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## Only a global ethics can turn information into wisdom

### The Club of Rome Helsinki -conference concluded on a note of hope

The annual conference of the Club of Rome, organized in Helsinki between October 11.-12., under the heading "Limits to Ignorance: The Challenge of Informed Humanity", drew to a close this Tuesday with a speech by the president of Finland, **Ms Tarja Halonen**.

In her presentation president Halonen accentuated that the cornerstone of a fairer globalization lies in meeting the demands of the people.

"It is remarkable how often people's needs and well-being are forgotten when discussing globalization. Emphasis has been on economic liberalization, market access and macroeconomic policies, which are - no doubt - important issues. Anyhow, these are not ends in themselves, but means for improving people's life", Halonen pointed out, and suggested that that a multi-disciplinary investigation into the effects that globalization has on work and labour would be an ideal project for the Finnish chapter of the Club of Rome.

The emphasis on people, and global solidarity, was also present in the conclusions of the four workshops that had, in the past two days, probed such issues as the problem of information overload, the role of NGOs in overcoming ignorance, and the irrationality of the markets in the information age.

Solidarity, the workshops jointly maintained, can only be achieved through a life-long learning process that promotes critical thinking. Only this kind of widening of perspective can lead people to truly understand each other and aim towards common goals, such as overcoming ignorance. Nowadays professionals even in the affluent countries, tend to share segmented shrapnels of information that lead, if anything, to more ignorance and indifference.

Just as economic liberalization is merely a tool for improving people's lives, information technologies should pave way for human enlightenment, wisdom and, ultimately, ethical development.

Thirty-two years after the publication of the ground-breaking Club Of Rome report, "Limits to Growth", which predicted the coming environmental problems with amazing accuracy, there is still widespread ignorance of the systems of the natural environment. In raising awareness of this and other issues, NGOs could play an even more prominent role, as they are more flexible than governments and, with the help of modern information technology, are able to connect people on a grass-roots level.

"What we need now is a call for an ethic of human solidarity. We have to find ways to motivate the silent majority, and turn the information war into information peace. It is ironic that whilst modern technology enables hundreds of satellites frequencies, they are not used for people to connect to each other. With such a system a nomad on the Arabian peninsula could converse with a sheep-herder in Mexico about, say, the best ways of taking care of herds", said **Prince El Hassan bin Talal**, the President of the Club of Rome.

*The annual conference of the Club of Rome was held in collaboration with the Finnish Association for the Club of Rome and the Finland Futures Research Center at the Turku School of Economics and Business Administration.*