to surmount in order to enable the positive evolution of the international framework. This responsibility should immediately become manifest in the political will to create an embryo of this European State at least between a few countries, essentially the founders, starting with France and Germany. These very countries in fact should have sufficient historical memory to remember the severity of the consequences they faced whenever they ignored the warning of Machiavelli about the need to exercise the following virtue in time: "*Nevertheless, not to extinguish our free will, I hold it to be true that Fortune is the arbiter of one-half of our actions, but that she still leaves us to direct the other half, or perhaps a little less. I compare her to one of those raging rivers, which when in flood overflows the plains, sweeping away trees and buildings, bearing away the soil from place to place; everything flies before it, all yield to its violence, without being able in any way to withstand it; and yet, though its nature be such, it does not follow therefore that men, when the weather becomes fair, shall not make provision, both with defences and barriers, in such a manner that, rising again, the waters may pass away by canal, and their force be neither so unrestrained nor so dangerous. So it happens with fortune, who shows her power where valour has not prepared to resist her, and thither she turns her forces where she knows that barriers and defences have not been raised to constrain her*" (The Prince, XXV).

Thanks to science, unless it proves to be a sensational blunder, we now know that the quiet times are passing and it is therefore increasingly urgent that we build the defences and barriers required to respond to the new environmental challenges.

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The United States of Europe to tackle the issue of global warming

The debate on global warming is over

"The debate on global warming is over" was the recent pronouncement of one of the most prestigious scientific journals ("A Climate Repair Manual", *Scientific American*, September 2006). The current levels of carbon dioxide concentration in the atmosphere are the highest of any recorded in the last 650 thousand years and are seemingly set to increase. No climatologist can predict what will happen in every single region of the world over the next few decades following the release into the atmosphere, started just two centuries ago, of the carbon dioxide stored underground for millions of years, but the scientific community has by now reached a consensus: a) that the historical climatologic data and current observations have revealed a relationship between the increase in greenhouse gases and changes in climatic cycles, and b) that without drastically reversing trends in the increase of the emission of these gases into the atmosphere, although this is currently not foreseeable, we should prepare ourselves for profound global changes in climate and in oceanic currents over the next few decades. If the trend towards excess global warming is not reversed by the mid-century, i.e. within the lifetime of many people alive today, the average temperature could increase by 2-5 degrees Centigrade: a significant increase when one considers that the planet today is only 5 degrees Centigrade warmer than in the last ice age.

The most likely consequences would be: an increase in extreme weather phenomena, with a subsequent aggravation of the problem of desertification in some regions and flooding in others, and damage to agricultural production; the return to glacial climates in some areas and excess temperatures in others; sea level rise, with serious consequences for countries such as Bangladesh, but also for coastal megalopolises such as London, Shanghai and New York, to name but a few. The rapidity of climatic changes following each other would severely test the ability of many States to respond to the inevitable economic crises and to the migration of populations towards regions that still have a temperate climate.

Various reports, including the one commissioned by the British government to Sir Nicholas Stern, have highlighted the consequences of climate change in terms of a slowing down in economic development and a decrease in security. Thanks also to campaigns highlighting the risk threatening the planet carried out for example by political leaders such as the former vice President of the USA, Al Gore, and by experts such as James Hansen, these prob-

lems are now widely discussed. The Stern report in particular has calculated that these consequences could be comparable to the damage "caused by the two World Wars and by the Great Depression of the first half of the Twentieth Century". Unlike the crises of the last century, however, it is difficult to establish how long they may last for, whether decades or even centuries. Clearly the longer we delay action, the more the scenarios are bound to get worse: a conservative hypothesis raised by the Stern report maintains that if we fail to immediately spend the equivalent of 1% of Gross World Product to spread the introduction of technologies already known to reduce harmful emissions, the consequence could be a decrease of 20% in Gross World Product by 2050. No government should question the need to take immediate action to avert such a prospect. But what authority could plan and coordinate this kind of overall ecological improvement policy for the planet?

Who governs the environmental crisis?

The instruments that would allow us to buy time in view of the introduction and spread of new technologies and to delay the moment when the risk threshold of the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere reaches uncontrollable levels are currently being applied in an uncoordinated and random fashion on a national basis. These include regulation policies for the pollution permit market, the introduction of the *carbon tax*, measures to promote the carbon capture and storage, the speeding up of the introduction of new technologies in transport or the diversification of energy sources for electricity production. In order to be effective, even only for the sake of buying some time, it would be necessary for these measures to be undertaken in a context of consistent and planned action, with which only a true world government could be entrusted. Now, not only does a world government not exist today, but it is inconceivable in the immediate future. We would be deceiving ourselves if we thought we could reach significant results in international conferences with the representatives of almost two hundred States. If we do not initiate a close collaboration as soon as possible between the subjects that most contribute to the increase in the concentration of greenhouse gases (about twenty countries are responsible for 80% of emissions, but if Europeans were truly united, the subjects that would need to agree a common policy could be reduced to less than ten) we will be heading for disaster. With this in mind the European Union has some grave responsibilities: not only is it not a true international partner since its effective capacity for action is totally insufficient, but with the spectacle of the division between its countries it actually slows down the development of similar processes of political unification in other continents. The lack of a birth of the European Federal State (not expected for the time being), with the profound changes in the balances of power that this would involve, makes it inconceivable in this phase a speeding up in international cooperation with which the vital issues could be tackled that are indispensable when seeking to mitigate the effects of climate change or even only to adapt to it.

Acting according to justice

It will certainly be impossible to obtain the agreement of hundreds of millions of men and women living in Asia and Africa – who currently aspire to achieve a quality of life at least comparable to that of Western countries – to make sacrifices that would end up further favouring especially current and future generations of peoples who have already been more fortunate than them. The USA and a large part of the countries of the European Union cannot begin to lead any planetary climate defence process without recognising this injustice and without first drawing up credible domestic austerity policies to promote the transfer of resources and technologies towards Asia and Africa.

Keeping the peace

A pact to share the burden of saving the planet, which has to be conceived and drafted in the perspective of being rapidly implemented, must be framed within a transition plan to create a world federation. Its first step should be the formation of a *de facto* provisional government based on the cooperation between the main world poles in order to keep the peace. Until the risk of a new arms race and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and of regional conflicts is reduced to a minimum, we cannot do away with the main source of resource waste and destruction, and therefore of potential worsening of the ecological crisis: war and the preparation for war.

Creating the European Federal State

The European Union as such is not, and cannot in the foreseeable future become, an active participant in these processes. In fact it does not have, and cannot have, the powers necessary, within its borders and in relation to the key international players, to promote those fiscal policies, those trade and industrial agreements, those military interventions that remain, even in the era of globalisation, a feature of the consistent and conscious action of continental States and their citizens and not of the representatives of a regional organisation of independent States, as the European Union continues to be despite the successes of economic and monetary integration. The impotence of Europeans within the field of energy and foreign policy is clear for all to see. The absence of a European power therefore means that the catalyst is missing for more advanced agreements with and between the key players in the ecological field, the USA, China and India on the policies of which rests a great deal of the future of our planet.

Europeans therefore have a great responsibility in the face of the impending climatic crises. The creation of a true European Federal State is in fact the main problem