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# Saint Malo Summit

## Transcription of the address by Mr Nicolas HULOT

Wednesday 29 October, AM

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I do not wish to put a damper on discussions but I would like to address a misunderstanding: there will be no solution to the climate crisis as long as no strategy exists enabling us to continue as before, making only marginal changes.

Like you, I hear people talking about an increasing number of crises. We could either panic or welcome this news if we believe, as Winston Churchill once said, that “*Chaos can bring hope*”. Let us hope that we seize this opportunity that will not come knocking a second time.

The climate crisis is gathering pace and is combined with many other crises. We have arrived at a crossroads of crises, a wonderful crossroads in my view and I do not believe that we have to tackle them all separately. I think that we must address this systemic crisis - because this is how we should see this key challenge that we must face clearly and courageously - by tackling them all together. Yet we must bear in mind that it is our development model that is at the root of all this disorder and it does not provide a solution. It is important to say things as they are. This crossroads of crises is going to tax our intelligence more than ever as long as we accept to pool our resources for once. The word intelligence stems from the Latin “*inter legere*”, “*legere*” meaning to choose. This is where, at this time and at this crucial point in our civilisation’s path, I would like to take our discussions.

From now on, we will be forced to take on the essential concept of choice, and for me it is the basis of freedom. Let’s look at the common denominator of all our crises: food crises, significantly worsened recently in our haste to solve the so-called energy crisis with agro-fuels, the energy crisis, the extent of which we can only guess at as long as we continue to deny that we are drawing on limited reserves, in this field as in others. The ecological crisis too, a general umbrella term including biodiversity extinction - do I need to tell you that we are wiping nature’s hard drive -, and the climate crisis that is becoming more serious and is changing scale.



I am deeply convinced that all these crises have a common cause and if our solutions are merely technological or financial, we can only go halfway to overcoming them.

I think that we are going through a very deeply-rooted cultural crisis and that the common cause of all this disorder is our chronic inability to set ourselves limits. I am of course speaking of our western societies, I will not be as insulting as to share the blame with emerging countries, or Southern countries.

Paracelsus said ***“All things are poison and nothing is without poison, only the dose permits something not to be poisonous”***. We are now individually and collectively obliged to set ourselves limits. We must extricate ourselves from the system we are each compelled to belong to. In other words, we must urgently, nationally, globally, locally and individually accept to sort through possibilities, free ourselves from the two principles that have brought about our evolution and that are driving us into the brick wall that we are hitting today. Firstly the technological principle: “if we can do it, then we do it” and secondly the economic principle: “if we can have it, then we have it”. This is no longer possible in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Here we come back to my notion of choice, which is the cornerstone of our societies’ progress: we must choose. We cannot be everywhere and have everything. We must end this model based on competition, which itself is based on accumulation and predation, and move towards an economic model that does not erase the future. At a time when everyone is focusing on the current financial crisis - which is becoming an economic crisis and, as predicted, a social crisis - I would like to remind you that the current model is traditionally based on the despoilment or seizure of natural resources. I do not see why today we focus on the economic crisis, saying as usual, “we’ll deal with the ecological and climate crises later”.

Edgar Morin said ***“By continuing to compromise what is essential to deal with emergencies, what is essential has become an emergency”***.

The economic and ecological crises are not two separate issues. The basis of the current economic crisis, which is only beginning, is mainly the collapse of our natural system. If we carry on as normal with this model, which is at the root of all disorder, plastering over a few cracks here and there, we will only put off catastrophe.

In other words, this crisis is an ultimate paradox. If we continue on as normal, time will decide on change, and it will be dramatic for each of us, - and the North should not think for one second that by putting up all kinds of barriers it will be able to escape from the series of consequences brought on by climate change. The North will benefit if the South wins the battle, and the South will benefit if nature itself is saved. This crossroads of crises is an unexpected and singular chance to act as one human race, so long as, and this is the goal of this conference, we put aside our differences and bear in mind that nature’s unity, like human unity, comes and draws strength from its diversity. This will not happen unless we share our best resources once and for all and unless we provide human intelligence, and our technological and economic abilities, with a credible roadmap.

The 21<sup>st</sup> century cannot tolerate the same logic and diverse behaviour as the 20<sup>th</sup>. At a time when we need to massively pool all our resources, as in wartime, with a real Marshall Plan to ensure the economic and ecological transition, we cannot continue putting thousands of billions of dollars in military budgets. These are the drastic choices that we will have to make. We must stop fooling ourselves, or to be more lenient, we must put right this misunderstanding in which we think that we can continue as before. If we want to reduce the potential for suspicion-fuelled conflicts, we must share and therefore regulate. One of the fundamental changes our economies will have to make involves our indicators, our accounting, which must include negative externalities. We must also shift

our labour-based tax system to encompass property, pollution and energy. This is what we must regulate.

Yes, another world is possible. Whether we like it or not, and I'm convinced that, here, we share the drive to build it together. The heart of democracy means officially stating that this disorder and evil comes from within. We all share part of the responsibility for negative and positive factors. As soon as we become aware of the stakes and convert this awareness into real actions, this is the first victory over our worst enemy, fatalism. We cannot lose hope. I am saying this as, like you, I am in a position to say that sometimes it is an act of bravery to remain optimistic or to have hope at such a momentous time for mankind. We must fight against fatalism and resignation. We all have part of the solution within us, so I am pleased about actions and contributions on a Regional Government scale but we must ensure that your efforts are not thwarted or countered by a spiralling model.

Infinite growth in a finite world is an illusion. Tomorrow, we will be forced to choose selective growth. The world cannot cope with a constant stream of people, material and energy. These flows must be divided between economic growth and the growth of material and energy transfers. This is a complete change in paradigm. It is the message I wanted to give today, and I wish you much success in your work.

Thank you.