

Summary of Keynote Address by Prof. Dr. Franz Josef Radermacher

held at ISPRS Centenary, Vienna City Hall, July 4, 2010:

Prof. Dr. Franz Josef Radermacher of Ulm, Germany, has been a founding member of the famous "Club of Rome". His keynote paper was a timely contribution on issues facing human society. Professor Radermacher acknowledged the contribution of ISPRS for international understanding and its reflection on the past, which is the key for the future. 100 years ago, the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, as well as the Ottoman Empire, had elements of a supranational structure which failed, but from which, in all modesty, we can learn lessons. Each generation can move forward in small steps or, as expressed by the Viennese economist Schumpeter, dwarfs standing on the shoulders of giants. We can easily lose what scientists have brought about. It is the ability to cooperate which can be the most powerful driver. Technology alone is not enough; it must be used for the right purposes. Engineers in the past have been successfully solving problems, until an even bigger problem has often arisen. Examples of the boomerang effects and ensuing frustrations have been the invention of the "paperless office", which created the biggest paper demand ever; or the idea that the Internet would stop people from travelling. Now we travel all the time, despite or because of it.

At the present time, when half the human population earns less than \$2 per day, there is not enough food for everyone. Nevertheless, cows which are raised to feed us, consume more resources than humans. The production of bio-diesel is a similar issue. The adoption of a modesty principle would be appropriate. The main effort should be on human cooperation, not on self-destructive competition. Competition should be regulated by law. 1000 years ago Europe lived in the dark ages: progress then went on in the Islamic world. Today, China is on the rise. Should the winner take all? Or should also the loser gain some?

The present global environmental problems have accelerated. Will we have a 2 degree increase in global temperature? Will we cope with global reforestation, which calls for 5 million square km of new forest by 2040? At the Environmental Conference in Copenhagen there was a negative press with respect to China and India, and yet these countries have a much lower CO₂ emission per inhabitant, than the developed countries. We should cooperate and accept the modest offers made by these countries, and not dictate to them on how they should behave. We know that the financial sector needs regulations, as the free market alone cannot solve all problems. Therefore, we need an ecological-social balance.

Adam Smith, the philosophical founder of capitalism worked under reasonable regulations, economy was a tool in this framework for him. The Club of Rome and the Global Ecoforum suggest that we need science and we need cooperation. Greed does not bring happiness, but mutual understanding does.

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