

The WFSW Newsletter 7 (2014-1)

Climate change : urgency, ethics, responsibility of scientists The World Federation of Scientific Workers sounds an ALARM

The whole world faces a twofold challenge : to redefine the relations between human beings and our planet, and relations among human beings

Global warming, waste, depletion of natural resources, pollution - all these factors cause or aggravate the scourges affecting hundreds of millions of human beings, including in the rich countries : poverty, hunger, non-access to drinking water, illiteracy, epidemics, exoduses. Human activities are now changing the fundamental conditions of life on earth. The dangers are well known. They are scientifically documented. The future of human society is inseparable from the future of our planet.

The earth as a physical object in space which has already undergone great upheavals over 5 billion years will find other states of balance. What about life on Gaia ? We human beings, who have occupied this planet only for 0,004 % of this time, have in a few centuries, damaged the earth's ecosystems and endangered our survival.

Researchers, engineers and technicians, teachers, in other words all our professions, our working conditions, or social aspirations must be viewed as inseparable from our commitment in the face of this twofold challenge.

"I am totally dependent on the life of others. I owe to Man what I know and what I think, and I discover that I am a member of a human community. My value consists in recognizing this." Einstein

What is at stake is the political will of States. In keeping with their commitments, they must implement immediately the processes of reducing greenhouse gases. This calls for action on the part of the citizens of the entire world. The divergences that remain concerning this or that conclusion at a scientific level justify neither indifference nor inaction on the part of decision-makers or on the part of citizens. Such divergences have always existed.

Following in the footsteps of whistle-blowers, we call upon scientific workers and their organizations, trade unions as well as professional organizations, to act so as to :

- 1) **Adjust** human activity to natural systems and anticipate the emergence of problems.
- 2) **Produce differently**, saving natural resources and developing renewable energies while at the same time meeting the basic needs of all human populations.
- 3) **Organize** the growth of some and the negative growth of others, through restraint, reduction of waste, balanced management of raw materials, and especially by giving priority to public needs shared by all.

This newsletter reports the texts adopted or initiated by the General Assembly n°21 which was held in Russia - September 8-12, 2013

This general assembly was marked by the growth in the number of foreign delegates who responded to the invitation of the host country, in the number of countries represented, and also in the number of organizations applying for membership. From a qualitative perspective, the sessions were characterized by the richness and the vivacity of the discussions. We receive this as a sign of expectation toward us on the part of a wide variety of organizations. We therefore face a challenge, a challenge which will lead us to diversify, innovate, or even redefine the contributions of the Federation to its member organizations. Reciprocally, these member organizations can contribute much more to the life and achievements of the Federation.

The secretariat

This entails:

4) A fundamental reorientation of political and economic choices. It is our duty as scientists to fight against the quasi-religious belief in the omnipotence of financial markets.

5) A reduction in the extravagant inequalities between incomes as well as assets because of the injustice that they represent, but also because of the waste and damage to the environment that they cause. We support the idea of a worldwide tax on capital.

6) Rebuilding international bodies with political and financial resources making it possible to achieve sustainable development and to share more equitably the fruits of growth.

Only one year remains before the 19th Conference on the Climate, to be held in Paris in 2015. The situation is urgent !

Declaration of the WFSW on current developments in the organization of research

Historically, the development of knowledge in each country has been mainly based on university institutions and various permanent research institutes such as academies, institutes, public research centres and laboratories, etc. Nowadays, the control and channeling of research systems constitute a priority for governments, agencies, or intergovernmental institutions (OECD, etc.). These objectives are explicitly described in the guiding principles of New Public Management introduced in the 90's ("*market-managers-measurement*").

To control and channel development of science and scientific research topics, governments use two methods. One is control of funding, the other is arbitrary or purported assessment of the « *quality* » or « *excellence* » of research. As a result, academic and scientific communities are excluded from decision-making processes. Financial aims are largely favoured at the expense of economic, social, environmental, and cultural ones. Basic research is thus sacrificed. Knowledge and university degrees become commercial products.

Instead of promoting fruitful scientific cooperation for the advancement of knowledge, these practices foster counter-productive competition between researchers and between research teams. Moreover, they are a factor in the increase in the number of insecure jobs among young scientists.

The WFSW denounces and opposes this conception and organization of research. The WFSW calls for the maintenance and creation of permanent funding structures as well as permanent jobs for young scientists. The WFSW and its organizations will strive to ensure the conditions indispensable to the transmission of knowledge and balanced development of science, public good of humanity.

Declaration on Nuclear energy

The Fukushima catastrophe reopens the question of the safety of nuclear energy production facilities, radioprotection of persons, and information for citizens. The WFSW puts forward the following demands :

- true independence of international and national bodies in charge of nuclear safety and the safety of facilities ;
- by states to give priority to safety in view of the current trend toward cost-cutting ;
- that governments cannot take decisions alone concerning the nuclear sector, the share of nuclear energy in each country, and in the long-term the decision to keep or abandon nuclear power. Only a process of dialogue between civil society and its elected representatives based on the consultation of all persons working in in the nuclear sector and their trade union organizations will make it possible to take decisions in the general interest and to eliminate the possibility of conflicts of interest ;
- complete and regular inspection of existing nuclear facilities in countries with nuclear power plants in order to assess the reliability of the facilities, the risks due to their ageing, risks related to maintenance and operation as well as earthquake or flood risks ;
- the assessment of the cost and conditions of waste processing and the dismantling of nuclear facilities ;
- The working conditions and health risks for all employees in the nuclear sector, full-time employees or temporarily sub-contracted employees, must be made transparent. Knowledge of the working conditions, questions of fuel supply and waste processing must be subject to international cooperation in a spirit of planetary solidarity and protection of all peoples.

Resolution concerning the project of Federal Law about the Russian Academy of Sciences and the reorganization of the state academies of sciences

Analyzing the numerous decisions of meetings of labor collectives and workers of the Russian Academy of Sciences (RAS), expressions of majority of members of the Academy and opinion of the international community, the delegates of the 21st General Assembly of WFSW consider that the bill in its current form will :

- lead to the liquidation of current very high effective system of organization of researches in Russia in some institutions of RAS and produce problems with employment in others ;
- eliminate social guaranties and social programs in Institutes of RAS ;
- disrupt fundamental researches in Russia ;
- start a new turn of massive outflow of young scientists from academic science.

All delegates of the 21st General Assembly of WFSW require Russian Power to stop the bill about RAS and to start a dialogue with scientists and their Trade Union about reformation of RAS.

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