

**On climate change, life for young people will be more difficult:
Ashok Khosla says.**

The President of the Club of Rome and of the largest environmental network in the world sustains that humanity is not endangered, but warns that the planet will very different from today.

That the economy does not solve everything sounds patently obvious these days, when the planet undergoes the worst recession since 1929 crisis. But to say that in the late 60's when few people discussed the benefits of material development and well-being obtained by the consumption is another matter. That was precisely what made the Club of Rome, internationally known since 1972, when it caused a commotion with his book *The Limits to Growth*, which warned of the insufficient natural resources in front of human greed. Research from MIT scientists disqualified at the time by 'exaggerated', ended by laying the foundations of modern environmentalism.

Almost 40 years after its landmark study, the Club of Rome is still trying to make world leaders understand its call to take "a new path for development", as they called their program until 2012, this is not the result of catastrophism, but a long-term vision.

In the same city where this group of thinkers started, *El Tiempo* spoke with one of his two co-chairs, the Indian Ashok Khosla, who also chairs the IUCN the oldest and largest environmental Network in the world.

-Does environmental degradation is the most serious problem facing humanity today?

-The Club of Rome does not address environmental issues and natural resources in an isolated way but as part of a system of things, and with a long term vision. We are worried by two phenomena first: a world so unfair, on one hand countries with good economies and few people and on the other hand countries with plenty of people and doing not so good, and second resource depletion.

Much of our work over the past 40 years has been to seek the causes of these problems and their solutions.

Many of them have roots in the economy. Production and consumption systems and institutional arrangements often give wrong signals and incentive taxes encouraging bad practices and do not promote good ones.

In summary, our approach to environmental problems is not only because it could lead to the wrong answers.

-How well were adjusted to reality predictions of 'The Limits of growth '?

The book was published in 1972, based on a research conducted since 1969. What is really amazing is that from some primitive data and methodology (this latter based on the use of the first computers); it reached conclusions that have become true 30 years later.

The model used, which was rudimentary but very sturdy (a computer application called World) gave us elements to know that if we continue to use the resources as we have been doing, at some point the situation will going out of the path, and it will collapse. It is true that in general terms it

has not happened, but poor people in the Third World collapsed, because of the economic model.

Despite the constraints under which it was made, the world is on the path laid in that study, which made a projection to 100 years.

-But the book also has been criticized...

-Many academics and media critic Limits of Growth for the wrong reasons. I think they probably did not read it, because they talk about issues that are not part of the book, such as energy.

-How close we are to the point of no return?

-Serious scientists think we have passed it in climate field. Actually it depends on what is acceptable for everyone. At the end of the day, the planet will be here and life will be cockroaches, for example. To me, I find it unacceptable that people die of hunger, and that is already happening.

If the point of no return is the one after which the extinction of the species is inevitable, we have not crossed it. Our civilization is on the verge of disappearance, but it will change. When I talk to young people I tell them they should understand that life will be more difficult for them, they must learn to survive in a world different from ours. Essentially this is a turning point.

In terms of capacity of the planet, it is likely we have already exceeded the threshold in terms of population and consumption.

-The demographic issue was precisely the focus of his message to hundreds of lawmakers who just met in Rome as a prelude to the G8 summit (which will hold next week in L'Aquila, Italy)...

-That is right. We talked about how we can impact the goals of population with a change in the way we educate girls. Statistics show that fertility (number of children) is inversely proportional to the level of schooling, too, as indicators human development, GDP per capita and energy consumption. In other words, people living well do not have so many babies.

-What do you propose?

-Invest in good schools, and send girls there. Also, provide them a little more energy for cooking and other activities ... In India they are having children because they need arms to pick up water!

-Does the Club of Rome perceive that the world is changing course or else we are going the cliff?

-Most of the approximately 65 members who have the Club (including former Israeli Foreign Minister Shlomo Ben-Ami, the Colombian Noemi Sanin and Juan Luis Cebrián, CEO of Spanish group Prisa) are in it because they think it is not all bad and that their work can have some influence on policy.

-The Club of Rome was formed by people from industry and government, when all said that the problems would be solved with more and more economy, realized things do not work that way. Therefore, it is in the DNA of the organization, does it remain true today?

-Companies have to make decisions thinking about the next 3 months. Governments, think about the next 4, 5 or 6 years. That is impossible.

With a long-term vision, humanity today must make a decision: Do we prefer technologies that result in heavy large dams, mines, ports and highways, or local systems that allow a decent life and that, in many cases, particularly in the power, may be the only way to save the planet?

In that sense, there is an exemplary project in Colombia, called Las Gaviotas, which is not only self-sustaining but has managed to turn the savannas of Vichada in tropical forest.

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BEJARANO BERNARDO G.

SPECIAL ENVOY OF EL TIEMPO

ROME

Colombian EL TIEMPO

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