

# HIS ALL-HOLINESS BARTHOLOMEW I

Archbishop of Constantinople – New Rome and Ecumenical Patriarch

Eminences,  
Your Excellencies,  
Thierry de Montbrial,  
Honourable participants,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Dear Friends,

The global community is now at a decisive turning point in its history. Building genuine peace can no longer be limited to the traditional instruments of diplomacy: it is becoming an absolute condition for the very survival of our world. The issue that brings us together – the search for a stable and sustainable framework for global governance – goes far beyond provisional arrangements and fluctuating geopolitical balance. It impacts the very heart of human coexistence.

For peace is not simply another political objective. It is the deepest expression of communion between people. It is also the ultimate condition for preserving creation in the face of the forces of fragmentation that threaten it. Since the very beginning, humanity has been possessed by an irreducible longing for unity.

And yet contemporary reality seems contradictory thereof. The world we live in is marked by constant tension between reconciliation and division. On the one hand, technological advances and economic interconnection have brought us closer than ever before. On the other hand, we are witnessing increasing fragmentation, both geopolitical and geoeconomic, explicitly manifested in the increased vulnerability of international trade, market instability and a gradual decline in global prosperity. The international trading system, which could be an instrument of peaceful cooperation, tends to be transformed into a set of regional blocs that are sometimes antagonistic, structured around dominant powers. In this context, universality of law is undermined, and the sense of injustice grows.

Yet the experience of history teaches us a fundamental truth: only solid institutional cohesion can contain the forces of disintegration. After decades of global economic integration, often seen as inevitable, we are now entering a phase of uncertainty and reconfiguration.

But this crisis goes far beyond the economic and technical dimensions. It reveals a deeper crisis, a spiritual crisis. It highlights our difficulty in recognising the other – whether an individual or a nation – as our neighbour, a partner in our destiny.

From this perspective, global governance cannot be reduced to the management of power relations. It must be understood as a service to humanity. It is up to us to rethink our

responsibility towards future generations, by seeing peace not simply as the absence of war, but as the fullness of life.

In this respect, the Evangelical message remains strikingly topical: “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you” (John 14:27). This gift cannot remain an abstraction. It calls for concrete reflection in our institutions, in our public policies and in the way we organise our common life.

But the current system of global governance is considerably weakened. Despite the proliferation of international organisations, we are not seeing greater unity, but rather increasing complexity, sometimes verging on fragmentation. Without a common moral vision, this network of institutions risks becoming a new Tower of Babel: a plurality of voices lacking any real harmony.

This then raises the legitimate question of whether traditional diplomacy is still enough to meet the challenges of today. Everything points to the need for a paradigm shift.

Reforming international institutions is now a matter of urgency. In Europe, for example, economic and social stability requires an adaptation of budgetary and financial frameworks. On a global scale, the emerging powers are called upon to play a more active and responsible role, going beyond strictly national approaches to contribute to more cooperative governance.

But no institutional reform will be truly effective without an internal transformation. Economics and politics cannot be dissociated from the spiritual condition of humanity. In this respect, the experience of the Orthodox Church offers a valuable perspective.

Through synodality, the Church bears witness to a mode of governance based not on imposition but on communion. The Holy and Great Council, meeting in Crete in 2016, forcefully recalled that the unity of humanity is both a gift from God and a historical responsibility. This experience shows that it is possible to reconcile unity and diversity, authority and dialogue.

This model, without being mechanically transposed, can inspire renewed reflection on global governance. Because peace, in its deepest reality, is not simply a legal agreement. It is a mode of existence. It presupposes a transformed gaze, capable of recognising the image of God in every individual.

However, the limitations of the current international system remain obvious. The United Nations Security Council, in particular, remains shaped by balances of power inherited from another era. A reform of its structures appears necessary to more accurately reflect contemporary realities. Without fair representation, the sense of injustice can only grow – and injustice is always a breeding ground for conflict.

In addition, new challenges are emerging that go beyond the traditional frameworks of sovereignty. The development of artificial intelligence is a striking example. This technology presents considerable opportunities, but also raises major ethical issues. In the absence of a global governance framework, there is a great risk that imbalance and abuse will increase.

The environmental crisis is undoubtedly one of the most alarming signs of our fragmentation. The degradation of our planet, our “common home”, is causing growing injustice and fuelling new tensions. Pollution, climate change, resource depletion: these phenomena have a direct impact on the most vulnerable populations and are causing massive displacements.

For several decades, the Ecumenical Patriarchate has consistently reiterated that environmental protection is inseparable from peace. Man is not the absolute owner of creation,

but its steward. He is called upon to care for it responsibly, to receive it as a gift and to return it with an attitude of gratitude.

Ladies and gentlemen, dear friends,

Faced with these challenges, it would be illusory to take refuge in purely technocratic approaches. Behind the statistics and economic analyses, there are human realities: shattered lives, silent suffering, uprooted peoples. The fragmentation of the world is not just a question of structures. It is the reflection of an anthropological crisis.

We are thus faced with a decisive choice. Either we accept division as inevitable, or we commit ourselves resolutely to building a world order based on solidarity. Awareness of our interdependence then becomes essential.

The Orthodox theological tradition expresses this reality through the concept of “perichoresis”, which designates a dynamic communion, a living interdependence. No one can exist alone. No one can be saved alone. Peace therefore presupposes the overcoming of selfishness, whether individual or collective.

The history of nations has too often been marked by domination, exclusion and violence. It is time to consider another pathway: that of governance inspired by justice, truth and love. Governance that is not simply a regulatory mechanism, but a living organism in the service of human dignity.

For history is not determined by economic forces or power relations alone. It is also shaped by human freedom: the ability to choose, to convert, to forgive and to cooperate.

In this sense, hope remains possible. It is not based on naivety, but on the conviction that man is capable of transformation. That division is not inevitable. That peace can be built.

To conclude, allow us to express one wish. Our work should not be limited to analyses, however pertinent, but should open up concrete avenues. May our reflections translate into real commitments. May our search for peace become a shared responsibility.

May the God of peace and reconciliation enlighten our minds and guide our decisions. May He give us the wisdom to overcome our divisions and the courage to work together for the common good.

“Pursue love” (I Corinthians 14:1), says the Apostle Paul. May this exhortation become our compass in a world called upon to rediscover, at the heart of its fractures, the profound vocation to unity.

Thank you for listening.