Philip McDonagh

PATHWAYS TO POSITIVE CHANGE

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Introduction

I'm very grateful to Cardinal Hollerich for the invitation to speak to you today. I will address three themes and make three practical proposals. First, I will argue – a fairly obvious argument – that the world has reached a dangerous point of inflection. In mid-20th century, the League of Nations Covenant and the UN Charter were designed to maintain peace and security among sovereign states. What is needed in multilateral diplomacy today is more complex – to map and manage profound currents of change with planetary survival at stake. For this, we need to develop new frameworks of engagement. I am mindful here of Schuman's vision that "the peace of the world cannot be maintained without creative efforts commensurate with the scale of the threat." I am mindful also of *Laudato Si'* which attempts, in Chapter Five, "to outline the major paths of dialogue which can help us escape the spiral of self-destruction which currently engulfs us." The "major paths of dialogue" proposed by Pope Francis are largely determined by gaps in our current structures and agendas. Taking Schuman and Pope Francis at their word, I will make a practical proposal in the realm of global politics. The churches should consider supporting "talks about talks" with a view to a new, multi-layered, pan-European process to begin on the 50th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act in 2025. 2025 is also, of course, the jubilee year.

Second, I will speak briefly about another practical proposal – to strengthen the dialogue under Article 17 in the European Parliament. Under fortunate circumstances, the topics we develop within the Article 17 dialogue can help to shape the agenda of a revived multilateralism. Even apart from this potential relevance to a global agenda, a deeper dialogue under Article 17 is good for governance and democracy in the European Union.

Third, I will argue that progress towards a European Summit, as well as a sustained dialogue under Article 17 aimed at finding a "bigger language" on the social question, can help create the conditions for a truce, a ceasefire, and negotiations to end the war in Ukraine – alongside new efforts to resolve the other protracted conflicts in Europe. The imaging of peace at the global level can become one strand in a future peace process in Europe. In this third part of my talk, I will draw on my experience of the CSCE and OSCE and my involvement in the Northern Ireland peace process. Here, I will introduce a third practical proposal: that an approach should be made in writing to Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk with a view to initiating a new phase of communication with the Russian Orthodox Church.

1. Towards new forms of comprehensive diplomacy in Europe

The UN Secretary–General's report of September 2021, "Our Common Agenda," states: "the world is experiencing its biggest shared test since the Second World War ... Humanity faces a stark and urgent choice: breakdown or breakthrough." The Secretary General's view, even before the war in Ukraine, was that institutions and negotiating processes are failing to keep up with dangerous long-term trends. In our co-authored book, *On the Significance of Religion for Global Diplomacy,* we examine these trends under the three headings of nature, the virtual world, and politics. Under "nature", we discuss the pandemic, climate change, the loss of biodiversity, ecological questions relating to soil and water, and emerging capabilities in biophysics and genetics. In the virtual world, more than twenty-five billion devices are currently connected to the Internet, a figure that is predicted to rise into the hundreds of billions. This creates new vulnerabilities and requires new forms of governance in several areas. Under the heading of politics, we discuss, as you can imagine, polarization, populism, and widening economic inequality within almost all societies. We observe that on some pivotal topics, such as monetary policy, it is difficult for citizens to understand and influence the course of events.

These developments in the natural world, the virtual world, and the political world are interconnected. Some contemporary thinkers have been inspired by systems theory and systems biology to identify the variables that make for a forward-looking, peaceful society. In a second step, they focus on the processes that restrict harm and enable positive development. The UN Sustainable Development Goals, the SDGs, reflect a "systems" approach of this kind. The SDGs constitute an agreed roadmap covering a very wide agenda. No subject is addressed in isolation. Interventions in one area can enable change elsewhere. Pope Francis states in *Evangelii Gaudium* that "time is more important than space." A central thesis of our book is that intermediate moves in terms of orientation and methodology can help unlock the potential for future transformation within the whole system.

Once we have understood the part played by human agency in opening up pathways to positive change, we can re-examine our frameworks of engagement with a view to sowing seeds of hope. Regional organisations can use their convening power to bring about new, multi-layered consultative processes, inclusive of the representatives of religion, as a form of pathfinding within the wider project of multilateral diplomacy. Day-to-day negotiations in which we protect our immediate interests will continue in the same rhythm as before. New processes operating in a long-term perspective would be distinct from, and complementary to, the day-to-day negotiations. The long-term consultative processes that I have in mind – one might call it a form of policy planning on a global scale - will require a new style of negotiating mandate aimed at a distinctive diplomatic "product". This "product" can combine, first, the gradual definition of new criteria or points of agreement to govern the conduct of international relations; and second, confidence-building measures (CBMs) with demonstration value in the perspective of a future "age of sharing" at the global level.

In the 1970s, there were signs that a broad approach to peacebuilding might take root in Europe. At the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) – a process, not a once-off event – the leaders of states in western and eastern Europe, as well as the United States and Canada, pledged to "cooperate in the interest of mankind." The three "baskets" of the CSCE set out a regional work program corresponding to the three main work streams at the UN: security, development, and human rights. The overall goal was to bring people together. At some point in the 19th century, it became unthinkable for Denmark and Sweden to fight a war. In the second half of the 20th century, war became unthinkable for France and Germany. Rapprochement in Europe under the Helsinki Final Act was meant to change habits and assumptions in much the same way, across a wider geography. My first practical proposal today – commensurate, in Schuman's terms, with the scale of the challenge – is to use the 50th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act in 2025 to inaugurate a new pan-European process of global significance. In our book *On the Significance of Religion for Global Diplomacy*, we describe a possible scenario. A European Summit in Helsinki in 2025, the first such Summit since 2010, becomes the springboard to a new process – which I would dare to describe as the diplomatic counterpart of "synodality". The preparatory work for this new process – the "talks about talks" – could engage parliaments and civil society (taking societal differences into account) and involve also churches, faith communities, and philosophical organisations. With adequate preparation, such a Summit can rekindle a style of diplomacy based on a comprehensive dialogue embracing the most consequential issues. Europe can set a headline for other regions.

In considering the future of multilateralism, there is much at stake in the realm of human values. The question I would put is whether the way we approached international affairs in the 1990s – a sense of being in control and knowing the future, combined with the emergence of impersonal systems based largely on the power of finance – is at risk of being replaced by another "technocratic" system based on a narrow conception of security. Do we risk assimilating every action to a system of power and asking others to do the same? What does this mean for the sustainable development goals, the security of food systems around the world, and the socio-ecological transition that is required in the face of climate change? Are we developing what Martin Buber termed "existential mistrust" of the Other?

Pope Francis, when he addressed the Council of Europe in 2014, stated: "If [conflict] paralyses us, we lose perspective, our horizons shrink, and we grasp only a part of reality. When we fail to move forward in a situation of conflict, we lose our sense of the profound unity of reality, we halt history …"

Vaclav Havel said once that hope "is not the conviction that something will turn out well, but the certainty that something makes sense, regardless of how it turns out." In that spirit, I suggest "talks about talks" with a view to a European Summit. Diplomats should have the freedom to undertake exploratory discussions with counterparts with a view to understanding their points of view, the dangers they fear, whether they consider that changes of position can occur, and where they see the possibility of new beginnings. In other words, we expect diplomatic contacts to enable the interaction, not of physical, but of moral systems. The personal, human level, including especially trust, becomes all-important. For this to happen, we need a context.

2. Strengthening the dialogue under Article 17 in the European Parliament

I turn now to my second practical proposal. In 2021 and early 2022, the churches and faith communities on the island of Ireland developed shared thinking on the Conference on the Future of Europe. This process was facilitated by our Centre at Dublin City University. There was a broad consensus that we should write to the European Parliament to propose a consolidation of the Article 17 dialogue. The person we intend to write to is First Vice-President Othmar Karas.

This initiative can be seen as part of the follow-up to the Conference on the Future of Europe under the heading of democracy. We share the vision of the German jurist Ernst–Wolfgang Böckenförde that "every democracy can only be as good as the societal forces that sustain it." In other words, democracy must not be taken for granted. It presupposes a pre-political reality - shared principles, a shared sense of belonging, and a spirit of trust. Perhaps these characteristics of wellbeing are largely summed up, or could be summed up, in the vision of a "social Europe." In this perspective, Article 17 is one means among others, but an important means, to strengthen lines of communication throughout European society. Religious actors need to appreciate the distinctive responsibilities of public authorities and to recognize the mistakes of the past. On their side, public authorities should acknowledge that faith communities have significant "social capital" as well as an inherent interest in the basic structural question of politics: *how should we live our lives*.

We – the churches and faith communities on the island of Ireland – would welcome, and would support to the best of our ability, a specific initiative within the European Parliament to nurture *the dialogical relationship between high-level values and practical policies*. The initiative we have in mind would not represent a departure from current practice. On the contrary, our proposal is to build on current practice in practical ways. In terms of organization, we propose such measures as the following:

- longer-term planning (taking us beyond the date of the next elections to the Parliament in 2024)
- a sustained dialogue under selected topics (more than one meeting on each topic)
- an increase in the resources available to support the Article 17 dialogue
- drawing on the "engaged research" of academic centres
- preparing reports that MEPs can refer to in their international engagement
- refining the concepts and organisational principles that favour the effective use of the Article 17 provisions

Concretely, this initiative could be expressed through a linked series of seminars addressing three to five of the most consequential issues in European society and global multilateral diplomacy in the perspective of 2025. Clearly, the choice of themes will depend on many factors including current plans, the committee structure of Parliament, the priorities of EP delegations, and work in progress in the services of the Parliament.

This proposal regarding Article 17 potentially fits together with the proposal for "talks about talks" regarding a possible European Summit. The more deeply we delve into the roots of our own culture, the more we will uncover the "lateral roots" and unspoken commonalities that can bind one cultural tradition to another. In liberal democracies, the citizen is not afraid of the State – a huge gain in historical terms. This gain will be more secure if we can show that it serves the social objectives stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights – objectives shared, in principle, by every member state in the UN. In our book (already mentioned) we cite a contemporary Chinese scholar who proposes a deeper engagement between the Confucian tradition and western liberal democracy. "The language of virtue, responsibility, and benevolent care," he writes, "can enrich the modern language of freedom, rights, and democracy."

One way forward on Article 17 could be for COMECE and CEC to meet with First Vice-President Karas to discuss some ideas of the kind I am sketching out here. In due course the COMECE Youth Net and other similar groups could be invited to contribute to a program of "engaged research."

3. Towards a truce and ceasefire in Ukraine

I turn now to the war in Ukraine. My perspective is shaped by the quotation from St. John chosen by the Cardinal Secretary of State when he entered St. Peter's Square to announce the death of Pope John Paul II: *God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world.* My intention is not to judge, but to contribute to political deliberation with a view to ending suffering – not only in Ukraine, but in all the countries where people are carrying a terrible burden and facing unconscionable risks because of the continuing conflict.

Can there be an opening to what Pope Francis calls a "rational dialogue" about the war? Many would hesitate to answer yes, arguing that our first obligation is to distinguish between perpetrator and victim and to align ourselves with the victim. I understand that point of view. However, there are several actors in a situation like this and several forces in play. A rational dialogue is the opposite of a sundering of all relationships.

We can begin from one centrally important fact. In July, under the auspices of the UN, Russia and Ukraine signed an agreement on the export of grain. The European Union and others appear to have confirmed at the same time that they are not blocking or making difficulties for Russian agricultural exports. These understandings demonstrate that constructive relationships rarely wholly vanish even in the middle of a crisis. Apart from the agreement on food exports, we can note other areas of cooperation. Prisoners have been exchanged. In principle, it is agreed that nuclear installations should be protected. Some categories of weapon have not been used. The parties can use their channels of communication to extend the July agreement on grain beyond November, to develop confidence-building measures, perhaps even to "image" future negotiations.

A second opening to a rational dialogue is the point made by Pope Francis at the Angelus on 2nd October. Russia, Ukraine, and all other parties have their particular responsibilities in the present situation – including responsibilities towards the rest of the world. Perhaps at this moment it is the actors in that third category, the "others" – in particular the European Union and its member States – who have both the capacity and the moral freedom to make a difference. The most important lesson from the recent history of Northern Ireland is that it is never the wrong time to start working for peace - even with those who are involved in illegitimate violence. Behind such violence there is often a wounded social structure that needs to be understood. If our hope is for a ceasefire in Ukraine, an end to the horror and destruction, negotiations, a reawakening of moral generosity, and future reconciliation, we should start looking now for the elements of a future conversation that would build on the areas agreement that I have just mentioned. The conversation should involve, as well as Ukraine and Russia, the European Union and those others whose actions are, in fact, shaping the course of events.

I now offer some thoughts from my CSCE and OSCE experience and from the Northern Ireland peace process, three from each source, to strengthen my argument that a dialogue is possible. First, a CSCE-style "security community" based on dialogue across a broad agenda and habits of trust is not the same as a paradigm of regional security based on deterrence and mutually-assured destruction, such as we now have. Finding a new balance between differing paradigms of security, and promoting disarmament, is an explicit requirement of the Helsinki Final Act. It is also an essential political project in every region of the world. To prepare for this discussion, we might look at the expectations created by Chancellor Kohl's 10-point plan for German reunification of November 1989 and the assurances given to Moscow in early 1990 by both the United States and the Federal Republic of Germany. The vision of the future that was offered then involved a strong CSCE, not least in the security sphere. NATO was to stop at the German border.

Second, Principle IX of the Helsinki Final Act obliges participating States to develop their cooperation "in all fields … to improve the wellbeing of peoples," taking into account "the interest of all in the narrowing of differences in the levels of economic development." This foundational principle enshrines cooperative economic relationships as a core value in international relations and brings the European and global agendas together. However, the European Union in the proper meaning of the term has never been present in the OSCE. The EU Commission is absent from the negotiating table. The principal economic questions are handled by Brussels in other formats, usually bilaterally. This weakening of the second, economic pillar of the OSCE is relevant to the sequence of events in Ukraine in 2014 and the balances implicit in the Minsk Agreements of 2014 and 2015. As we look to 2025 and beyond, the key goals of a new all-European process should include recognition of the European Union as the anchor of a wider European zone of peace and economic cooperation; and at the same time, the avoidance of economic "zero-sum games" in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus.

Third, in 1991, the principle of the territorial integrity of states - recognised in the Helsinki Final Act (Principle IV) - was interpreted in a particular way when western countries, invoking another principle they had signed up to, the equal rights of peoples and their right to self-determination (Principle VIII), recognised all parts of the Soviet and Yugoslav federations as independent states. There were potential sources of future conflict and obvious areas of interdependence among the new states that ought to have been acknowledged and addressed at the time. As part of a rational dialogue, we might illuminate current options by asking what compromises would have been found had the principle of the peaceful settlement of disputes (Principle V, Helsinki Final Act) been brought into play at that time.

These three topics for a "rational dialogue" are based on CSCE principles. We can also borrow ideas from the Irish experience to support Ukraine in its relations with Russia. First, Ireland has been prepared to leave open for the future the question of re-unifying territory and is glad to preserve the common travel area across our two islands along with many other special arrangements. How to make the most of a political dispensation that is imperfect from everyone's point of view, while at the same time preserving friendship and peace and working towards a possible change in borders, is another topic for rational dialogue.

Second, the British and Irish governments have encouraged innovative forms of political and cultural pluralism in Northern Ireland – pluralism, for example, in the sphere of language policy, such as seems to have disappeared from the radar in Ukrainian–Russian relations. In Northern Ireland, a citizen can identify as Irish, British, or both.

Third, when I accompanied our Nobel Prize winner John Hume to visit the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam in the jungle in Sri Lanka – in support of a joint British and Irish initiative – I heard from John himself his deep conviction that hearts change and positions evolve in the course of a genuine dialogue. Dialogue is transformative. Russia's deepest political motivations and priorities could be framed differently and possibly would be framed differently in the context of a dialogue marked by good will. Russia and Ukraine have connections, including family connections, that go back hundreds of years. Russia can rightly aspire to a reconciled relationship with its nearest neighbour much as the members of the European Union aspire to reconciled relationships among themselves.

I turn now to a third practical proposal. Russian friends tell me that the prayers proposed by the Patriarch for use in Russian Orthodox churches elsewhere in Europe do not bear out the image of Kirill to which we are perhaps accustomed. Be that as it may, it seems to me that a key figure at this historical moment is Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk, for three main reasons. First, Metropolitan Anthony is responsible for the external relations of the Russian Orthodox Church. In that capacity, he travelled to the Holy See during the summer. He also met with Pope Francis in Kazakhstan last month. A second consideration is that Metropolitan Anthony continues to hold a position of responsibility in Paris in the Exarchate – the Patriarchal Exarchate in Western Europe. In his Paris-based role, the Metropolitan would be an appropriate church leader to turn to if we were seeking to bring the Russian Orthodox Church into the Article 17 dialogue. A third consideration is Metropolitan Anthony has spent many years working in Italy. It's a fair assumption that he understands both the politics and the religious landscape of the European Union.

My practical proposal, then, is that a letter be sent to Metropolitan Anthony to share with him some of the ideas discussed at this week's meeting. It is easier for someone in his position to engage by letter than in person. His willingness to engage is demonstrated by his presence in Karlruhe at the WCC. Even the transmission of the letter would be a sign of hope. Of course if Metropolitan Anthony were to respond suggesting a further step, such as a meeting of representatives, that could be given consideration in due course.

Conclusion

I come now to a conclusion. In our co-authored book, we argue that the first axiom of politics is the following:

> We should examine the patterns of our behaviour in the light of all that we ought to know and can know

What we ought to know and can know at this point in the 21st century is that economic globalisation or "trans-nationalisation" has not been accompanied by an equivalent interaction of persons and consciences. Put simply, our frameworks of engagement are inadequate. If, as the UN Secretary-General states, we face "breakdown or breakthrough," my three practical proposals can be read as a *pitkospuut* towards a future breakthrough. In Finnish, a *pitkospuut* is a pathway made of plain wooden planks across a treacherous bog.

I will repeat my three proposals again:

- to start a quiet conversation about a possible European Summit in 2025
- to use the Article 17 dialogue in a more sustained way to connect high-level values with day-to-day policies
- to stay in touch with fellow Christians in Russia through a letter to Metropolitan Anthony

The political methodology that we adopt here and now can open a pathway to changes that are not yet within reach or even visible. Perhaps over the next decade, a changing diplomatic culture can provide new cultural resources based on the interaction of persons, not the clash of impersonal systems. Perhaps by mid-century we can hope for an "anthropological" development – a global humanism founded on a broad understanding of the scope of reason, a higher sense of political responsibility, and new forms of commonality and sharing.

I end these few remarks by quoting Pope Benedict's definition of democracy in a speech delivered in 2006:

> Democracy will be fully implemented only when all individuals and all peoples have access to the primary goods of life, food, water, health care, education, work, and certainty of their rights, through an ordering of internal and international relations that guarantees everyone a chance to participate.