

BPO Intergenerational Forum 20.1.23

Andreas Nidecker Welcome Address

Good morning

Dear Panel speakers of this years I.g. Forum, Margaretha Kiener, Mayor Rio, Prof. Lukas Kundert, Lukas Ott, Marie Claire Graf, Tina Kurath & Tsubasa Shinhara,
Dear representatives of various Youth Organisations present and as ZOOM participants
Dear Chairs and organizers of today's Meeting Vanda, Ilya, Marzhan and Alyn

As president of the Basel Peace Office and I'd like to extend you a cordial welcome. Given the limited success of the recent COP 27 meeting in Sharm el Sheikh, we elders are share the frustrations of not just the young people, but also the one of many scientists and academics. With You we are even worried about the mega problems nowadays facing mankind, compounding each other and seriously threaten the human habitat in many places: 1. the climate effects, leading to desertification in some regions and frequent floods in others including the sea level rise and much more violent storms. 2. The ongoing wars even in the very heart of Europe, combined with one Nuclear power threatening even with the use of nuclear weapons. And 3. finally the growing trends of nationalism threatening democracy in some nations.

While we in our generation are as helpless as individuals as many of your generation, all of us can organize ourselves, join active organisations and cooperate, as we practice this in the young NGO Youth Fusion. In fact, transgenerational cooperation is more important than ever and whereas we need to understand your impatience, we also should constructively support your efforts financially, politically and through our adult networks. Your generation on the other hand has the courage and motivation and will increasingly need to participate in the public discussion as members of NGOs and even by political action.

A recent article in the NYT had the title: "History may absolve the soup throwers". Some of you may have read the story of two young activists, who threw **tomato soup on Van Goghs famous painting "Sunflowers" at the National Gallery in London. In doing so they cried out "Are you more concerned about the protection of a painting or the protection of our planet and its people?"** They then glued themselves to the wall below the painting. No damage was done, as the painting luckily was protected by glass. Similar actions by concerned young people seem to take place in many places nowadays, be it in museums, as roadblocks against new highways or protests against nuclear proliferation.

We agree, **that given the obvious facts of environmental degradation vs. the inertia of industry moving away from Carbon and the slow political speed of appropriate activities, creative and attention grabbing actions are necessary, even occasional civil disobedience.** Nowadays also leading researchers agree and many discuss the **Pros and Cons of climate militancy.** I believe that critiques by people, who consider themselves opinion leaders, are wrong if they propose, that acts like the tomatosoup event would degrade the artists and their work, at least **as long property destruction can be avoided.** Furthermore, criticizing that something beautiful and valuable maybe destroyed in fact renders the best arguments for the actions of the young activists: After all **if it so bad, if something beautiful and valuable is destroyed, how about focusing too on our own habitat the earth ?**

