

Third plenary session of the 9th World Forum for Democracy

“Can Democracy Save the Environment?”

- 1) Lawyers and businessmen are often accused to make simple things complicated. In next five minutes I would try to make extremely complicated things (as decarbonization and green deal) simpler.
- 2) Let's imagine that I am dreaming about new TESLA electric car, which seems fashionable, green and environment friendly. The only fact that makes me sad is that it is still twice more expensive than the same-class car with gasoline engine. Also, the charging station is ten miles away from my home. So, I need to persuade my wife and children that we should still own electric car to be happy and that it worth the higher price in long-term perspective. Also, I must be honest with them that we cannot afford the seaside holidays next summer to save money. As well, I will spend extra hours in the office to earn more.
- 3) According to the United Nations Environment Programme, annual investment in nature should reach approximately USD 500 billion annually by 2050 – in order to tackle the climate, biodiversity, and land degradation crises¹. Achieving carbon neutrality by the middle of this century will require more than 100 trillion US dollars - up to 5 trillion US dollars per year by 2030 - for a global shift in using energy sources. It is not abstract figure, it is money that each of us will pay.
- 4) It means that the sufficient financing of the nature-based solutions will impact dramatically the capacities of countries to make progress on other vital areas such as education, health and social policies. The same is true for businesses. The GDP and EBITDA cannot grow so quickly to cover new green costs. It means that we altogether finance the extremely ambitious environmental policy for account of something else, which is equally traditionally important for us. To put it simple: it looks not as investment by now, but as expense, unless the decarbonization by itself will stimulate the rapid economic growth and create unprecedented opportunities for business in green sectors.
- 5) Public expenses require to establish the highest level of openness and trust. Trust between governments and people that the extra-money they will pay in taxes and higher prices on every-day products, like electricity, heat or food are paid for better future. Trust between public and private sectors that expenses and loss of profit will not be discriminatory and that clear and transparent rules will be democratically established and enforced. Finally, trust between the states that green agenda is not used as the instrument of trade wars, illegal sanctions and political oppression in international relations.
- 6) We see that the lack of trust has definitely made it harder to unite the world in struggling global challenges, like COVID-19 pandemic. Consider, for example, issues in many countries where public does not trust the clear medical measures

¹ <https://www.unep.org/resources/state-finance-nature>

to prevent further pandemic or the obstacles in cross-border certifying of vaccines. It is also the issue for the “green” agenda now.

- 7) Important role of democratic institutions, and the Council of Europe specifically, is actually to create trust and transparency in the course of discussing climate issues to address the challenge properly.
- 8) To establish trust, we all should be honest, consistent and have facts in hands. Electricity became number one energy source and we have to consider how increasing industrial demand corresponds with the overall green strategy. Also, please have in mind that now almost 1 billion people on the planet have no regular access to the electricity power at all. It is important that economic development, which for decades gives us jobs, social and political stability would be preserved.
- 9) This is still a big challenge for world institutions to maintain a transparent approach here. For example, only few experts pointed that the breakdown of oil-based transport will not just cause the global rise of electricity prices, but also the rebuilding of all electricity supply wires for increasing voltage. It is like to say in 1900 that by 1920 horses must be replaced by cars everywhere, and that we immediately need million of kilometers of autobahns and thousand gasoline stations and car maintenance depots. It would be totally unrealistic and disruptive goal. Although, evolutionary it happened during the whole twentieth century, smoothly adapting economies, infrastructure and way of life worldwide.
- 10) Should we return to animal-drawn traffic again? I am sure that there is no consensus between nations that we need to get back to pre-historic deindustrialized, de-urbanised and de-populated Earth to become green. Different countries have different capabilities and economic strength so the “green” burden should be fairly distributed. Otherwise, without the large-scale financial support the poor communities will become more poor due to the decline in export, inflation and unemployment. We know cases when countries are seeking to write off international debts in exchange for the national progress in achievement of global climate goals. The idea of “debt-for-climate swap”, offered by the International Monetary Fund, has been already supported by some countries.
- 11) While it is important to fight the global climate change we have to keep in mind that it should not be to disadvantage the people and destruct immediately their way of life. The price must not be overwhelming for a customer, tax-payer, shareholder, investor, citizen, human. Otherwise, one day we will discover ourselves returning from the inspiring conference about the environmental revolution to the cold and dark house with starving children.
- 12) So, can democracy save the environment? I strongly believe it can, united by single goal of preserving our planet we may achieve outstanding results in solving the most important problem of the century and balancing our common values, ambitious aims and achievements of the civilization.
- 13) Thank you