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# Prioritising People and Planet a New Agenda for Global Progress

Proposals by the 'Pascal Lamy Group'

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by FEPS

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**Never before in human history has the pace of change been so rapid. The nexus of new scientific advances, technological leaps, digitalisation, major demographic changes, and an intensifying globalisation, is impacting our lives with unprecedented force. What is more, a number of developments, including climate change, migration, and urbanisation are changing our societies in new ways.**

These megatrends are here to stay with their positive and negative implications, depending on who and where we are. **These trends create extraordinary opportunities for individual and collective accomplishments but they also pose huge challenges for social, environmental and economic sustainability.** The direction we choose creates an historic opportunity and responsibility for the progressive movement. Developing a compelling progressive agenda that rejects the fatalistic, neoliberal paradigm is the only way to forge a progressive future. The future can be better than the past.

A determination to shape a positive agenda by harnessing these megatrends led to the adoption of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for 2030, which provide a set of targets of progress, a horizon for hope. The UN SDGs are in line with progressive values of social progress and social justice that aim to provide a decent and improving quality of life.

The duty of the progressive movement today is to act to restore hope in the hearts and minds of the citizens of all societies.

Recent years have been characterised by a number of negative trends: geopolitical tensions are mounting; global capitalism remains crisis-prone; inequalities are growing; labour's share of national income is at historic lows; 'precariat' is on the rise as workers' protection is declining and insecurity growing in many countries, and this disproportionately affects young people; democracy, where it exists, is sometimes under attack; and our planet's resources are overexploited and suffering from climate change, biodiversity degradation and other stresses. The strong are doing better than the weak; income and wealth are increasingly being captured by the richest 1%. Furthermore, as we look ahead, further development of robotisation, artificial intelligence, biotechnology and other rapidly evolving technologies will create powerful new opportunities but also risks that divide societies even more. Increasingly, the capacity of individuals to access required knowledge and skill levels and to afford to live in the dynamic cities is at risk.

**This means that the extent to which individuals may expect incomes, inclusiveness, and socialisation through work is in question.**

Progressives have a responsibility to redress these failures. The duty of the progressive movement today is to act to restore hope in the hearts and minds of the citizens of all societies. This includes providing all citizens with the means to improve their

capabilities and addressing the economic, social or cultural insecurity which fragments societies. Universal human rights and the right to global public goods as well as ensuring gender equity and equitable global access to healthcare are at the core of a progressive agenda. All this necessitates a new paradigm of social change.

**In order to move forward and realise this agenda a frank and lucid diagnosis of where the movement stands today is vital as its political capacity to shape societies is in doubt or in retreat almost everywhere.** Other political movements have been more successful at exploiting the growing political and social discontent, pain and frustration. They have mobilised reactionary forces cohering around ultranationalism, isolationism, tribalism, racism, xenophobia and authoritarianism, which are in total opposition to progressive ideals and solidarity. The fact is that these negative forces are on the rise; progressives are not.

What led to this predicament is a matter for discussion within the movement. For some, it is because too many policy concessions to dominant economic neoliberalism have blurred the distinction between left and centre. For others, credibility has been damaged by the gap between the promises made and the negative results experienced by the movement's supporters.

**Most agree that the progressive agenda has not kept up with today's and tomorrow's challenges, having lost touch with the part of the population it claimed to represent: people needing and wanting change, the disenfranchised, those feeling left or locked out, and of course the younger generations.**

Hence, we have a responsibility:

- First, to propose a revamped, forward-looking vision, able to attract those who share progressive values
- Second, to rebuild the capacity to gain strength by mobilising political energy in line with a progressive agenda of globalisation.

### **FIRST: THE NEW VISION**

It must be global but leave room for diversity. Challenges and opportunities are common, but a one-size-fits all approach would not work. We are all in the same boat but the fear of uniformity and the demand for preserving multiple identities needs to be addressed. It must be designed with a long time horizon in mind, but applicable to the problems of today as well. It must be principled and all encompassing: taking into account the impact of technology on the future of work and social fabric, but be based on ideals of fairness, equality and solidarity. It must encompass the ecological dimension. It must be simple to allow for a wide debate, while matching the growing complexity of societies. It must shape the contours of an alternative vision of the future of humanity, where the economy serves humans and nature, not the other way round. It must remain open to new ideas and new forms of social and institutional organisation. From this vision the following proposals arise for a transformative agenda to a post-neoliberal world, based on fairness and equality. Some are reaffirmations of progressive guiding principles. Others are more precise goals.

#### **1. Democratic choice**

Choices that matter for people have to take place according to democratic processes. This requires proper information, citizen empowerment, civic education, open public debates, majority rule, with the necessary checks and balances such as freedom and plurality of the press and independence of the judiciary. Utmost efforts should be made to open up democratic processes, to enable new ways of participating and reaching out to voters, enhancing democratic pluralistic culture and boosting civic engagement. A two consecutive term limit for public and corporate mandates should be imposed on leaders of public institutions or private organisations in order to avoid power capture or nepotism.

#### **2. Active and protective state**

The focus should not be on big or small government, but on establishing an innovative, creative, capable and dynamic state that is proactive in empowering all its citizens through good and decent work, and in investing in ways to protect against old and new social insecurities and to prepare society for future challenges.

#### **3. Global public goods**

The global commons, access to which matters more and more, now covers a wider range of domains, including the environment and ecological systems, health, and data. These commons must be protected as global public goods. Monopolies have to be constrained.

#### **4. Multilateralism first**

Bilateral and transactional international arrangements are less fair and less transparent than multilateral ones. An emphatic promotion of multilateralism and solidarity is needed, as it is required to govern the growing number of global issues and to guarantee a fair globalisation that delivers for all.

#### **5. Real gender equality**

Gender equality is a human right. Inequality is a drag on economies and societies. Action is needed across our entire societies: in the law, in politics, in the workplace; in business – on boards and in entrepreneurship; in the media fighting stereotypes, with social policies and sexual and reproductive health and with zero tolerance for violence against women and girls.

#### **6. Non discrimination**

Actively combatting any sort of discrimination based on racial, sexual, religious and cultural criteria, through affirmative policies,

so that injustices are recognised and remedied and all human beings are treated equally, living in mutual respect and dignity. Cultural diversity and rights of minorities must be preserved.

### **7. Shared Security**

At home and abroad, insecurity affects the least wealthy first. Therefore, it is imperative to be bold in eliminating the causes of insecurity and tough in fighting terrorism and organised crime. Effective disarmament has to be a priority of international cooperation.

### **8. Future-oriented education for all**

Everyone should have access to a quality education and training. Brain power is the fastest growing and most easily accessible resource. Education should foster skills such as creativity, critical thinking and openness to difference, which are increasingly important for personal achievement, societal development and global resilience. To achieve this education should benefit from a fundamental redirection of resources.

### **9. Access to healthcare for all**

Universal access to healthcare, which is essential in reducing health inequalities, must be promoted in such a way that it is accessible and affordable.

### **10. Responsible migration**

International laws regarding refugees must be upheld. Legal and safe pathways for migrants must be established. The rights and responsibilities of migrants and the host communities must be respected.

### **11. Zero net carbon emissions by 2050**

Achieving net zero carbon and other emissions which contribute to climate change is our only chance to limit this to +2°C. Unless we repair our planet and build a more sustainable development model, entire societies will be devastated, starting with the weakest, thus exacerbating inequalities.

### **12. Right to corporate co-decision for labour**

The involvement of workers and employees in companies and business investment strategies should be promoted. In addition to strengthening organised labour and industrial relations, this includes extending workplace democracy through supporting workers involvement on company boards and company workforces having entitlements to collective shareholding.

### **13. Taxation of the 1%**

Excessive wealth and income concentration are inefficient and unjust. Capital must be taxed more than labour. As a priority, the 1% top owners or earners must give back to society a larger part of their wealth and income.

### **14. Zero tolerance of corruption and tax evasion**

Corruption and tax evasion are hidden taxes on the poor. They distort legitimate and accountable power systems. Transparent, accountable, and effective governance is the solution. Political parties should be publicly financed and limits on corporate political funding should be established.

### **15. A World Financial Organisation**

Finance is both global and risky, and yet its global governance is weak. In order to ensure that finance serves the needs of our societies, existing organisations and rules need to be reformed and the Basel informal system of regulation must be replaced by a proper World Financial Organisation, with treaty-based binding rules and enforcement mechanisms.

## **SECOND: THE NECESSARY MOBILISATION**

A new approach is required to advance this new progressive agenda. In many places, our traditional levers of power, such as traditional trade unions, have lost clout. Citizens' faith in traditional state institutions have reached new lows, provoking anti-authority, anti-establishment and even anti-democratic sentiments at a time when strong institutions are needed.

### **A new, three-part strategy is required to counter this.**

First, it is vital that progressives go beyond self-criticism and nostalgia and become a forward-looking force. They need to regain confidence in themselves, in their renewed agenda and in their power to win elections again. Without this and without a clear hope that progressives can become a transformative force shaping the 21st century, they will remain a defensive movement and hence vulnerable to negative polls or any other distractions from boldly pursuing their mission.

Second, the left needs to think more imaginatively about its constituencies, and go beyond the traditional parties' organisation of citizens and trade unions, as has been the case for the past two centuries. Progressives need to embrace a political world that is no longer defined by the old conflicts and divisions. Instead individual allegiances have become more dynamic, reflecting growing communication and complexity and a matrix of different identities which define modern evolving societies. **The political environment requires the inclusion of diverse constituencies that deserve to be supported and resourced.** The movement needs to be open to partners, allies, and grassroots activists who bring new transformative ideas and operate with new media to progressive organisations. These include non-governmental or non-profit organisations, together with regional or

local authorities that are now exercising power in a poly-governance pattern. New coalitions for change are required at both the domestic and international levels. There is an enormous amount of energy, passion and readiness to support change. This provides new opportunities for progressives to shape local and global governance to align with people and the planet's needs.

Third, as patterns of participation and engagement have changed fundamentally, progressives need to change their organisational and communication cultures. Electorates have become more volatile and new coalitions are being built on the basis of a widening set of shared but highly differentiated demands. **Appreciating and responding to the diversity of these demands is especially vital when reaching out to the youngest and millennial generations;** but also to the many millions of disenfranchised and disenfranchised citizens who stand to gain from a new agenda for global progress that recognises their needs and prioritises and invites them to be part of shaping a movement committed to prioritising people and our planet.

#### List of members of the 'Pascal Lamy Group'

Amorim Celso, Brazil  
Broadbent Ed, Canada  
Burrow Sharan, Australia  
D'Alema Massimo, Italy  
Dewan Sabina, India  
Damâso Mafalda, Portugal-UK  
Emerson Craig, Australia  
Finchelstein Gilles, France  
Fiorillo Michele, Italy  
Gerrits André, The Netherlands  
Goldin Ian, UK  
Gonzalez Arancha, Spain  
Gusenbauer Alfred, Austria  
Henry-Knop Diana, Czech Republic  
Herfkens Eveline, The Netherlands  
Inotai Andras, Hungary  
Jablonowski Kuba, Poland-UK  
Kaberuka Donald, Rwanda  
Kennedy Michael, USA  
Kwaśniewski Aleksander, Poland  
Lagos Ricardo, Chile  
Lamy Pascal, France  
Landerretche Oscar, Chile  
Lemkow Louis, Spain  
Liebhaber Bruno, Belgium  
Manuel Trevor, South Africa  
Netshitenzhe Joel, South Africa  
Pangestu Mari Elka, Indonesia  
Rifai Taleb, Jordan  
Saad Filho Alfredo, Brazil – UK – Italy  
Sánchez Pedro, Spain  
Sané Pierre, Senegal  
Schröder Martin, Germany  
Skrzypek Ania, Poland  
Smith Rick, Canada  
Somavía Juan, Chile  
Stetter Ernst, Germany  
Tall Sall Aïssata, Senegal  
Velasco Andrés, Chile  
Warner Neil, Ireland  
Wieczorek-Zeul Heidemarie, Germany  
Wood Stewart, UK

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