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“It is vital to understand how to improve the development of the global population and the environment, as we are already living beyond the very resource consumption forecasts from the Club of Rome 1972 report.”

– Izabella TEIXEIRA, co-chair, UNEP International Resource Panel

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‘Green Global South’. The Realpolitik of Intersecting

To begin with, let us underline how much humankind is ill-prepared to meet global, interconnected crisis. Changing geopolitics, the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, environmental challenges, all call for a better understanding of possible solutions at the intersection of socio-economic and environmental inequalities, especially in developing and emerging economies. We could summarize this as ‘the Green Global South Challenges’, which Intersecting would be a relevant tool to address through the upcoming troika of Indonesia, India and Brazil presidencies of the G20 from 2022 to 2024.

As we are collectively getting beyond the limits of natural resources extraction, we are confronted with an even more acute issue inequality in getting access to such raw resources. The current organization of global trade flows and supply chains (and their infrastructure) is exacerbating such inequalities. It contributes to the growth of CO2 emissions and the fragmentation and depletion of ecosystems,

affecting everyone and striking especially lower income households, neighbourhoods, countries and regions. We need to change economic and social perspectives around the world to address national, regional and global sustainability needs and priorities.

As global ecosystem degradation and transformation stems from growing global interconnectedness, the social demand for a new relationship between human beings and nature is rising and pressing but it has yet to be transformed into politics and policies. We argue that it is not possible to escape from our interconnected world and the related crisis. Yet, there is ample room to make progress in shaping policies locally, nationally and globally, that are more effective. Today’s situation is largely the result of two decades of laissez-faire since the turn of the millennium. We did not give enough thought to find solutions to the current environmental crisis, which started already long ago in the past century.

We believe that hopes and aspirations from the past, in particular since the aftermath of the second world-war, are no longer suitable for today. For instance, endless rise of consumption and acceleration of trade can no longer work as a paradigm for growth and well-being as it exhausts natural resources and affects complex environmental balance on land, in the air and at sea. The real-politik of today should not be to control or manage risks but to address and change the very mechanisms that create those risks, be

they economic, social or environmental. To a large extent, the COVID-19 crisis reveals the underlying structure and cracks within globalisation. It highlights the limitations of national and multilateral frameworks. It confirms how much the current global environmental crisis is also a geopolitical crisis.

The 'Intersecting' concept is a very useful and operative way to reframe mindsets and policies along several critical issues at the same time. It allows to combine the climate age and digital age and ask what kind of citizenship can emerge, within national or municipal boundaries and even beyond. Echoing the multiple socio-political and economic forecasts research threads from the late 1960's that paved the way to create the United-Nations Environmental Program (UNEP), we are compelled to discuss human demands and needs. It is vital to understand how to improve the development of the global population and the environmental reality, as we are living in the very resource consumption forecasts from the Club of Rome 1972 report and in the very demographic forecasts from the early 2000's announcing a growingly urban planet.

We do not need more 'networks', more 'projects to be scaled up.' Politics need to be Intersecting to solve global problems, to provide effective system change, at large. Politics is the way forward for changing environmental policies and accepting the national realities that impact global problems and localizing acceptable solutions. We cannot ignore

nor limit the understanding of national realities when solving global problems. Local needs and interests continue to pressure processes. Therefore, extracting industries -in which we include extensive agriculture practice such as in the Amazonian region, could be far better managed using an 'intersecting' rationale. For this, we need innovative coalitions, such as the Consortium of Amazon Governors in Brazil or the Arctic Council that gathers countries around the arctic circle along with observers, to create new political space and reduce the distance between scientific research, people, and policy-making.

As we recognize how vital is the role of science and innovation to shape progress, the 'Intersecting' paradigm also illustrates the shortcomings within the scientific community and within the political arena. For instance, what is the point of successfully sequencing the Sars-Cov-2 virus and developing innovative vaccines in very short period of times, through intense and maybe unprecedented global scientific cooperation (and competition), if vaccine production and distribution is so slow and uneven that new variants tend to ruin or seriously limit massive but too localized vaccination efforts? Deeply rooted imbalances and inequities in international trade and access to innovation are now deepening the COVID-19 crisis not only in lower income or more fragile countries, but also globally.

If science is to help, then we need much stronger social and human science, in particular historical science and

history of science, to broaden perspectives and widen our own horizon of understanding. The current vaccine dissemination problem might well be just another illustration of a longer-term “no-share” technology problem that has lasted for over a century.

The COVID-19 crisis has exposed mankind to fear, threats and restrictions. It has brutally revived the role of territorial boundaries and questioned how we are physically, digitally, environmentally interconnected. As the world is looking for new solutions, undertakings such as the Global Solutions Initiative and the Think-tank 20 are valuable but it is urgent to make a better use of such connections and work at the cross-roads, at the intersections of different issues and policy-frameworks. We view the creation of an ‘Intersecting assessment framework’ as a very useful and relevant proposal, provided it does not stay in an academic context but helps confront with the reality and generate well-prepared innovations to face future crisis.

We are hopeful that global coalitions such as G7 and G20 can bring the solutions together with a global consensus. To exercise ‘Intersecting’, it is important to consider the role of regional brokers and influencers as a reflection of national and regional interests. There is a need for a reality that makes more sense across short-term perspectives and long-term perspectives. The Green Global South agenda can reconcile Western and Eastern development perspectives, as it is time for people and societies to walk together.