

## A NEW GLASNOST FOR THE PLANET

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It may seem paradoxical, but despite having borne witness to the countless humanitarian and environmental disasters of recent decades, I am an optimist.

But being an optimist does not mean simply looking at the world through rose-tinted glasses, like Voltaire's *Candide*, and declaring everything to be for the best, despite an endless array of misfortunes. Being an optimist, as I see it, means to refuse to make do with the status quo, and instead to consciously look for ways to make the world a better place and help address the practical challenges faced by people here and now.

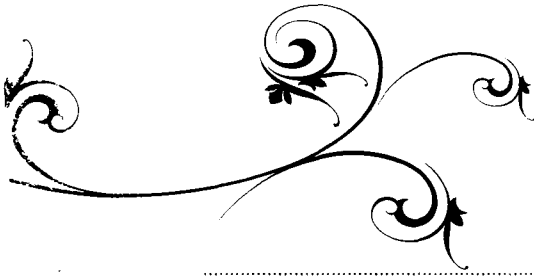
I call this 'optimism by action', and I believe that such a philosophy of life can provide the catalyst for our much-needed transformation to sustainable development.

Twenty years ago, when *Glasnost* – openness – was used to launch the process of *Perestroika* that transformed the Soviet Union, no one believed that it was doable. But I was driven by the need to 'wake up' those people who had 'fallen asleep' and make them truly active and concerned; to ensure that everyone felt as if they were master of their country, of their enterprise, office or institute: to fully involve the individual in all of the processes concerned.

Today, I am convinced that, as citizens of the world, we need a reformulated *Glasnost* to invigorate, inform and inspire us to put the staggering resources of our planet and our knowledge of it, to use for the benefit of all of Earth's citizens.

*Glasnost* could be put to service as a catchall phrase for all of the instruments in the struggle for transparency and awareness. *Glasnost* is more than transparency; it is a demanding, long-term process of awakening which inevitably leads to calls for fundamental changes. A reversal of currently prevalent behavioral patterns must begin with changes in the human spirit and a reprioritization of our value system, including relationships between people, and the man-nature interrelationship.

This means solidarity of a higher order than that of previous models found in small groups, communities and social movements: one that more equitably balances the burdens and benefits



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of globalization and brings about a just and caring world order. It is a solidarity that presents itself as the pillar of sustainable development in all its human and inter-generational aspects.

“Judge not by words, but by deeds,” should be our mantra. This is precisely why we need a new *Glasnost* for the planet, one that will inspire its citizens to become actively involved today in the struggle for a better tomorrow.

I believe in people and will remain an optimist – an active one – calling for dynamic and positive change.