



Global Marshall Plan
balance the world
with an Eco-Social Market Economy

Feasibility of an Eco-social Market Economy – Friulanisches? Manifesto and the Global Marshall Plan Austrian President Dr. Heinz Fischer

I commend you for the Global Marshall Plan Initiative, your efforts and the ability of leading discussions about such an interesting, complex and important issue and for arranging such a prestigious event. It is a pleasure to have the opportunity to give a welcoming speech at this conference. I am especially looking forward for the chance to meet once again with his majesty Prince Hassan, President of the Club of Rome. I also look forward to meeting with Vice Chancellor Riegler. We have always gotten along together well, I am sure he would agree. I am also quite impressed by the activities of the University Club Klagenfurt, which most certainly put much effort and preparation into the organization of the dialog.

It is my opinion that deliberating about the future viability of an eco-social market economy in the globalization age also requires reflection on the phenomenon of globalization. In the Parliament I recently heard the budget speech by the Minister of Finance. In his speech he succinctly mentioned that globalization is happening whether we like it or not. I know that he meant that globalization is an inevitable trend. I am not completely convinced however, that it is correct to make a declarative statement in this form. With the expression "globalization", we are describing the current mainstream caused by technical, ecological, economic technological and social developments, encountered in practically every industrial nation. This is correct. But nevertheless I deny, and I have always denied, the idea of uncontrollable development or historical automatism. Humanity has always been concerned with the questions of historical automatism. Anyone who has been even somewhat involved with Marxism can especially understand how dangerous ideologies such as these can be. The trends toward globalization are strong – admitted. But human intelligence and political will, especially if large portions of the population can become committed and interested, are also strong. For that reason, history has always been the product of objective and subjective factors. And it will remain so in the future that the history will continue to be the product of objective and subjective factors. Therefore, one cannot just speak of automatism and uncontrollability. Upon closer scrutiny, something else becomes clear: Globalization is not a monolithic block of development trends, but rather a bundle of different currents and developments. Each of these individual trends has pro and con forces, speeding and slowing elements, but even these are controllable. I wanted to be sure to state these two thoughts as my entry to the complexities of globalization.

More and more of what plays out as political process, is not strictly divided into foreign and domestic policy, but takes place instead as world civic politics. National policy requires international cooperation, even for the achievement of national goals. In this vein, it is correct to use international directives for achieving the national goals of international agreements. A good example of this is the Kyoto Treaty, which in this situation can be improved upon at the national level through international cooperation. In this context, it is to be saluted that such a large nation like the Russian Federation has decided to ratify the Kyoto Treaty. We have indeed lost much time and are not on schedule. It is not certain, and even rather unlikely that we will actually be able to reach the targets we have set for ourselves by 2012. This does not change the fact however, that the efforts in this direction must be advanced and intensified. Environmental protection is now one of the central millennium goals formulated by the United Nations several years ago. I consider these millennium goals, which has eight objectives, to be an extremely important and central task of international policy. Fighting

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poverty, ensuring equal opportunities, access to education, fighting AIDS as well as all other objectives are urgent problems that must be addressed today rather than tomorrow. Support for international organizations, national organizations and last but not least, the United Nations, is worthwhile and important.

But the situation with the Millennium Goals is similar to that of the Kyoto Treaty. It will not be easy to reach these goals, especially to their full extent. One could therefore ask whether or not it makes sense to formulate objectives which in practice cannot be completely met. There are many such objectives for which this assertion can be made. I believe that it is still important to make such goals. This is because goals are not rendered ineffective or unimportant by reality. Perhaps they become even more important. Sometimes high goals must be set in order to provide motivation. Perhaps you are familiar with these wise words of Martin Walser: „the existence of a utopia is the precondition for it to cease to be a utopia“. Only when one sets a high or even utopian goal, will one make every attempt to turn what is initially considered a utopia into something feasible. History provides many examples showing that this is possible.

The fact that the actions of human beings do not always correspond to a categorical imperative does not refute their importance, but instead makes them more important. In the style of Immanuel Kant one could therefore formulate an ecological imperative and say, “Always act in such a manner such that future generations would be able to consider your action as reasonable and responsible.” I believe that this idea is worth thinking about. And, it is for this reason that we have come together for this discussion.

Unfortunately, the income gap between rich and poor has been widening over the last few decades rather than narrowing. At the same time, more than half a billion people are defined as „working poor“, forced to meet their needs with one US dollar per day. These are alarming figures which, as with the state of the environment, cannot be ignored; because a half billion is not just a number 5 followed by many zeros, it represents an unbelievably number of individual fates. We must therefore be aware of this and sharpen our consciences. Awareness alone however does not solve the problem, but it is the precondition for the solution. It is for this reason that cooperation in the field of development is so important. It is also sad and disappointing that we, the wealthy Republic of Austria, have not met our goals in this area. The ambitious 0.7% goal of the BNP (Bank Nationale de Paris) is far in the distance. But we are even relatively far away from attaining the lower set goal of 0.39% in our country. We must resolve ourselves to improve our performance in this area and show more sense of responsibility, and I will say this publicly when given the opportunity. Our ability to improve depends on having access to information and a sense of responsibility.

I think that the activities of the “Global Marshall Plan” are devoted to these goals. Austria benefited greatly in the postwar years from the US’s Marshall Plan. Much of the reconstruction of our country was made possible and financed by the Marshall Plan. Those who have directly experienced that a sustainable and intelligently planned assistance program can significantly affect the revival of a nation will certainly understand why the idea of a Global Marshall Plan, more than half a century later, is so fascinating and impressive. This Global Marshall Plan cannot be an isolated island, but rather it should be a networked, deliberated initiative showing promise for success in connection with other initiatives. The University Club Klagenfurt should be highly commended for establishing such a connection. I would also like to thank the Ecosocial Forum for participating and engaging in dialog on this issue. It is my wish for the future that critical, responsible, future-oriented people form any type of critical mass necessary to move such bold concepts from scholarly discussion into societal reality.

With this, I would like to express my gratitude once again for the invitation and I wish you the best success in the discussion of these issues.