

## **GLOBAL WARMING – SOCIETAL EFFECTS AND LIONISM**

What about global warming and its consequences? Is it a fact or hype? Even scientists cannot agree about it. Being fed with this theme on daily basis, everyone starts pondering about this disturbing issue. My particular area of interest revolves around the societal effects of global warming and the role of our Lionistic society in possible future scenarios.

In case we are speaking about hype (in a foreseeable time period), it is an optimistic scenario in which Lionism stays as is, continuing and enlarging its noble duties. In case we are speaking about imminent fact, we must be prepared on pessimistic scenario, in which our lives and the lives of further generations could be gravely affected. This is the scenario I will consider.

Even this scenario could be manifested in two ways. More immediate effects of the global warming spiral, like polar caps melting, coastal areas flooding, rivers and aquifers drying up, deforestation, ozone layer depletion, etc, are actively creating the new environment on which we must adapt. However, some scientists claim that we are actually facing the end of the interglacial era, and prophesy quite reverse effects of Gulfstream cooling, ice spreading far from the Poles, etc. Paradoxically, in such a case, global warming could save us some time before entering the new Ice age.

Whatever the future will be, such a chain of events will probably put in question entire civilization, including our association as its proud part.

If in such scenarios the part of the population remains without land, potable water or other (now taken for granted) utilities, all values should be challenged, and everything could evolve in the struggle for pure survival.

We cannot exclude wars for land and water, emergence of climate refugees, hunger because of a loss of arable land and plants, freezing to death because of the lack of energy for heating, or natural disasters close to biblical proportions in which thousands will perish.

If we only look at the already published doomsday geography, we can easily start imagining frightful scenarios of international clashes over remaining resources.

To sum up, a lot of trouble is on the horizon for the humanity. That means that we should also reconsider our mission in such changed circumstances.

When established, Lionism was meant to last, i.e., to last in the continuity of prospering civilization. Discontinuities of great world wars and great depression hindered its role to some extent, but the pessimistic scenarios of global warming will probably bring very different and possibly unbridgeable discontinuity.

Like in 1945, when Lions, as one of the first nongovernmental organizations, were invited to assist in the drafting of the United Nations Charter, we should also be involved in charting of the future human relations. After all, our vision is to be the global leader in community and humanitarian service and this is the area in which we could really contribute.

Let's look at the situation and our possible strategies from the two viewpoints. The first one should deal with the more immediate effects of global warming, not taking in care the full extent of possible political or societal issues, and the second one will focus just on these issues.

Regarding the first one, let's consider the current situation regarding global warming after 'Copenhagen Accord'. Its most important and the most effective outcome is surely 'Copenhagen Green Climate Fund', envisioned as the financing vehicle of the UNFCCC<sup>1</sup> for projects, programmes, policies and other activities in combating negative effects of the climate change. However, the amounts which are necessary for its serious start are immense and will surely not be collected till the next convention in Cancun.

Nevertheless, mere establishment of such a fund is notable civilization achievement, and I think that our organization should be connected with it in some way.

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

The astonishing success of Sight First initiatives leaves little doubt that we cannot contribute as well as our activities regarding Tsunami in Indian ocean or Haiti earthquake.

The apparent way of our inclusion would be via relief programmes for areas affected by negative effects of climate change, like areas hit with floods or draughts, or to participate in REDD+<sup>2</sup> programme, or to fund production of NAMA-s<sup>3</sup>, or something else directly connected. We could call it 'Lions Global Warming Relief Fund'.

This could be officially announced on our annual convention in Sidney and presented on the next UNFCCC convention in Mexico.

Regarding the second one, more frightening effects of disruption of human relations directly interfere with one of our purposes – 'to create and foster a spirit of understanding among the peoples of the world', forcing us to consider societal issues of global warming more deeply. We are facing the joint enemy of the humanity that knows neither borders nor nations.

These are serious matters asking for serious approach. The three years EU CLICO<sup>4</sup> project that the European Union has started under the EU 7<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme will give some answers to that end.

Since this project directly relates to our Mediterranean area, we should monitor its evolvment and try to match our activities with its findings. One of the really great things about this project is the collaboration of Israeli and Palestinian researchers about the joint water problems.

We should also actively monitor all other similar projects and initiatives, as well as works of various think tanks, in order to be ready to cope with these issues in efficient way.

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<sup>2</sup> Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation

<sup>3</sup> Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions

<sup>4</sup> Climate Change, Hydro-conflicts and Human Security

In the meantime, we should work on the raising of public awareness for this subject. This could be done by fostering similar themes on future Mediterranean conventions (as well as on Europa Forums or our annual conventions). We could also organize Internet forums on this theme, or scientific conventions, where we will invite leading analyzers and opinion makers in that field.

We should also influence authorities in our countries to improve the urban planning and management of coastal areas, which in many cases does not take in account the issues of possible future coastal flooding or worse.

In any case, we should be proactive in this theme, because we don't want to see these problems coming with no strategy prepared for tackling with them.

The basic idea behind any action would be to spread the spirit of humanity that prevents the outbreak of hatred and violence in moments of such global crisis.

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