



**The Political Dimensions of the World Economic Crisis:
A European Perspective'**

26 March 2009, Barcelona
Palacio Real de Pedralbes,

ABSTRACT

The financial crisis that hit the world in 2008 has become global and triggered the start of a worldwide economic recession. By the fourth quarter of 2009, most countries will have been in economic recession for nearly a year. Wealthy countries will have become less wealthy and the poor even poorer. National government and international financial institution attempts to cope with the financial crisis and other economic troubles will have inevitable political consequences and may put the procedures of constitutional democratic politics at risk, create conditions for heightened social unrest and possible violence, and deepen the inequality and injustice in which many continue to live. Financial and macroeconomic troubles cannot justify the deferral of equally crucial challenges being faced by humanity today, ranging from poverty to global warming, from human rights to peace building, all key to sustaining democracy, good governance and development.

Above and beyond the urgency to design and implement policies and measures to address this mega-crisis in the short-term, a recurrent theme appears in all discussions – the need to look ahead and welcome the crisis as an opportunity to address much deeper, medium and long-term concerns, at multiple levels. The design and adoption of a new, more effective international financial architecture is seen as a vital step in preventing future meltdowns and attaining international financial stability, as well as a more credible, truly multilateral and democratic governance structure in the international financial institutions.

But concerns are not limited to financial institutions. The governance structure of nearly all international organizations and of the various global 'groupings' is also being questioned. Can this crisis become the opportunity to effectively address this issue? To rethink entrenched ways of doing things and to promote reforms that strengthen democracy? A post-crisis, multiple level strategy and approach will be essential both in structural and leadership terms. Will this strategy be underpinned by existing structures and groupings or will new or renewed ones emerge? Defining and agreeing on how, when and what in a course of correction of this magnitude will need leadership and experience, sagacity and audacity. Other important issues such as those highlighted above - climate change, poverty alleviation, good governance – must not be left by the wayside in the necessarily bold and foreseeable process of change and reform that lies ahead.

The current crisis is extremely complex. It affects various countries and regions differently depending on their level of development, location and inclusion in the global economic networks, among others. Dealing with it will require different solutions and strategies for each region and each group of countries. This is why the proposed work program is based on regional round-tables in preparation for a global discussion in our Annual Conference 2009. Participants are convened not to discuss the specificities of particular financial or economic measures. As politicians and experts in policy and decision-making, participants are encouraged to focus their attention and analysis on the policies being adopted by governments and multilateral institutions to meet the challenges posed by the economic crisis, as they bear on the imperative of strengthening and sustaining democratic values, democratic leadership and the quality of polities and policies.

PROGRAMME

Thursday, 26th March

- 13:30 – 14:00 *Welcoming words: (Sala Tàpies)*
Ricardo Lagos, President, Club of Madrid. Former President of Chile.
Jose Antonio Ocampo, Programme Academic Coordinator. Professor at Columbia University. Former Under Secretary General of the United Nations for Social and Economic Affairs
José Montilla i Aguilera, President of the Autonomous Government of Catalunya
- 14:00 – 15:30 Lunch
- 16:00 – 20:00 **Roundtable** ‘The Political Dimensions of the World Economic Crisis – A European Perspective’ * (*Sala de Música*)

Block 1: The Situation within Europe: the National and Supranational
Block 2: Europe’s New Role in the International Arena

Moderator: **Philip Stephens**, Associate Editor and Senior Commentator, Financial Times
Welcoming Words: Hon. **Antoni Castells**, Minister of Economy of the Autonomous Government of Catalunya
Speaker: **Jean Pisani-Ferry**, Director of the Brussels European and Global Economic Laboratory, Member of the European Commission’s Group of Economic Policy Analysis
Rapporteur: **Richard Youngs**, Coordinator of the Democratisation Program, *Fundación para las Relaciones Internacionales y el Diálogo Exterior* (FRIDE).
- 20:00 – 21:30 Cocktail offered by the Hon. Josep Lluís Carod-Rovira, Vice President of the Autonomous Government of Catalunya (*Biblioteca*)