

RESPONSIBILITIES AND PENALTIES

THE NECESSITY FOR A WORLD EXECUTIVE INSTRUMENT FOR AIR AND WATER

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For over fifty years Commander Cousteau shed light on the mysteries of the world's oceans and made it possible for us to discover the beauty and fragility of our planet. At the same time, he made us conscious of our responsibility to guard this precious treasure.

Fifteen years ago, Commander Cousteau issued the *Rights of Future Generations*. The first article states that "future generations have the right to a pollution-free Earth." Many catastrophes had to take place before we realised that a world regulatory authority on air and water is essential.

Is it necessary to recall the Thalidomide scandal that was responsible for the birth of thousands of children with genetic defects? The Seveso accident in Italy, dioxins and poisoned soils? The Amoco Cadiz and Exxon Valdez accidents? The forest fires in Indonesia, mad-cow disease and depleted uranium contamination? Unfortunately, thousands of cases of environmental abuse can be listed on a daily basis.

The Cousteau Society is battling on three fronts. We are interested in documenting the state of the planet and are continuing our expeditions on our boat, *Alcyone*. We have launched an expedition to the Caspian Sea to study the state of the environment in an enclosed sea bordering on five countries. Our observations have been presented to the international scientific community and, today, form the basis of discussions aimed at finding concrete solutions for the Caspian Sea. Our work is also carried out in the North Pole. All our efforts are directly linked to the state of our planet's water reserves, be they fresh or saltwater.

We have also launched an extensive programme to save the world's coastline. Riverbeds, lakes and seacoasts all over the world are in great danger due to construction, deforestation, chemical and other forms of pollution. Seventy-five percent of water pollution comes from the Earth. Because people have the natural tendency to settle in areas where water is available, in less than 30 years 70% of the world's population will be living on the shores of lakes, rivers and oceans. It therefore became apparent to us that we should act immediately to prevent the world's coastline from turning into a giant sewer. We have proposed, through our work, an integrated approach to the management of the coastal environment, in a global and sustainable framework, involving co-operation among all littoral parties. This co-operation has a strong social element, providing work for the poor and encouraging development.

Finally, as initiated by Commander Cousteau, we are continuing to develop, together with UNESCO, university departments where long-term environmental responsibility is taught through the joint study of ecology, economics, technology and the humanities.

However, no matter what the effort, the problem of responsibilities and penalties is always present. There seems to be no pilot in the plane. There is no global authority with the executive power to set standards for air and water. Governments are refusing to intervene in the hallowed name of "national sovereignty." Industrialists get zero returns on polluting investments, nevertheless they see environmental norms as a monster threatening to devour their profits and condemn their development. Rich countries waste money on frivolities, while the rest of the world is struggling for food and water. Twenty-seven thousand people die each day because of the lack of safe drinking water.

In every environmental scandal, we search for those at fault. This is a time-consuming procedure and, usually, the damage is so extensive that it cannot be repaired. We therefore ask for a global authority to be established to set standards for air and water and to ensure that they are enforced. We fully associate ourselves with the efforts of Biopolitics and we will join forces to see that this goal is realised.

We would like this global authority to have executive power. Rather than being appointed by states, its representatives should be designated by the citizens, since they are the ones more apt to defend the interests of present and future generations. In the face of the evident weaknesses of the United Nations, this organisation should aim at modifying the UN Charter and rendering its executive power more effective. We regret the UN's resolute attitude, but we will not give in to discouragement. A first attempt at establishing, with minimal delay, an organisation for environmental regulation to arbitrate or adjudicate environmental conflicts could be made by the Council of Europe. However, the final objective of the Cousteau Society is to see, concomitantly, the establishment of a global authority on air and water by the High Court of Justice.

I am particularly proud to have been invited to Athens by Dr. Vlavianos-Arvanitis, to express the will to continue Commander Cousteau's work and to assist in the efforts of Biopolitics and of all who strive to save life on our planet.