

A world out of balance and the need for leadership for common ethical values

- Global Ethics Forum Geneva, 4th September 2024

Adress of the new Globethics president Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Dietrich Werner

Dear Christoph, dear vice presidents Dicky Sofjan and Divya Singh, dear members of the board, dignitaries, academic colleagues and strategic partners!

It is an immense privilege for me to present to you five short considerations on the future of Globethics at this solemn and joyful occasion:

1) A world out of balance and the search for common ethical standards

This world is out of balance. It is in disarray and increased polarization – however, we cannot give up the search for common ethical values! That was a key conviction which opened the introductory chapters of your opus magnum “Globalance for a New World Order”,¹ Christoph Stückelberger. Two years after its second edition was published in 2022, we still find ourselves in an extraordinary multifaceted global crisis. A world out of balance- this assessment is echoed by the key global UNEP report from July 2024 “*Navigating New Horizons – A Global Foresight Report on Planetary Health and Human Wellbeing*”. The report recommended for all interested in ethics for a sound planetary future presents insights on eight critical global shifts (presented in 18 serious signals of change) that are accelerating the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity and nature loss and pollution and waste.² The challenges of a world out of balance or what some have even called a “world adrift”³ – are also behind another key document from the UN which in these weeks is heavily discussed in New York during UN-Summit for the Future later in September 2024, the Second Draft document of the “UN-Pact for the Future”.⁴ Surprisingly it is not including any significant chapter on the underlying role of values, religions and ethics although much evidence has been piled up by key research on the relevance of religions and ethics for sustainable development.⁵ Thus we can only hope that responsible UN leaders will still come up with a supplementary UN “document on ethics and religious values for the future” which is urgently needed. However, the UN document on a “Pact for the future” presents a remarkable panorama of challenges and political priorities for a world out of balance and was rightly quoted even in the invitation letter to this years’ Global Ethics Forum where it states: “*We are at a*

¹ See: Christoph Stückelberger: Globalance towards a New World Order, Ethics Matters and Motivates. Handbook with 250 Graphs. 2nd Enlarged Edition, Geneva 2022, p. 32f, in: <https://liferay.globethics.net/globalance>

² UNEP Report 15th July 2024 Report: A global foresight report on planetary health and human wellbeing, in: <https://www.unep.org/resources/global-foresight-report>

³ The American National Intelligence Council has published its last Report “Global Trends 2040: A More Contested World” (2021) in spelling out five future scenarios for the world, out of which only the first one is mainly positive (“Renaissance of Democracies”), whereas all others are predominantly negative (Scenario 2: “A World Adrift”, Scenario 3: “Competitive Coexistence”, Scenario 4: “Separate Silos”; Scenario 5: “Tragedy and Mobilization”), see: https://www.dni.gov/files/ODNI/documents/assessments/GlobalTrends_2040.pdf

⁴ See: https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/pact_for_the_future_-_rev.2_-_17_july.pdf

⁵ Christine Schliesser: On the Significance of Religion for the SDGs. An Introduction. Routledge 2023, In: <https://library.oapen.org/viewer/web/viewer.html?file=/bitstream/handle/20.500.12657/61728/9781000884678.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>; see also: Esther Suter: The 9th Annual UN Symposium on the Role of Religion and Faith-Based Organizations in International Affairs, 2023, in: <https://iarf.net/9th-annual-un-symposium-on-the-role-of-religion-and-faith-based-organizations-in-international-affairs/>; Elisabeth Le Roux: “We have values that are needed”, Faith Actors and their role in Civic Space. Research Report DanChurch Aid, ACT Alliance, WCC, June 2024, in: <https://www.oikoumene.org/news/new-report-side-event-highlight-faith-actors-and-their-role-in-civic-space>

*moment of acute global peril... Humanity faces a range of potentially catastrophic and existential risks.”*⁶ Why this is so? We all know factors behind, just to name six of them:

- Climate change still causes severe disruptions;
- The collective security system which was developed after WW2 seems to be replaced by a dominance of might over right;
- Military and economic power count more than mutually agreed legal frameworks, binding treaties and democratic procedures;
- Multilateralism in politics and the promotion of cultures of mutual responsibility are waning, alongside an eroding consensus that commitment to strong engagement in development cooperation is a must for a politics grounded in human rights and democracy for all;⁷
- Geo-political tensions and regional military conflicts are rising and continue protracted without being sufficiently controlled and contained;
- People are seeking refuge in populist, extremist, or autocratic political orientations which are spreading like an infectious disease. The inner cohesion of societies and their middle spectrum thus suffers and continues to be weakened at the expense of polarization between the political extremes.⁸

How can we achieve a new world order which is inspired by common ethical values, different from the old answers of rigid nationalism, mutual nuclear deterrence, military escalations, economic protectionism and “my country first”-survival strategies which we know work only at the expense of future generations and at the expense of the ecological integrity of the earth as a whole? How can we achieve a more balanced, a more inclusive system of value-based commitments for multilateral responsibilities? This has been the key question not only behind your book “Globalance for a New World Order”, Christoph, but also behind both your immense work on interreligious and global ethics in the past decades as well as behind the 20 years of history of Globethics foundation which has just been recollected in the session before. It also inspired this Global Ethics Forum 2024 which we just completed. With these days in Geneva we wanted to reposition the work of Globethics Foundation in the most important collective search processes for new political and ethical orientations in the current global poly-crisis as expressed in some of the studies referred to above.

Ethics – many of us are convinced- is more than a collection of statements with good intentions, ultimate ends or general moral principles (“Gesinnungsethik”). Ethics needs to face contextual realities on the ground, the ambivalences involved in having to make difficult choices between different options. Ethics needs to spell out the implications of responsibilities in translating good intentions into possible individual and common actions of just and appropriate choices and into common legal frameworks (“Verantwortungs-ethik”). In the book on “Globalance towards a New World Order” I found one key sentence which struck me as not only being close to my own convictions, but also able to guide us for continuing the institutional and programmatic legacy of Globethics in this new period: *“We need binding rules, regulations, standards, and law enforcements, based on a strong value-base. (We are convinced) that individual ethics, interpersonal ethics and institutional ethics are all needed, but institutionalized ethics in forms of global, regional and*

⁶ The Zero Draft document for the UN Pact for the Future from the 26th January 2024 is available: <https://www.un.org/en/summit-of-the-future/pact-for-the-future-zero-draft>. The Second Draft document for the UN Pact for the Future from 17th July 2024 is available: https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/pact_for_the_future_-_rev.2_-_17_july.pdf

⁷ See the July 2024 speech of the president of Bread for the World, Berlin, Dr. Dagmar Pruin, critically commenting on the unprecedented waning of political support for a solid financing of global development assistance from the German government and the biggest cuts in the development budget: <https://www.brot-fuer-die-welt.de/blog/entwicklungszusammenarbeit-staerkt-die-demokratie/>

⁸ Other scientific data on the most severe global risks and trends are included in the recent new version of: Global Risks Report 2024, in: <https://www.weforum.org/publications/global-risks-report-2024/digest/>

national and local rules and laws are critical. Institutional ethics are not unilaterally declared or imposed, but negotiated in fair processes and implemented with power, incentives and sanctions.”⁹

2) We need institutionalized ethics – the value and potential of Globethics

The deep concern to qualify and strengthen institutionalized ethics and the connection between ethics, common rules and international law is at the heart of my own vision and commitment. We have learned anew: “Law is the servant of ethics”. The city of Geneva which can be regarded as the world’s capital on global ethics with the foundation of Globethics as its privileged instrument and platform, has a particular historic role in promoting the connection between ethics and international humanitarian law. This can be particularly maintained by the recently commemorated “Geneva Conventions”, the original first one to form the International Committee of the Red Cross on the protection of wounded soldiers from 1848 and the advanced four Geneva Conventions concerning the protection of civilians in wars from 1949.¹⁰ I am convinced that we need many new and additional Geneva Conventions today on urgent key ethical challenges, like a Geneva convention on AI ethics¹¹ or a Geneva convention of the digitization of warfare¹² and the future of peace and common security systems – Globethics can be a key tool to achieve major successes in this regard in this city. Strengthening networks of institutionalized ethics today can become a crucial remedy against the growing loss of orientation and social cohesion in a world adrift, a world without proper navigation. Globethics can serve as a shining light of common ethical orientations against the growing polarization in our societies (see the symbol of a lighthouse on the new Globethics strategy).¹³ During the Global Ethics Forum, we have listened to a vast cloud of more than 70 witnesses and voices in a rich and diverse panorama of international experts contributing on key ethical fields with their expertise. We have strengthened institutionalized ethics by promoting the launch of the 2024 global survey on business ethics as well as an important policy report on “Ethical leadership in the age of AI”. We have visibly seen during this Global Ethics Forum, that Globethics is part of a vast and strengthened global network of important partners many of which have similar goals and visions. I invite all of them to support us in the ongoing journey to deliver further substantial and visible formats of institutionalized ethics – and as a Christian theologian and ordained pastor I explicitly extend this invitation to people and ethicists from all religious traditions and non-religious worldviews, as we are an inclusive platform, open for many traditions as long as they support key principles in common values and understanding of human rights. What has been achieved already by Globethics to a significant extend in the fields of business ethics and ethics of AI we hope to deliver together also in the other fields of our strategic agenda, namely peace and governance ethics as well as environmental and sustainability ethics, always related specifically to common standards of training and frameworks for ethics in higher education which is our specific angle and unique contribution.

The world – beyond any doubt- strongly needs ethical leadership in this moment of a global poly-crisis! I firmly believe that Globethics is uniquely positioned to fulfil its mandates and to contribute as an inimitable

⁹ See: Christoph Stückelberger: Globalance towards a New World Order, Ethics Matters and Motivates. Handbook with 250 Graphs. 2nd Enlarged Edition, p. 32f, in: <https://liferay.globethics.net/globalance>

¹⁰ See:

https://www.redcross.org/content/dam/redcross/atg/PDF_s/International_Services/International_Humanitarian_Law/IHL_SummaryGenevaConv.pdf; and also:

https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/geneva_conventions_and_their_additional_protocols#:~:text=The%20Geneva%20Conventions%20and%20their,individuals%20victimized%20by%20armed%20conflicts.

¹¹ See: <https://www.gcsp.ch/the-geneva-process-on-AI-Principles>

¹² See: <https://netzpolitik.org/2024/artificial-intelligence-automated-warfare-and-the-geneva-convention/>

¹³ See: Ethical Leadership through Higher Education and Global Engagement. Globethics Strategy 2023-2027, in:

https://globethics.net/sites/default/files/media/document/2024-03/Globethics_Strategy_2023-2027-reduced.pdf

and distinct space for transformational thought leadership in world ethics as it has unique core competences – and I want to offer you my short four special “Cs”:

Globethics has an outstanding **convening power** both in the international context of Geneva as well as globally, bringing together a wide field of actors, INGOs and HEIs with their different belief-systems, religious traditions and ethical approaches, but all united as people of good will and with a common sense of value-orientation;¹⁴

Globethics secondly has a special **convincing power**, as it is the power of sharp minds, of critical arguments which counts here in the field of ethics, not the power of might, money or mass manipulation;¹⁵

Globethics thirdly has a significant **communication power**, as it has developed a highly sophisticated digital knowledge sharing system accessible for those less advantaged and aims to be relevant and strong with the most advanced systems of communicating to in circles of opinion leaders both in higher education, in politics, in business, diplomacy and in interreligious dialogue;¹⁶

Globethics finally has a exceptional **cooperation power**, as it has built up not only strong relational and cooperative links within the Geneva landscape of NGOs and university education like the Graduate Institute here in Maison de la Paix, but also the network of its various regional centres in countries of the global South, many of which are here, and the network of its national contacts.¹⁷

It will be a crucial task for the months ahead how to unearth, revitalize and strengthen this tremendous potential of Globethics for enhancing working processes on ethics both in crucial fields of global engagement as well as in defined regions and national contexts.

3) My understanding of visionary and transformative leadership

As an organization we stand for principles of integral, value-based, ethically reflected, visionary and transformative leadership in all aspects of life and society. At the same time particularly in this new period it also holds true that we need to apply these principles to ourselves. Not to forget: Globethics has and has had a very dedicated and highly qualified team and leadership. I express my immense gratitude to the former president and the board. We have an exceptionally committed executive director with whom I am looking forward to be in close dialogue. To turn a bit more personally at this stage: How do I see my particular role as a new president? In the process leading to the request to provide leadership for Globethics I certainly had sometimes asked myself: Who am I to provide leadership for this massive project and foundation?

In my brief acceptance response during the Board meeting in June this year, I had stated: “As the new president elect I stand before you now with a sense of humbleness, also awe and respect for the enormous work this foundation has done already in past years and which lies ahead and for the confidence put in me. But I am filled also with a sense of determination and fresh commitment to accept this huge responsibility in a spirit of servanthood, solidarity and enthusiasm for what we can achieve together.”

I would still use the same key words, humbleness, respect, a spirit of sincere listening and good collegiality, to describe my attitude for entering now into this new role of responsibility. At the same time and at this critical juncture I think leadership should also be marked by a sense of clear directions through visionary and

¹⁴ See for example: *Global Ethics for Leadership: Values and Virtues for Life* (Globethics Global Series, Vol. 13), Geneva 2016

¹⁵ See for example the Globethics Series “Principles on Sharing Values across Cultures and Religions, Globethics Geneva 2012

¹⁶ See the unique Global Digital Library System of Globethics: <https://repository.globethics.net/>

¹⁷ See the role of regions, regional centres and national contact persons: <https://globethics.net/regions-and-centre>. See also the Consortium on Ethics on Higher Education (<https://globethics.net/consortium-ethics-higher-education>) and the Pool of Experts on ethics (<https://globethics.net/pool-of-experts>).

transformative approaches as we are really in a critical period of transition. Globethics probably will not be the same in five years from now. Each of you could later share with your neighbour where do you see Globethics in 5 to 10 years from now – or share this in writing with us! We need to learn and live with transition in rapidly changing environments. That starts with the president. I cannot be another Christoph Stückelberger, as I am a different person, but certainly bring with me into this new responsibility

- Decades of involvement in the international ecumenical movement, in ecumenical social and development ethics discourses accompanied by years of intensive theological publishing;¹⁸
- Engagement in national and international discourses on the intersection of religion and development (PaRD, BMZ and BfdW);¹⁹
- Thirdly, involvement in international initiatives to strengthen excellency on higher education (WCC/ETE etc) and a particular passion to contribute to the empowerment of younger generations of ethical leaders;
- Finally, involvement with national and international networks of interreligious dialogue, particularly the Lindau process of Religions for Peace (RfP), just to mention a few.

Thus, I am not alone, but part of a multi-regional and multi-religious team consisting of one new president from European background and two well experienced vice-presidents, one from Asia and one from Africa. I am convinced that we present – together with the Director from Middle East background- a very strong leadership team for Globethics for the years ahead. If you ask me for my short-version vision for the future of Globethics I would like to give you my short four “Es”:

- **Empowerment of youth:** We need more deliberate and visible forms of empowerment for integral ethical leadership of the younger generations to come, both younger ethicists, young women, young men. Having in mind that there are many countries, particularly in the global South, where 45% of the national population is below 25 years, we cannot bypass the creative, innovative and responsible role of the younger generation and their needs and zeal for more training, more inclusion and more direct participation. The ceremonies we have encountered during the past days during the Globethics Youth Leadership Award and the including and subsequent mentoring program is as encouraging as the regional Ethics Doctoral Program in Indonesia which I would hope to be widened and continued.
- **Education for an Ethics of Respect:** Education, education, education – this as many have said- is the crucial answer and priority number one response to basic human development needs as well as the achievement of core goals of the SDG Agenda. In my understanding an ethics of respect should be at the centre of our attention and work: Ethics of respect for the dignity of each human being, ethics of respect for others, other cultures, other religious traditions, ethics of respect for animals, for forests, for rivers and lakes, for the earth as a whole, ethics of respect for nature, of respect for the sanctity of life which is not our property, but given to us from the creator of all life on earth. I believe this can be shared amongst many religious traditions. Education and sensitization for an ethics of respect for life has to be obligatory, not just an additional option for all educational levels, from the kindergarden, to primary and secondary schools up to private and public universities, for university leadership as well as the future politicians and diplomats. How to continue with human civilization on this fragile planet earth without a compulsory code of conduct on an ethics of respect for life?!
- **Environmental and Ecological ethics at the core:** As I have worked myself a lot on environmental ethics²⁰ I would like to see environmental ethics at the centre of many of our activities and to

¹⁸ See: <https://www.ocms.ac.uk/free-book-resources/>

¹⁹ Partnership on Religion and Development, German Ministry for Development Cooperation, Bread for the World - National Protestant Development Organization in Germany.

²⁰ International Handbook on Creation Care and Eco-Diakonia. Concepts and Theological Perspectives of Churches from the Global South. Editors: Daniel Beros, Eale Bosela, Lesmore Ezekiel, Kambale Kahongya, Ruomin Liu, Grace Moon, Marisa Strizzi, Dietrich Werner. Regnum Books, Oxford 2022, 916 pages

strengthen the interrelation between planetary environmental ethics, ethics of new technologies like AI ethics, peace ethics, business and economic ethics, health ethics including such complex fields like medical ethics or aviation ethics as all of these have to be reinterpreted within a framework of a new comprehensive understanding of justice within planetary boundaries.

- The last “E” is about **Enabling the regions and Energizing for funding**: We will come to this in more detail later, but just to indicate already here: Our regionalization strategy is part of our global outreach and global policy engagement strategy. We should give high visibility to the work done in regions by people concerned for contextualized ethics from the regions. We have a passion for strengthening the visibility of the marginalized voices for ethics concerns, like those struggling against deforestation in Amazonas or indiscriminate and ecologically insensitive extractivism in African and Asian countries. It would be a complete misconception to argue “why giving financial support to a foundation which works in Geneva, one of the richest cities in the world?” as a significant part of our funds as a foundation, operating both from Geneva and from seven clearly defined regions in the global South, goes as empowerment to the regions and to disadvantaged actors in ethics.

Our common tasks and challenges are indeed enormous in the board, particularly with regard to securing long-term funding and adapting to rapidly changing contexts. The institutional and educational landscapes in the context in which we are operating are changing at an ever-increasing speed. What is our unique character, our USP, for what we can and should offer? We need to achieve highest and enduring impact with smaller means and currently a limited staff. How to prioritize? These are some of the questions which we will be persistent to ask. **Ethics has its price** – like higher education of the future leaders in economy, politics, science and religions has its price. Cheap and shallow or sloganizing ethics is not worth any effort. For ethics to be impactful, capable to be communicated to leaders, fit for organizing new majorities in societies and sustainable in the long run it needs high quality standards and the best of younger, open and critical minds for visionary leadership (that was the conviction already of one of the architects of the pioneering movement of Life and Work, J.H. Oldham, in the global ecumenical movement.)²¹ While we all owe an immense word of gratitude and recognition to Linsi Foundation which has faithfully accompanied Globethics in the first two decades as funding partner we also need to state clearly: Globethics needs additional sources of funding for the years to come, particularly after 2027. And we need not only additional funds, but we also need a reconsideration of where and how these funds are spent – a better ratio between the allocation and the utilization of funds in terms of the best efficiency and effectiveness in terms of the outcomes. In a world where we observe an unprecedented accumulation of private wealth it would be a scandal if we would not manage to attract some of the existing enormous global assets for building a comprehensive ethical framework for some of the crucial challenges which we are facing – as a vast number of people and also foundations do share our principal objectives and convictions on the significance of ethics for the future of life on this earth. This Global Ethics Forum from 2024 has shown that Globethics is and remains a key player in this regard. We believe: Globethics is too precious and too unique, it has achieved too much already to be abandoned and left alone in terms of strategic funding support. Serious neglect of long-term global investment into ethical leadership development will result in a much higher price to be paid in the end by societies and governments in terms of the consequences of the absence and neglect of common ethical standards for the social fabric and inclusion, for peace and justice in and between our societies. Therefore, it is important to invest into the infrastructure, the staff and the strategic work of a leading think tank on ethics like Globethics now!

²¹ See on history of ecumenical social ethics: West, Charles C. "Ecumenical Social Ethic Beyond Socialism and Capitalism." *Ecumenical Review* 43, no. 3 (July 1991): 329–40. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1758-6623.1991.tb02723.x>; Wolfram Stierle, Martin Haider, Dietrich Werner: *Ethik für das Leben. 100 Jahre ökumenische Wirtschafts- und Sozialethik. Ökumenische Erklärungen, Studentexte und Sektionsberichte des ÖRK*. Ernst-Lange-Institut für Ökumenische Studien, 1996 (690 pages)

4) What does it mean to do ethics with people of good will from different religious and non-religious traditions?

The world is crying out for ethical orientation and sober as well as visionary political and moral leadership! Doing ethics with people of good will from all different religious traditions and also from non-religious, humanist or philosophical background is not just something like a comfortable after-work activity you are doing out of your cosy and undisturbed armchair. It implies serious involvement into listening to those at the margins, to those facing ethical dilemmata as well as to those suffering and to those discriminated against. We need a differentiated, nuanced, but also clear and prophetic language of ethical orientations in several problem areas. Let me just illustrate this by four brief examples:

Affordable housing crisis and financialization of the real estate market: *Is it ethical* that vast groups of people in European as well as in many other countries due to the commercialization, globalization and financialization of national housing markets experience the worst ever crisis of affordable housing and rents as prices for houses and flats on sold are skyrocketing in many countries as a result of financial capital pushing financial returns on the housing market to unknown extremes, leading to rising and unprecedented rates of homelessness (150 million people worldwide)²² in many countries both in the North and the South?

Global inequality and widening social exclusion crisis: *Is it ethical* that the richest 1% of humanity owns nearly two-thirds of all new wealth worth \$42 trillion Dollars created since 2020, almost twice as much money as the bottom 99 percent of the world's population owns as stated in an Oxfam report from 2023?²³ Only 3000 persons in this world have accumulated personal assets of 14, 4 trillions of USD, which equals 13% of the global BIP – thus calls for a just global taxation system – even on the G20 level- are getting lauder.²⁴

Global nuclear weapons arms race and lack of common security systems: *Is it ethical* that the security system of this world still builds upon the assumption that mutually assured mass destruction and deterrence by more than 12.000 nuclear bombs owned by nuclear-armed states will guarantee the security of all humanity on this earth, while only 400 nuclear bombs are sufficient already to wipe out humanity completely?²⁵ How do we ethically reflect on the fact that according to the UN General Secretary the nuclear warfare risk currently is at the highest point since decades and still superpowers do not show any relevant sign to return to negotiation tables?²⁶

Lack of multilateral diplomatic peace efforts for regional conflict areas: *Is it ethical* that a diplomatic solution and ending of two of the most grave military, territorial and cultural conflicts in the world currently, namely the Israel-Palestine and the Ukraine-Russia war, constantly is postponed? The world seems to allow attitudes of hatred to explode, threats of mutual annihilation extended and separating walls of apartheid to be built. Regional wars continue with thousands of civilian victims. Long generations of traumatized people have to be expected. How can these generations of people affected be transformed to a mentality of mutual dialogue,

²² <https://www.homelessworldcup.org/homelessness-statistics>

²³ <https://www.oxfam.org/en/press-releases/richest-1-bag-nearly-twice-much-wealth-rest-world-put-together-over-past-two-years>

²⁴ Gabriel Zucman: Genug ist genug. Die Zeit ist reif für eine Milliardärssteuer. In: <https://www.ipg-journal.de/rubriken/demokratie-und-gesellschaft/artikel/genug-ist-genug-1-7705/>; the full English study is available on: <https://www.taxobservatory.eu/publication/a-blueprint-for-a-coordinated-minimum-effective-taxation-standard-for-ultra-high-net-worth-individuals/>

²⁵ The world's nuclear-armed states possess a combined total of about 12,100 nuclear warheads as of March 2024. See: [https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/nuclear-weapons-who-has-what-glance#:~:text=The%20world's%20nuclear%20armed%20states,nuclear%20weapons%20by%20the%20NPT.](https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/nuclear-weapons-who-has-what-glance#:~:text=The%20world's%20nuclear%20armed%20states,nuclear%20weapons%20by%20the%20NPT.;); see also on the work of ICAN: <https://www.icanw.org/>

²⁶ <https://press.un.org/en/2024/sc15630.doc.htm>

empathy and peace if they are nurtured and surrounded mainly by a culture of hatred, revenge and retaliation on both sides?²⁷

The answer to these brief exemplary cases and questions which are identifying the scandalous neglect of common ethical principles in our world can only be an unambiguous and clear No. Much of what is happening today is shockingly unethical in deed. The solution to these burning ethical challenges, however, cannot be given by one actor alone, neither by governments, nor by corporations, nor by religious actors on their own. This recently was clearly stated again by Azza Karam.²⁸ Actors need to work together. We need to be as inclusive as possible and should always ask: Who sits at the table and who is excluded while he/she should be also listened to? We need intense and intentional cooperation by multi-contextual and multilayered actors. The world needs sustained processes of detailed and informed contextual reflections on ethical challenges such as those affecting all humanity and the whole planet. The key task of Globethics in this perspective is of more strategic and long-term nature, as we are not just another peace or just taxation or AI related NGO, but we are about the more fundamental task to strengthen the capacities of future generations to develop ethical expertise in these areas. We are about capacity building, global standardization and empowerment for ethical competencies through higher education. But this certainly cannot be achieved without concrete ethical immersion into these areas of conflicts and real-life challenges, an immersion which, however, will be inspired by key convictions and common values held up by the Globethics family,

- *That it is ethical behaviour to respect and to defend the dignity of each human being in each phase of his or her life and in each place and region of this world until the last breath and both decent housing, economic welfare, peace and security as well as ecological stability belong to his or her human dignity;*
- *That it is ethical to propagate and construct frameworks of shared and mutual security systems which build on regulating principles of recognizing both conflictive, but also common interests of both sides and to build a balanced system of mutually assured security in which a compromise can be reached progressively between all related parties;*
- *That it is ethical to really accept that we cannot live at the expense of future generations to come after us and our lifestyles need to change related to sustainability standards which respect a three-dimensional notion of justice (identified as inter-generational justice, intra-generational justice, inter-species justice) (see the key*

²⁷ More than 10.000 civilians died in the Ukraine due to the Russian aggression, in:

<https://www.statista.com/topics/9087/russia-ukraine-war-2022/#editorsPicks>; 39.000 people killed in Gaza war, 1200 people killed in Israel.: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/longform/2023/10/9/israel-hamas-war-in-maps-and-charts-live-tracker>

²⁸ Azza Karam has recently (25 June 2024) argued: “Appreciating the ‘good’ powers of religious institutions and leaders, and the remarkable reach of religious social services and positive changemakers, is necessary, but by no means enough. In fact, seeking to emphasize, support and identify the religious as the panacea, is harmful – in the same ways that marginalising the religious as evil, anti-human rights, unhealthy, misogynist, unnecessary, parochial, etc. has been, and remains, harmful, to the very same fabric of the civil societies we all uphold. It is not all about good religion or bad religion. Rather, it could be about how to generate, nurture, protect, and yes, honour, civil societies. *Neither our governments (including even the elected ones), nor our religious institutions (including those which have survived centuries) nor our corporations (including those with the highest ranking of CSR and ESG) can, alone, change the dramatic junction of our collective human and planetary realities... All our institutions, groups, communities and our individual selves, bear a responsibility. Our long-established religious institutions, faith-based and interfaith initiatives in their mushrooming multitudes, need to be held accountable to what we give of our most valuable, to those who are not religious, those who come from different religions or religious organisations, and especially, to those who uphold all human rights for all peoples at all times.*”, in: Azza Karam during a Symposium of UN Organizations and faith-partners: The Age of Holy War & Poetics of Solidarity – Part 2, in: Social, Political, Economic and Environmental Issues which Affect Us All. In: <https://www.globalissues.org/news/2024/06/25/37046>

proposal of the Earth Commission on Earth System Boundaries),²⁹ so that we do not take more than what is given to us within our life-span from the earth's resources and that we restore the damage done to mother earth.

A more deliberate deepening and inclusion of ethical aspects, guidelines and orientations in the current UN system in key areas related to current dilemmata and the global poly-crisis- that is our last point here- is not possible without strengthened civil society participation in all levels of UN organizations and in regional government actors' platforms. That is why we would support what has been articulated as a demand for a reform of the UN system, particularly for the UN Summit for the Future to take place still this month in New York:

In the UN report on "A breakthrough for people and planet- Effective and Inclusive Global Governance for Today and the Future" from 2023,³⁰ which was published on behalf of the High-Level Advisory Board on Effective Multilateralism, a clear argumentation was brought forward to rebuild trust in multilateralism through inclusion and accountability which is only possible through a better inclusion of civil society actors: The report reads as follows:

Our consultations surfaced a consistent call for greater inclusion of civil society in the core work of global governance. "Civil society" is broadly defined here to mean non-governmental organizations operating in the civic space, such as trade unions, faith-based organizations, Indigenous networks, research institutions, think tanks, independent media groups, and other types of non-governmental entities.

13 There are a number of concrete steps that could improve inclusion of civil society, such as: (a) using digital space to involve more groups in United Nations processes; (b) formally including Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) accredited civil society groups in common spaces in the United Nations; and (c) building interactive dialogue with civil society into formal United Nations sessions.

14 These and other actions to more meaningfully include civil society in the multilateral system should be systematically linked into a network of formally recognized civil society focal points across the major institutions of the United Nations system, reflecting a systemwide strategy for civil society inclusion.

15 Faith-based and charitable organizations play a significant role in providing public services, extending critical safety nets, peace-making, and environmental efforts in many countries. Such organizations should continue to be engaged as multi-faith stakeholders in discussions and implementation, within and across countries, and as part of multilateral efforts.

We might need to explore further with UN partners how and where a platform or major international agency for deliberate inclusion of ethics and ethical discourses can be created in and between the various programs and sub-divisions of the current UN system. As we move along in our Globethics processes we see our work also as a contribution to strengthening the voice of civil society actors, the voice of faith actors and think tanks of higher education contributing to key areas for a movement for global ethics and responsible leadership which the world urgently needs.

5) Globalance in a New World Order and Globalance in the work of Globethics

We have touched upon key areas of ethical significance at the beginning which had been outlined in the opus magnum on "Globalance towards a New World Order". However, certain Globalances are not only needed for a New World Order, but also for the work with and within Globethics. I am proposing to bringing

²⁹ Joyeeta Gupta and others: Earth system justice needed to identify and live within Earth system boundaries, March 2023, in: <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41893-023-01064-1>

³⁰ https://highleveladvisoryboard.org/breakthrough/pdf/highleveladvisoryboard_breakthrough_fullreport.pdf

in the following concerns in future dialogues within the board and with old and new partners as a new president:

The future development of Globethics should be marked by four crucial balances

- a) **Balancing between continuity and innovations, flagship programs and time-bound projects**
- b) **Balancing between regional outreach and global partnerships**
- c) **Balancing between our own distinct profile and wider alliances in the field between faith-based, interfaith and secular actors**
- d) **Balancing between sustained and stable core budget funding lines of strategic funding partners and short-term project funds by additional funding partners**

Briefly this entails:

- a) A new phase or ‘post-founder period’ of Globethics (luckily enough we will still have valuable and continuous advice from Christoph as honorary president) will need both continuity in terms of some strategic flagship projects like the Global Ethics Forum, the Publications and Certified Ethics Courses Program, the Globethics Doctoral School and Youth Leadership Award, as well as targeted innovation in areas where we still can do better. We could consider innovation through a deliberate emphasize on empowerment for younger leaders, e.g. the *creation of a global fellowship and network of younger ethicists, including the creation of a much broader interfaith scholarship program for younger ethical PhD candidates*. We need to deliberately contribute to creating the next generation of qualified ethical teachers and researchers in this world! We should also consider a deliberate emphasize on troubled regions of pressures and tensions (I know many of them both near and far) in which young critical ethicists, engaged scholars and their institutions standing for ethical values, for peace and human rights are threatened and discriminated against. So many gifted young intellectuals, researchers, ethicists from all religious background have become exiled as it has become impossible to continue working within their original context! We cannot leave those alone. In these regions of pressures, we need more visible solidarity and explicit support for *doing ethics in a situations of tensions, conflicts and life threats (a multifaith programme for young ethical scholars at risk)*.
- b) A new working period of Globethics secondly needs a balance between regionalization and centralization, voluntarism and paid professionalism. While we need a realistic (and not overstretched) strategy for strengthening regional centres, we cannot allow for focusing only on paid staff positions covered by the core budget. We cannot give up on a strong, capable and even more strengthened headquarters office in Geneva as otherwise we would lose inner cohesion and institutional connectivity within the NGO landscape in this capital multilateralism for global policy outreach. At the same time, we need to be creative in terms of voluntary staff and regionally paid (or seconded) staff positions in partnership with other regional actors for those who have the enthusiasm, ethical zeal and capacity for to support regional outreach on networking in ethics. How to balance profiling the work in regional centres with the profiling and strengthening of some key strategic international partnerships (for instance with UNESCO, with Club of Rome, with World Future Council,³¹ The Earth Commission³² or UNEP³³...) which we need for the global impact of Globethics is another issue to be carefully looked at. How to review existing partnership agreements of Globethics and their dormant or activated potentials? – we will be persistent with these questions.

³¹ <https://www.worldfuturecouncil.org/de/>

³² <https://earthcommission.org/>

³³ <https://www.unep.org/who-we-are/about-us>

- c) A new period of Globethics thirdly needs a balance between keeping the distinct profile of Globethics as a unique entity (including a clear prioritization of the core working areas) and maintaining wider coalitions and networks: Globethics is not just another (peace or justice) NGO, not just another institute offering university courses, not just a think tank hosting policy conversations. But Globethics is **a multilateral network and convening platform of institutions and actors working for ethical leadership in higher education and in global engagement**. However, could its reputation and exemplary role be strengthened by publishing one example a 2-3 pages public ethics statement (vest-pocket format) on a burning regional ethics issue each month in its Newsletter coming from different regions in order to make more visible the work of the regions? Could the Global Ethics Forums be strengthened by having regional thematic pre-assemblies with clearly defined outcomes? One of the unique features of Globethics is its facilitating role to bring different players and actors together in the field of ethics, higher education and younger generations. Could it become a task of Globethics not only to offer a selected number of world class certified or executive ethics classes to a limited number of students, but to offer a global platform for universities to showcase and share their manifold models of advanced and master ethics courses, to develop a common quality indicator and assessment system so that a global ranking of ethics courses could be applied (something like a “World Forum of Applied (Business, Peace, AI, Medical, Political) Ethics Courses”)? At the same time Globethics should maintain wider coalitions and working relationships with both faith-based, interfaith-based and secular actors contributing to the advancement of key areas in today’s world. Globethics should always apply a special sensitivity for the religious and spiritual grounding of ethical values.³⁴ The sidelining, neglect and discrimination of religious voices and actors in the field of ethics which goes together in many countries with shrinking space for civil society in general will never be accepted and supported by Globethics. - All these are more tentative questions and preliminary suggestions as we still need to wait for further evaluations and strategic planning at the level of the board which I cannot pre-empt.
- d) A new period of Globethics finally urgently needs a new balance between sustained and stable core funding lines with existing or new strategic supporters as well as new project related short-term funding as the current level of support is not automatically continued beyond 2027. Ethics has its price, but also as **highly qualified ethics deserves its price**. With rising expectations and goals to be reached, we thus need diversified and additional funding for both the core budget as well as targeted short-term project funding. At the same time, as has been stated already, we need to be self-critical also and review the ratio between the services rendered and the actual full-cost calculation in several areas and try to reduce (staff) costs while assuring lasting impact.

6) Postlude: I do what I can

Let me close with a little humoristic piece and narrative which is cited from a very important speech made in 2023 in Aachener Dom by the Austrian writer Robert Menasse, essayist, scholar, literary critique, who was born in Vienna 1954 and has lived and worked in Brazil, Austria and Sri Lanka with his works translated into 20 major languages. His lecture was held under the remarkable title “Faith in Europe – A Sermon”, a passionate plea against the reemerging of the spirit of rigid and narrowminded nationalism which is

³⁴ See the excellent report: Elisabeth Le Roux: “We have values that are needed”. Faith Actors and their role in Civic Space, in: <https://www.noedhjaelp.dk/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2024/06/eler-we-have-values-that-are-needed-faith-actors-and-civic-space-study-2024-web.pdf>

threatening the closure and falling down of the beautiful European sky and horizon with all its radiating stars and opportunities.³⁵

At the end of this remarkable lecture from June last year, he shares a short fairytale which is worth rereading here:³⁶

“There is a sparrow lying on the ground. In a forest clearing under a gray sky. He lies on his back and stretches his legs up in the air. A tomcat comes by, sees the sparrow and is amazed. He doesn't think: This is easy prey, or maybe he still does. But the cat first wants to understand this unusual behaviour of the bird, and so he asks: Why are you, an animal of the air, lying here on the ground and stretching your little legs up?

The sparrow replies: You may not have noticed it yet, but the sky is threatening to fall. The cat has to laugh: And you think, if you lie there and lift your little legs towards the sky, that you can prevent that? *I don't think so, says the sparrow, but I'll do what I can.*

Did the tomcat then eat the bird? He was amazed, he was so confused that he trolled himself. He thought for a long time, this 'I'm doing what I can' couldn't get out of his head, and so one day he decided to go back to the spot where he had seen the sparrow to see if it was still there lies and stretches his thin little legs in the air. He didn't find him anymore, but he met a lamb lying next to a wolf in the sunny clearing. And the sky was big and blue and wide.”³⁷

Am I doing what I can in order to stem the tide? Are we doing all what we can to prevent the open sky from a catastrophic falling down on us, to build up resilience over against destructive forces in this world and to invent little acts of hope and non-conformity against inertia around us? If we all do what we can, each on his or her place and context, then Globethics will remain to be a global family of “creative ethical changemakers” (to cite our colleague Lawrence Chong from Singapore)³⁸ be alive for years to come and humanity will do better.

³⁵ See: Robert Menasse: Glaube an Europa, Aachener Dom 2023, Suhrkamp 2023: in: <https://www.suhrkamp.de/empfehlung/robert-menasse-glaube-an-europa-b-4089>

³⁶ <https://www.faz.net/aktuell/feuilleton/debatten/robert-menasse-ueber-europa-18974975.html>

³⁷ Robert Menasse: Glaube an Europa, Aachener Dom 2023, Suhrkamp 2023, p. 25 f.: in: <https://www.suhrkamp.de/empfehlung/robert-menasse-glaube-an-europa-b-4089>.

³⁸ <https://www.lawrencechong.com/>