

Addendum to the 1982 ERICE Manifesto - Erice (Italy) November 11th, 2023

In 1982, the Erice Manifesto emphasised the role of science and scientists to help counter the risk of nuclear holocaust deriving from a polarised world divided into military blocks set against each other. Approximately 100,000 scientists and many government representatives joined it. In the years following the Manifesto's drafting, far-sighted leaders drew up historical agreements for arms control and reducing nuclear warheads, leading to the gradual easing of tensions that facilitated the end of the Cold War.

Since that time, however, the world has undergone profound changes; new fronts and new powers have appeared in economic, political, and military contexts. Humanity must now face increasing risks of a renewed arms race in a landscape embracing existing plans for nuclear arms, other weapons of mass destruction, and conventional arms, and plans for the malevolent use of emerging dual technologies and increasing challenges for the safety of outer space. Now, the endurance of the international disarmament architecture, the control of armaments, and non-proliferation deriving from the end of the Cold War is at stake.

Thus, the crisis of the multi-lateral system and events of recent years reassert, with greater force, the power of science as a vehicle for peace and collaboration between peoples and governments, in a context that must involve moderation and a return to constructive dialogue.

The effects of the pandemic caused by COVID-19, the gradual but inexorable degradation of the environment, and the numerous outbreaks of war (even in Europe, which has lived in peace for almost 80 years since the second post-war period, with the sole exception of ex-Yugoslavia) demonstrate that the language of science – its discoveries in the service of humanity and the collaboration between scientists of different origins – are means for globally facing the new challenges that endanger the existence of the human race. The current development of science is based on international collaboration between significant numbers of researchers and on their being able to be in continuous contact, without restrictions. We need to reaffirm the independence and neutrality of science beyond instrumental or aggressive political purposes, placing the good of humanity at the centre of our concerns.

Even in the darkest periods of the Cold War, the exchange of ideas among scientists from opposite blocks never ceased, because people always believed that science overcame the creeds and politics of conflict and opposition. The current conflicts have dramatically revived a crisis in international relations that does not belong to the spirit of science and the global sharing of knowledge. We need to reverse course.

A coordinated, global scientific effort made it possible to save millions of human lives and defeat a particularly aggressive and mortal pandemic. The whole world is now connected in a systemic form and no country, including the greatest world powers, can think of acting effectively alone.

In this light, we intend to revive the current relevance and validity of the Erice Manifesto to restart and encourage dialogue and cooperation between scientists from all over the world, as a tool for peace, progress, and the resolution of planetary crises as an alternative to the confrontation and polarisation that increasingly characterise our times.