

## CONTEXT

# Caux Call to Action

**Clare Short**

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At the end of the first Caux Forum for Human Security, Clare Short called for a declaration 'around which people like us, and many others across the world, could organize. And then a worldwide movement.'

Many responded and, with her, developed a statement that was improved and supported by the 2010 Caux Forum.

Here Clare Short introduces the draft Caux Call to Action to 2010 Caux Forum participants:



I am a great believer in us all having to examine our all consciences and try to live with integrity, and to live according to the principles we espouse. Mohamed Sahnoun and Cornelio Sommaruga I had known and respected deeply in their work in the international system when I was working as a Minister. And it was their names and their track record that brought me here to see what they are espousing. And I was moved, as everyone must be who comes here, by the beauty of the scenery and the magic of the place. There is something profound about it that has potential just to move people and draw people and take thing forward.

This very concept of Human Security – I see it as an intellectual construct that seeks to draw together all the strands of what human beings need to be a fulfilled human being living a decent and dignified life. It's like the concepts in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. And it is making that very important point that if someone is hungry, you don't just need to give them food. You know the very important word by Amartya Sen, 'There are never famines where there isn't depression'. Because even though nature can do harm to people, people with their voice and their possibility can bring solutions. Whereas if you oppress them and they can't move, they can't find their own solutions. So, the idea of Human Security is important, and draws on some old profound truths that I think we know.

I was asked to sum up some parts of the discussion and said, 'We need to do more than this, we need to be more radical, we need to see all the interconnections. Those of us who live in the wealthy OECD countries need to see that our way of live and its increasing greed, consumerism and inequality is the model that we offer to the rest of the world.

But this is completely unsustainable. And what an ugly model it is becoming! The growth of inequality, and atomisation, and loneliness, and mental illness and drug addiction, and alcohol – there is lots and lots of evidence that after a certain point of economic growth, greedy competitive consumerism doesn't make a good society and doesn't make people happy.

This challenge isn't just to us as individuals – it is also to the societies we live in. If we look at the threat of global warming, we can't just ask, 'Are the sceptic's right? Shall I change my light bulbs?' It is massively bigger than that. And if we don't halt it, the ramifications and the catastrophes will cause such displacement of millions of people, such war over food and access to water, that we are looking at a catastrophic future.

So, the Caux Call to Action was meant to say 'Yes, let's build on the values and the history'. But we have to be much more ambitious, much more honest. Challenge ourselves, link with others. Work locally, in our countries, and globally for a transformation of the way we live. The only way humanity is going to survive with any decency is to change the model to a much more sustainable way of living and provide that equitably to all in the world.

And that's a revolution. But it is a beautiful revolution. It is the revolution of which moral philosophers and religious leaders have dreamed; a world where all have dignity and enough. And then within that we can expand our humanity.

Some people have questioned why in the Caux Draft it says 'particularly the Middle East'. The oppression there is particularly dreadful – it seems to me – and shows the West to be an utter hypocrite. And the

values on which the United Nations were based – that you cannot take territory by force – are being breached. And the UN in its alliance with the EU, Russia and Europe and so on, is breaching all those. This injustice is causing these horrible division between the Arab and Muslim world and the West. It is undermining all the principles of international law and the principles on which the United Nations was built.

We need unprecedented international cooperation to deal with the challenges we face. If the world is bitterly divided we are not going to do it. So these are enormous challenges. In the face of climate change and the rest, one possibility is that we say, 'This is terrifying, I can't cope, I'll just try and be a good person, and be kind to my neighbours, and cross my fingers and leave it to somebody else'. But the idea of the Caux Call to Action is to try to draw together those sentiments. Not write a great long essay of all the solutions, but to encapsulate the fact that all these things are interconnected and we are not on a sustainable path. And there is a deep hypocrisy in the structures of Western policy. I think the people of the world know this better than the political elite. There are moments in history when that happens. People know we have to change and something better is possible, but feel disillusioned by our lack of progress. In fact, things go on getting worse.

And it is not just us. There are other groups of people in all sorts of places feeling the same, taking initiatives, trying to push things forward. But the question is: can the history of this place, the beauty of this place, the fascinating collection of people, and the unity across generations add to that momentum, give you additional energy, reach out to more people, have a vision of what is possible. Of course it is idealistic, but it is also practical. If humanity doesn't move in this direction, who knows what will happen? Neanderthal man isn't there any more. The Dinosaurs lasted for a 160 million years. And we have only been around 160,000. It is not inevitable that we go on. We might be about to destroy not the planet, but our life on the planet – if we are not much wiser and bigger.

We have met to discuss whether such a thing was a good idea in Washington and Oxford. And then a draft. And then comments on the

draft. And re-drafts. And then drafting meetings, and then another draft. And then realised: it is not just the draft. Whatever the words you get, they are not the perfect words. What counts is the sentiment and the action that follows. The action has to be built by the movement. And it will start with actions in different places by different groups of people. We will have a website – that's the proposition. And people will commit themselves personally. And then to action, and then report it back. And learn from it and spread those ideas. And learn from mistakes – that is so important. Honourable and good efforts are often made that do not succeed. We should not hide them. We should say 'We tried this and it didn't work', and give the reason for failure.

We should only go with this if people think this would give new energy, more momentum, adding to what others are doing, to make the absolute shift that we need to make, and that has been made by humanity from time to time. At the end of that dreadful Second World War that spread across the world and had such a part in the creation of Caux, people said, 'We are never going to do that again.' And they did create a new world order, which is now crumbling in our hands. We will either go forwards, or backwards. Would this help us to contribute to going forwards? That is the question.

## Clare Short *UK*

**Clare Short is Chair of the Caux Call to Action Steering Council, formed in September 2010. She was Secretary of State for International Development in the UK from 1997 to May 2003. The Department for International Development (DFID) was a new Ministry created after the 1997 general election to promote policies for sustainable development and the elimination of poverty. Of Irish ancestry, Ms Short was born in Birmingham and educated at the Universities of Keele and Leeds. She previously worked in the Home Office, as a Director of Youth Aid and the Unemployment Unit. She was also a Director of AFFOR, a community based organization promoting racial equality in Birmingham.**