

### [A species in danger of extinction](#)

Today I would have liked to speak about the extraordinary “Paz sin Fronteras” (Peace without Borders) Concert held at the José Martí Revolution Square 24 hours ago, but the stubborn reality forces me to write about a danger that threatens not just peace but the survival of our species.

The United Nations Organization, whose task is to safeguard the peace, security and rights of almost 200 states that represent more than 6 thousand 500 million inhabitants on our planet, is about to begin the General Assembly debates next Wednesday, with the participation of heads of states. This time, on Tuesday September 22nd, given the exceptional importance of the subject, it will dedicate a senior-level session on climate change as preparation for the Copenhagen Conference to be held in Denmark between December 7th and 18th of this year.

At the International Conference on the Environment called by the UN in Rio de Janeiro, I stated as the then head of state of the Cuban state: “A species is in danger of extinction: man”. When I uttered and backed up those words, received and applauded by the heads of state in attendance –including the president of the United States, a Bush less dismal than his son George W. –they still believed that they had several centuries to confront the problem. I myself did not envision a date any closer than 60 or 80 years.

Today we are dealing with a truly imminent danger and its effects are already visible. I shall limit myself to just a few details which shall be amply tackled in New York by our Minister of Foreign Affairs who will be speaking there on behalf of Cuba.

Average temperatures have increased 0.8 degrees Centigrade since 1980 according to the NASA Goddard Institute for Space Studies. The last two decades of the twentieth century were the warmest in hundreds of years. The temperatures in Alaska, the Canadian West and eastern Russia have gone up at a pace that doubles the world average. Arctic ice has been quickly disappearing and the region can experience its first completely ice-free summer as soon as the year 2040. The effects are visible in the 2 kilometre high masses of ice melting in Greenland, the South American glaciers, from Ecuador all the way to Cape Horn, fundamental sources of water, and the gigantic ice cap covering the extensive area of Antarctica.

Current carbon dioxide concentrations have reached the equivalent of 380 parts per million, a figure surpassing the natural range of the last 650,000 years. The warming is already affecting the natural systems throughout the world. If this should occur it would be devastating for all peoples.

Scientists have discovered that no less than 3 billion years ago the first basic life forms on planet Earth appeared. Since then, these same life forms have evolved non-stop towards higher and more complex forms by virtue of the inexorable laws of biology. Our current species, Homo sapiens, has existed for barely 150 thousand years, an insignificant fraction of time from the beginning of life. Even though the Greeks, hundreds of years before our era, were already in possession of certain astronomical knowledge, barely more than 500 years ago, after a long period of medieval darkness, Man discovered that the Earth was round and not flat. An audacious Genovese admiral with solid understanding proposed to sail eastward in search of India instead of circumnavigating southern Africa. European colonization of this hemisphere and the rest of the planet would commence.

The human species could measure with sufficient precision the rotation of the Earth every 24 hours and its movement around the enormous incandescent mass of the Sun approximately every 365 days. These and other singular circumstances were associated with the existence and life for all species in

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existence at that time.

Since antiquity, the most advanced philosophers and thinkers have sought social justice. In spite of this, physical slavery legally lasted until 129 years ago at which time slavery was abolished in the Spanish colony of Cuba.

From my point of view, the Theory of Evolution as presented by Darwin in his book "The Origin of the Species" has been one of the two most important scientific discoveries. Some people saw in this an antagonistic element for religious beliefs; however, no scientist today refutes it and many of them who profess sincere religious beliefs see in evolution the expression of Divine Will.

The other decisive contribution was Albert Einstein's General Theory of Relativity, presented in 1915, the source of much research following the death of its author in April of 1955. Few persons have so much influenced the future of the world as he did. Einstein persuaded Roosevelt to start research to produce the atomic bomb fearing that it would be developed by the Nazis. When Truman dropped them over the defenceless civilian cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the event had such an impact on him that he became a confirmed pacifist. Today, the US possesses thousands of nuclear weapons much more powerful than those; they could exterminate the population of the world several times over. At the same time, they are the greatest producers and exporters of all kinds of weapons.

The accelerated pace of scientific research in all fields of material production and services, under the economic order imposed on the world following World War II, has led humanity towards an unsustainable situation.

It is our duty to demand the truth. The populations of all countries have the right to know the factors causing climate change and the current scientific possibilities to reverse the tendency, if indeed we still really have any.

The Cuban people, especially its magnificent youth, demonstrated yesterday that even in the midst of a brutal economic blockade, it is possible to overcome unimaginable obstacles.

**Fidel Castro Ruz**  
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