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As confirmed by the numerous international summits on climate change that have taken place in recent months, and by the scientific comment that has accompanied them, global warming is no longer just an uncomfortable prediction, but instead an undeniable reality. In spite of this, and of the advanced scientific debate on the issue, the debate on the policies needed in order to tackle this global emergency has barely begun.

Now, the question on the agenda is not *whether* there will be any effects of global warming, but rather *in what framework* and *in what way* these effects must be dealt with. The uncertainty that still remains over when and where the effects of climate change will be felt does not alter the basic fact of global warming, on which climate trends now depend. It is now recognised that the greenhouse gases so far released into the earth's atmosphere will produce an increase in global temperatures as early as the decade 2020-2030, and that after 2040 not even significant reductions in emissions of these gases will be able, this century, to reverse the trend of rising global temperatures. The climate changes that will accompany this phenomenon will certainly have dramatic repercussions in a global power framework that, like today's multipolar world, is already characterised by marked economic and military imbalances and huge inequalities between the different world regions. There is a real risk that, in the absence of a democratic world government, these climatic changes may act as catalysts, plunging the world into a prolonged period of extremely confrontational relations between states. For this reason, too, it has become imperative to promote a transition towards an evolutionary world order, different from the present one, within which it might be possible, in concrete terms, to pursue international, cooperative government of these global emergencies.

But such a transition, in the current situation, is inconceivable on account of the profound divergence of interests and the growing mistrust that characterise relations between the USA, China and Russia. Only a Europe endowed with the capacity to act, and carrying real political weight on the international stage, can hope to restore balance and harmony to these relations. But as long as the Europeans remain divided, they will remain incapable of offering the rest of the world any contribution at all, lacking the instruments both to promote the birth of a more just and more balanced world order, and to safeguard their own future through the introduction of countermeasures designed to prevent the effects of climate change that will also hit their own economies and national security systems, making them more fragile.

No one, especially in Europe, seems really to appreciate this emergency and these responsibilities. The majority continue to delude themselves (and public opinion) that a global problem, like that of stabilising the climate, can be tackled through an array of micro-revolutions (cultural, technological and in the spheres of production and consumption) organised at national level. This delusion, which, among other things, gave rise to the Kyoto Protocol and the plans of the European Commission, is itself the result of a serious political error that could prove fatal: the error of thinking that the power needed to create global governance of the environment already exists, when, in fact, it has yet to be created.

The Kyoto Protocol itself bears this out. This treaty, promoted a decade ago by the Europeans, and even at the time seen as inadequate, has not been respected by the very European countries that wanted it. The fact that the USA failed to ratify the protocol and China and India refused to submit to the limited restrictions it introduced must be put down to the lack of credibility of the Europeans, to their divergent foreign and energy policies, and

to the absence of a real European negotiating power at international level. Ten years ago, it was already patently obvious that the European Union (then with 15 members) was not going to be capable of imposing, on its members, stringent policies for cutting atmospheric emissions. Today, in fact, only the UK and Sweden can be said to be honouring, on paper at least and each in its own way, their undertakings in relation to the Kyoto Protocol. Even the hopes of achieving miraculous results through use of the logic of the markets have come up against the wall of Europe's division. Indeed, what has emerged has been the dubious international trading of pollution rights (a system proposed some time ago by the USA, which had already long operated a market of this kind domestically), and its initial results are plain for all to see: last year, trading of these rights, on the one hand, made it economical for some countries, like the UK, to increase their consumption of coal-based energy as opposed to cleaner combustibles, and, on the other, led countries like Japan to prefer to go on failing to honour their Kyoto commitments rather than purchasing pollution rights from countries (like Russia) that still have a precarious environmental policy.

Today, the European Commission's plan on climate and energy is – once again – full of grandiose European undertakings, and the task of actually carrying them out is – once again – left to the governments of the single European countries. Just like ten years ago, we are faced with the deeply mistaken illusion that it is enough to establish objectives (inadequate, what is more) for these to become achievable. According to this plan, the European Union should be seeking to reconcile its commitment to reducing the phenomenon of global warming with Europe's need to secure its energy supplies. In fact, the current trend is one of increased European reliance on supplies of Russian, Algerian and Asian gas; there is no European nuclear policy, and rates of consumption of renewable energy sources differ from country to country; meanwhile, the aim of providing incentives to encourage consumption of biofuels, in the absence of an adequate European agricultural production base in the sector, is destined merely to shift Europe's dependence on external energy to other continents (North and South America).

If the Europeans really want to play a part in the debate on the future of our world's climate and to help to solve the political problem that underlies it, i.e., the division of the human race, then they must abandon these delusions and self-mystifications and start facing the facts and tackling them in concrete terms. Any attempt to stabilise the climate, to be effective, will have to be decided and pursued on a vast scale, and this must happen within the next two decades. And since, at the present time, it is inconceivable that we might see the immediate and drastic widespread reduction of all fossil fuels that would be capable of producing its effects within the first half of this century, then we must at least lay plans, at continental and global level, to mitigate the consequences of the unavoidable trend of global warming.

It thus falls to the Europeans to make it possible for a European pole of power to enter the world stage where it can promote a transition towards global governance of environmental problems. This means creating, within a short space of time, a European federal state as large and powerful as the other global powers. It goes without saying that this level of awareness will not arise from the current debate over whether or not to re-launch the European Constitutional Treaty. The Constitutional Treaty, after all, seeks to solve the problems of governing a Union made up of twenty-seven countries, or more, whereas the re-launch of Europe as a political entity can come about only if some countries – and it is difficult to imagine that these countries might come from outside the Six that first started the process of European integration – can finally see that they must take the decisive step of entering into a federal pact that goes beyond the existing Treaties. With such an act of political union the Europeans could not give the rest of the world a clearer or more concrete signal that there does indeed exist an alternative to a future dominated by the threat of international anarchy and uncertainty over our climate.

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