of nations. There are already clear signs that things are beginning to move in this direction, although the global picture is as yet far from homogeneous'.

It is important to recognize as good news the fact that we live in a counter- ageing society, since the change that is occurring in the structure of our planet's population constitutes one of the greatest achievements in human history. Our culture, our mind-set and the structures of our societies must now adapt to this new and promising situation. For the inevitable significance of this new circumstance is, that each of us has a potential for remaining an *active participant in society longer and more effectively* than has ever been the case hitherto. Achievement of that longer and more effective active participation must now become our goal and a key instrument of greater progress and justice for all.

The time has perhaps now come to launch a campaign similar to those promoted in the past for minorities and women. It would focus on those between on average the ages of 60 and 80 years or more, since up to that age at least 90% of people are, or should be, in good mental and physical health. Their capabilities will be enhanced even more by their remaining integrated in society longer. They will thus be able to exercise a *new right*, that of more mature people or seniors to contribute with their experience to our world.

Increasingly, educational programs will help to provide those who are 60 and above to develop new skills and opportunities for embarking on a *new career* based essentially on part-time jobs and/or un-remunerated activities.

Any perception of our society as ageing and thereby in decay is unacceptable and constitutes the ugly face of a non-adaptive culture which, economically and socially, is simply unsustainable.

3. Work as an element of personality

We need first to reconsider, enlarge and redefine the notion of work as productive activity as we have inherited from two centuries of industrial revolution.

Under present still prevailing conditions, full-time remunerated work, around at least 35 hours a week is considered in most cases the only measure of an individual's contribution to the productive activity. It is here, in most cases, where a

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large part of our social contacts are established and individuals find and define their place in society. In official forms there is always a question about our professional occupation just as there is always a question about our gender: our personality is very much linked to it. The entire network of social interaction is heavily dependant on our position in the (remunerated) working world and the scant honoring of other activities has lead to the perverse situation that somebody engaged in valuable non-monetized work - and here only the example of household and child education work shall be cited - receives much less than his due share of social recognition. It is obvious that this has adverse effects on motivation and self-esteem.

But many problems also lurk in the monetized sphere of the economy for its endured long years of education often passing a rigorous selection process to attain their current job. In addition, they are facing the constant risk of becoming redundant. Since the productive activity of every person lies at the heart of our economy, it is not surprising at all that the social focus on this element of personality is extremely pronounced.

Nevertheless, a series of other activities are gaining importance in a society that is sometimes characterized as one of leisure rather than work, a concept that is not entirely true since much of the so-called leisure time is spent on voluntary work. In Germany, between one fourth and one third of the male working age population engage in honorary work. In these cases, secondary or voluntary activities like sports, charities, community work etc. are also linked to the personality of the individual, more often than not in a very positive way. Even if these activities do not always contribute directly to the monetized part of the economy, they are a valuable element that deserves recognition since they also add to the wealth and the welfare of people.

This development of increased differentiation of the various possibilities of productive work as complementary elements of personality is rather new, particularly as seen from a classical economics point of view. But it definitively helps more and more in the judgment of the contribution of people to society and to the modern economic system.

We sustain our philosophical prejudice: We are much more what we produce than what we consume. Even consumption, in a veblenian sense, is just a way to produce an image of ourselves. And the majority of people, we believe, are conscious that their value is very much linked to their level of self-esteem and usefulness in society. We definitely stand behind the idea that in fact we consume and need to consume in order to produce, for ourselves and for society, rather than the other way around. In this context the question of work as an element of personality gains a whole new dimension.

4. Work intensity and education in the life-cycle from 18 to 78

To identify the current work intensity in the life cycle, we have to examine the participation rates of people in the monetized labor market. This is the ratio of active population, i.e. all persons of either sex who furnish the supply of

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labor for the production of goods and services regardless of their employment status, in comparison to the total number of people in a determined age group. The higher the proportion of the active population in a specific age group is, the higher their work intensity. This intensity is subject to legal framework, social influences and individual decisions.

As we can see, there is a sharp increase of economic activity at the age 15 until 24 as a result of the termination of secondary or tertiary education. Before the age of 15 there is usually, at least in industrialized countries, only negligible activity in the labor market. This changes when mandatory school attendance terminates and individuals can join the work force according to their personal inclinations and needs.

Afterwards, the work intensity is more or less stable over a period of several decades. For men, the proportion of economically active people typically reaches over 90%, while that of women tends to be considerably lower. Depending on the integration of women into the labor force, in various countries the activity level only rarely exceeds 75%. During this time, the participation rates of women exhibit a particular but very characteristic drop between the age of 30 and 39. An obvious explanation for this phenomenon is the preference of women this age to spend their time dedicated to domestic and/ or child-caring activities.

At the end of the second phase we can observe that the proportion of people who provide labor supply diminishes gradually. It is the moment when retirement becomes a major factor in the decision on working time and economic activity. More and more people drop out successively from the labor market opting to spend more time in other activities than in remunerated work.

5. Education and work in the course of the new life cycle

If we accept the idea that the work intensity of the population is correlated to the individual preference of personal work intensity, we might arrive to a curve that is similar to the one denominated "active population" in the previous chart. It is the simplification of the depicted activity curves of the respective nations in so far as it displays a more abrupt start of working intensity after the termination of education and has to be regarded as being qualitative rather than quantitative in nature.

We have already identified the different phases of activity in human life. We will now propose an alternative system for the distribution of work and work intensity that seems better suited to the individual's needs throughout these different stages of economic activity. During the first phase of education, there should be an integration of part-time work into the tertiary education system on an official level. This would enhance the possibilities for the younger to gain working experience while still studying without necessarily submitting them to the stress of attaining an unsuited job besides being enrolled in full-time education. At the same time this would relief them of at least part of their financial problems. The integration of part-time work into the education system would also foster the connections between theory and practice and provide closer links between institutions of higher education and the rest of the economy.

During the second phase, there would be few changes as to the work intensity in general the alternative layer-system of employment will be explained later in greater detail. This stage, however, will gradually phase out instead of a sudden end. There will be increased possibilities for the older to gradually retire by reducing their workload according to their individual preferences and needs. They still have 20 years of life expectancy at the age of 60 and their gradual retirement could be a beneficial complement to the established three pillars of the social security system. It would also help to reduce the demographic stress on pay-as-you-go (or big scale capital accumulation) pension system in ageing societies. Voluntary work, already present to a lesser extent, might increase, in part as a non-monetized substitute of previous remunerated work since many older people like to stay active without necessarily the need or the wish for monetary compensation.

During all three phases, education or training and retraining will be present, albeit to different degrees. As we have previously explained, constant education is necessary to stay in the labor market and to meet the demands of an ever more complex and ever faster changing society.

6. Part-time jobs for the over 60's

First, we would like to prove a common prejudice wrong: older workers attribute in a very positive way to the success of their employers instead of being a burden like conventional corporate opinion tends to believe. There exist quite a number of studies on this issue that demonstrate the general positive contribution of older workers². They are experienced, reliable, work hard, are effective in their job, think before they act and display good team-working abilities. They are also subject to lower turnover and seem to be more flexible towards new assignments and changing work conditions as their younger colleagues. These very positive characteristics of older workers can and definitely should be exploited not only until the age of retirement, 60 years in most industrialized countries, but for a longer period. Longer life expectancies and improved health conditions would permit this.

One of the major problems for the employment of older workers resides in the system of remuneration by seniority. Traditionally, older workers have been more expensive than their younger counterparts who, in fact, have been subsidizing the higher wages of the former. This has led to a situation where older workers might be paid more than their effective productivity, providing the employer with an incentive to get rid of them, or, in the case of general redundancy, to shed them first. The situation is even worse in some countries where the contribution to pension systems increase with age, thus making older workers even more expensive.

Nevertheless, there seems to be a new movement towards performance-based remuneration in many countries, especially in the Anglo-Saxon countries, that will promote the competitiveness of older workers. Part-time work in this context could attribute in a considerable way to the transformation of the remuneration system since the switch of older workers reaching retirement age from full-time to part-

² See e.g. Warr, P. (1994): Research into the Work Performance of Older Employees. In: The Geneva Papers on Risk and Insurance. No. 73, pp. 472-480. Or The Commonwealth Fund (1991): New Findings Show why Employing Workers over 50 Makes Good Financial Sense for Companies.

time employment with partial pension relieves some of the financial constraint, both for the employer and the employee.

However, the current distribution of income for the older population, those aged 65 and over, does still not reflect a major shift towards increased income from part-time work according to the EBRI³. Their data for 1994 show, that with 44% of total income social security is the largest source of income, followed by pension and retirement plans with 20%. Earnings, accounting for 15%, range even behind income from assets, amounting to 17%. The slight pick-up of the elderly's income from earnings from 13% in 1984 could be interpreted with caution, since it first fell from a previous peak 21 % in 1974, as a feeble sign that things are changing.

The question of gradual retirement as a complement to the established three pillars of the social security system and as an expression of personal choice and individual preferences is closely linked to part-time work. Even in countries like Germany, France or Japan, where rather traditional attitudes to part-time work have dominated for long, attitudes are starting to change. Especially the wish of the over 60s for more flexible ways to organize their lives have contributed to the increased recognition of more flexible work patterns.

So far, the experiences with part-time work as the component of a gradual retirement are mainly positive.⁴ Introductory organizational problems can be overcome rather quickly and the initial investments in extra administrative, planning and sometimes equipment cost are compensated through reductions in absenteeism, increased flexibility, improved morale and productivity growth.

It is noteworthy that ignorance appears to be one of the bigger obstacles towards part-time work of older worker, especially when they are past the official retirement age. People tend to be skeptical where part-time work has not been experienced, but where developed, it is generally welcomed by supervisors⁵. Also younger colleagues can benefit through an endowment process of valuable skills from the development of part-time work for more experienced workers that would otherwise be fully retiring.

Since generally the benefits of part-time work for the older outweigh the costs, there are structurally and medically no obstacles, and practice shows that many more tasks could be performed by part-time workers than is currently the case, the development of part-time proves an ideal way of lengthening and/ or flexibilizing the working life.

³ Employee Benefit Research Institute (1996): Income of the Older Population. In: Monthly Newsletter. Vol. 17, no 7, pp. 1-3

⁴ See Delsen, L Reday-Mulvey, G. (1996): Gradual Retirement in the OECD Countries.

⁵ Delsen, L. (1995): Atypical Employment: An International Perspective

7. Education against discrimination in the counter-ageing society: the Double Helix Project⁶

The Double Helix Project aims at blending two emerging trends in the fields of labor and education. Both concerns those activities which are being carried out during a lifetime or during one's active life and are conceived as continuous processes. Both consider the possibility of segmenting such processes into periods in which either education or labor becomes the main theme of one's activity and into the period when either education or labor are interrupted. The fundamental idea of the Project is to make these processes complementary, the suspension stage of one theme being taken over part of the helix corresponding in time.

Making use of the previous experience of its author in the report to the Club of Rome, one devoted to the reform of education and the other to the future of work, this time they engage upon a study that aims simultaneously at the education and work systems, from the 21st century perspective and its knowledge potential and productive activities. The symbol of the double helix is appropriate to emphasize their degree of interaction. And, as the solutions suggested are based on a combination of mobile and transferable units, the double helix is even more eloquent. We should nevertheless show where the metaphor ceases to be useful. Unlike the genetic helix, which is an almost fatidic given, the double helix of learning and practice is permanently under construction and it can be reoriented every 1-2 years at the least. Still, it is not less true that it becomes an individual road of life, original and almost unique, unrepeatable and with ramifications that recall the defining power of a stamp.

A personal history would perhaps better enlighten the reader. John is the son of a sailor, born and grown on the coast of the Atlantic. The vocation runs in the family, so, at the age of 16, after having received his basic education between 6 and 14 years, followed by a two-year vocational school he embarks on a fishing ship. He spends two years at sea, getting accustomed to all the mechanical installation and to sailing.

At the age of 18, he returns at school, finishes secondary education and attends a short college of pisci-culture and, after three years he gets a job at an aquaculture farm, where he spends another three years. He is 24 when he attends the second college of marine biology for the next two years. Between 26 and 30 he works for a marine ecology state center and afterwards fulfills his postgraduate studies at a university. This training allows him to work for five years in a research institute, where his experience and results lead him to two years of doctoral studies. At the age of 40 he starts teaching at a college, whose curriculum suggests him one year of training in the pisci-cultural economy. For the next five years, he works as a consultant for a company of marine products. He quits this moneymaking job for a personal consultancy firm, a small family business. He is now 54 and, with all his passion for the species familiar to him, he allows himself one year for the study of museography, so that he becomes the director of a great aquarium between 55

⁶ This project is supported by the Risk Institute. The head of project is Dr.Mircea Malitza

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and 60. An emergent country from a different continent requests him to found a similar institution that he directs for two years. The realities of the host country push him to study the economy of the developing countries for one year which turns him into the consultant of a government on sustainable development. He reaches the age of 65 and spends two years as an associate professor at the central university of this country. Concerned with the pressing needs of those countries, he comes back home to work for one year as a volunteer at an NGO on this issue.

Between 71 and 76 years he directs as president a Foundation dedicated to the same goals. Here he is, at the end of his 60 years of active life as president of a department of an oceanic Academy. We cannot follow him from now on, as he is always invited at international meetings and on conference tours.

What does this scenario reveal? It reveals that our character has changed the nature of his activity for the past 20 years. Amazing, isn't it? Not if we take account the fact that he is constantly weaving a coherent ellipse. All his learning steps (seven, covering 12 years) are connected to a biological vocation, to be improved by piscicultural, museum, production, sustainable development and ecological courses. His work steps (13 totaling 48 years) alternate in the activities for which he is training and that maintain the line of his vocation. Similar cases lie under our eyes. They are not frequent enough to be considered emblematical. Nevertheless, the statistics continue to inform us upon the growth of the labor force mobility.

What is new about John's case? It seems that the length of studies (10 years of compulsory education plus another 12) does not surpass much the period of education of a Doctor of Sciences nowadays. The new and essential advantage is that it unfolds over the entire life and it may be reoriented towards attractive and useful goals that are linked to a sole fundamental vocation.

But the length of the working periods points to an absolute novelty. It generalizes the sixty-year active life to the scale of the whole society. The average of active life increases by twenty years. Thus, demography and the leap from 55 to 75 years of life expectancy eventually come to terms with social life organization. And this prolongation ceases to be the fright of national budgets as well as of the "aging society" ill-fated spectre.

The transition from learning to work and vice-versa is not absolutely compulsory. One job may be followed by another. One nevertheless notices in this scenario that this succession may mean transition from a paid work in a private company to a private lucrative business, to a voluntary work, to the setting up of a non-profit foundation and possibly to a consultancy, which, in its turn, may be private, may be that of a firm or of an international organism.

THE BRUSSELS-EU CHAPTER HAS THE PLEASURE TO INVITE YOU AT ITS EIGHTH
AURELIO PECCEI LECTURE, WHICH WILL DEAL WITH THE NEW SCIENCE ON
NETWORKS

NETWORK EFFECTS IN THE KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY
by

Dr. PETER JOHNSTON

European Commission and Brussels-EU Chapter CoR.

This lecture attempts to bring together current knowledge and new insights in the three dominant development issues at the beginning of the 3rd Millennium: the transition to a more stable population after centuries of dramatic growth; the transition from an industrial economy in the developed world to a global knowledge society; and the ambition of a transition to sustainable development.

These are linked in part by the realization that human society has many of the emergent properties of a complex network, and that population growth may itself be strongly linked to the accumulation of shared "knowledge capital"; that the sharing and access to this knowledge is the key to both the dynamic of change to a global knowledge society; that the self-organizing characteristics of complex social networks naturally tend to optimize access to shared knowledge, and that the realization of sustainable development also depends on a rapid sharing of new knowledge, technologies and innovations around the world.

DATE: THURSDAY MAY 22, 2003 FROM 6:00 TILL 8:00 P.M.
The lecture will be followed by refreshments.

Venue: Royal Academy of Belgium
Hertogstraat, 1/ 1, rue Ducale. B-1000 Brussels

About the Brussels-EU Chapter CoR-BCH

The Brussels EU Chapter of the Club of Rome is an independent non-profit association, registered under Belgian Law, affiliated with the Club of Rome. The Association specifically aims to build bridges between the European Union Institutions and the Club of Rome.

The Association's mission is to act as a catalyst of reflection on sustainable development in Europe on all levels: Government and private.

Its aims are:

- To identify the most crucial problems facing European society; to analyse them in the global context and to reflect on alternative future solutions for a sustainable European Society, including the elaboration of specific scenarios for the future of the European continent.
- To initiate research in which the major theme is the development of a conceptual foundation for globally sustainable development and for the specific contributions that Europe can make;
- To organise a societal discourse on the implementation of European policies in a global context, involving the most important public- and private-sector decision-makers, as well as the general public.

Its activities are framed within the objectives of the Club of Rome and of European society:

- **A global perspective**, recognising the increasing inter-dependence of nations;
- **A holistic approach**, seeking a deeper understanding of complex contemporary problems;
- **An inter-disciplinary and long-term perspective**, focused on the choices and policies determining the destiny of future generations;

It is composed of individuals who subscribe to the goals of the Association; of outstanding ability and with well-established reputations in their professional work, and who are active in the Brussels region – in Belgian society or with the European Institutions. ♦

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