
Sharing: To Eradicate Poverty, Strengthen Institutions and World Education for Reconciliation and Peace

A Presentation by Liberato C. Bautista¹

**at a Side Event organized by the
Foundation for Subjective Experience and Research (Germany)
on the sides of the 68th Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women**

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NGO colleagues, friends, ladies and gentlemen.

1. Thank you, Josefine Brecht, for having me on this panel on a crucial and urgent topic, such as eradicating poverty, strengthening institutions, and the need for peace and reconciliation in the world, and achieving them through education that is at once local and global—which global citizenship education must be about. I am especially delighted that the Foundation for Subjective Experience and Research is a member of CoNGO. I have been involved in their programs in New York and Germany, including their network, which includes the Baltic Sea Forum.
2. The theme for today's discussion is at once simple and complex. Simple because who can disagree with the urgency of eradicating poverty or the need for education (local, global, and perhaps education for global citizenship, too)? And who can disagree with the need for reconciliation and peace today? Possibly, no one disagrees with these aspirations, but how and what kind of resources we must gather and mobilize, and who must do them and make them possible, is the more challenging part of the theme. The organizers suggest that SHARING is that value that makes it possible. I agree.
3. Let me characterize the social, economic, and political context in which we are and why eradicating poverty and achieving gender equality and gender justice are urgent. Today, there is a surplus of fear and a deficit of hope among the world's people. I have often spoken about fear and hope because people's futures and those of our planets are at stake. That future is imperiled. People and the planet are imperiled. It is so imperiled that forecasting the future might require

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an immediate and minimal undertaking—eliminating hunger and eradicating poverty. Even as we affirm the interdependence and interrelatedness of the 17 SDGs, these and other development goals revolve around an ethical imperative that if we fail it, all else will fall short—and that ethical imperative is eliminating hunger and eradicating poverty. As governments, civil society groups, and the UN System get closer to the UN Civil Society Conference (Nairobi, May 9-10, 2024) and the Summit of the Future (New York, September 22-23, 2024), and as multiple stakeholders engage in the Zero Draft of the Pact for the Future, I dare say that the future will get bleaker before it gets better unless we address hunger and poverty which mires the lives and livelihoods of the majority of the world's people.

4. Today's theme implies the importance of strengthening multilateral institutions, which I agree with. But with caveats, to include for now the importance of revisiting the institutions that have been put in place to check the excesses of national assertions of sovereignty (transborder aggression and wars, colonialism and imperial conquest) but also to harness the power of working together under the rule of law, both national and international law. The aspect of sharing in the theme must animate this imperative to strengthen institutions so that even as nation-states assert sovereignty, such sovereignty must be in the interest of building a world animated by peace and security, human dignity and human rights, sustainable development and human progress—to quote the pillars of the UN.

5. Civil society formations, primarily organized into NGOs, are crucial in bettering our world—be it the relations of nations or the relations of peoples. Each stakeholder must play their parts—singly in their mandates and jointly with others in addressing issues that impact the well-being and dignity of populations through acts of solidarity that aim for the achievement of social justice in all its forms—gender justice, climate justice, intergenerational justice, economic justice, migration justice, climate justice, and so much more. Social justice and social solidarity are aspirations that must be pursued if peace among people, nations, and the planet is to be achieved.

6. This is why when we imagine what future we might help to carve for ourselves and future generations already born and yet to be born, our imagination of that future must include the creation of inclusive and resilient communities where livelihoods are sustainable, with decent jobs and living wages. The well-being and dignity of people and their communities are ensured. Even as we must move away from continually blaming the COVID-19 pandemic as responsible for the health dilemmas and economic problems we face today, we must still look at health justice as a critical component of social justice, without which the value of sharing will falter and not flourish.

7. Sharing can thrive and prosper when we foster transformative social protection systems in national and international policies. But even more, when we add to these arrangements the right to development that includes socially just international trade agreements, financial architecture that advances human rights, and, I must add, promotes the concept and practice of food sovereignty, which is foundational to what makes for resilience and inclusion in society, and crucial to the eradication of poverty. The survival of humanity is at stake in an ever more imperiled and unsustainable natural ecology. Intersecting crises endanger the health of people

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and the planet, not the least brought about by the health and social pandemics, global violence and wars, global forced migration, climate crisis, racial injustice, and so much more.

8. To decrease fear, we must affirm the fundamental principle that human dignity and human rights are non-negotiables. To increase hope, we must build a shared future for all the inhabitants of the earth and their natural ecology by promoting and safeguarding the common public goods and services indispensable to human life, their livelihoods, and their neighborhoods. At face value, you may think that decreasing fear and increasing hope are fundamental tasks of nation-states. Nay—it is a task for all. Recovery from the intersecting pandemics that people and the planet face today must not only be inclusive of and resilient for people and the planet but also just. Justice must be at the heart of recovery. After all, we are recovering from past historical injustices, including slavery, colonialism, and racism, that have marginalized peoples, plundered their lands and resources, and subverted their human dignity and their communities, primarily indigenous communities. When inclusion, resilience, and justice unite, we can move away from the prevalence of fear and transition into the resurgence of hope.

9. Justice is what rights and wrongs pandemics are made of. When justice is pursued, resilience goes beyond the human capacity to adapt. When people who have undergone injustices for centuries and among generations in their families and communities undertake acts to unyoke themselves from such injustices, I refuse to call that recovery. It is transformation in its most fundamental, if revolutionary, sense. We must not consign resilience to resignation as if we will weather every climate and economic crisis without structural and systemic changes. Nay, resilience must be about uprooting the intersecting social pandemics and injustices that have entrenched people and the planet in hunger and poverty.

10. The impoverization that has resulted from shameful acts of injustice in human history has plunged our planet into the precipice of unsustainability and the resulting dehumanization and commodification of people and populations everywhere. The concerns of this side event are most commendable because they can summon and mobilize both material and moral resources to undo the entanglements of public policy with such injustices that allow for poverty and hunger and for wars and violence to linger longer. And if this happens, our yearnings for successfully implementing the SDGs and achieving gender justice will have come to naught.

11. We must increase hope and decrease fear through arrangements that genuinely put people and the planet at the center of the local and global public imagination and public policy action. We certainly need global leadership—and global citizenship education—to help identify catalytic action and strategies for transformative change. Multilateralism and sovereignty as we know them today must be reformed if reformulated, as they will no longer suffice for that catalytic and transformative change I have described.

12. The challenge to multilateralism today is not only that the world's problems have exponentially multiplied over as imagined since the Peace of Westphalia in the early 17th century that endowed us with the notion of sovereignty and sovereign nation-states who can contract treaties between and among them. The true challenge to multilateralism lies in the

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urgency that these sovereign nation-states recognize how each of their people and their natural ecology is tied to the survivability and sustainability of all others and that acting together globally is in their local and national interest. Doing so makes for that peace and reconciliation conceived in this side event's concept note.

13. In my former office at the National Council of Churches in the Philippines hangs a poster produced by the Peace and Justice Center in Marin, California. The text on the poster said these words that continue to influence my thinking and doing: "At the table of peace shall be bread and justice." Food invokes images of a table where we break bread together, tell stories of lives and living, families forge solidarity, and peace talks are held. I agree with this image because the peace we seek needs women and youth to populate the tables of peace where bread and water, peace and justice, are served.

Thank you for your kind attention.

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