



u n i t e d n a t i o n s d a y d i n n e r 2 0 0 2

24 october 2002,

mandarin ballroom,

mandarin singapore



UNITED NATIONS ASSOCIATION
OF SINGAPORE





DR AGNI VLAVIANOS ARVANITIS PRESIDENT AND FOUNDER
BIOPOLITICS INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION

It is a great honour and privilege to have been invited by Professor Tham Seong Chee, enlightened scholar and eminent Trustee of the Biopolitics International Organization (B.I.O.), to address this distinguished gathering of the United Nations Association of Singapore in commemoration of United Nations Day and the International Year of Mountains.

This event could not have been more timely. To strengthen our response to growing environmental challenges, a unifying vision is essential. This urgent need calls on the United Nations and world leaders to work in partnership to address environmental issues and to promote working links among governments, decision-makers, the private sector and civil society for the benefit of the environment and "bios" - life - on our planet.

Mountains, which provide most of the world's fresh water and harbour some of the richest biodiversity, are valuable resources in danger. Climate change, pollution, excessive mining, agriculture and tourism are putting tremendous pressure on mountain environments, leading to widespread degradation and increased risks of forest fires, soil erosion, floods and famine. The International Year of Mountains is a commendable United Nations initiative and an excellent opportunity to focus the world's attention on the protection of mountain environments and the intricate web of life that mountains sustain. By caring for our mountains, we ensure our long-term security and survival.

It is not only important to change attitudes, but also to motivate and empower people everywhere to act in defence of the environment. Mountain forests - the "lungs" of the body of bios - play a key role in oxygen production and in the maintenance of the atmosphere's ozone layer; both vital to our survival on the planet. Destruction of these forest ecosystems places the entire future of humanity at risk. To counter this risk, "defence for the environment" must become an international priority. If military aircraft, instead of dropping bombs, were used to drop seeds for reforestation, then war regimes would be converted to programmes for the preservation of the environment, and the entire planet would benefit.

Since its inception in 1985, the Biopolitics International Organization has promoted international co-operation in environmental protection and has sought to enrich every human endeavour with environmental dimensions. Our hope for the new millennium is to see a society based on bios supporting values where every individual will be involved in the race to save the environment. The Olympic Spirit and cease-fire during the Olympic Games, a proposal put forward by B.I.O. in 1992, can help humanity exit the present crisis in values that has resulted in serious environmental deterioration and to embrace a "biocentric" vision of hope and peace. Mythos, culture and other time spanning ideals, together with a global effort in support of the environment, can lead humanity towards a brighter future.