

SAVE THE PLANET?

The last decades have been characterized, among others, by the coming into being of an obvious and deep concern for the progressive destruction of life on our planet and the future wellbeing of humanity. There are innumerable people, organizations and governments that have strongly pronounced themselves regarding an uncertain or, rather, catastrophic future that lurks all around. Many important initiatives have been oriented to reduce, or to try to reduce, the continuous environmental deterioration that the uncontrolled activity of humans produces.

The scientific community has been a standard bearer in this fight and, numerous worldwide institutions, including the United Nations starting with the Brundtland report, have spoken clearly and motorized multinational agreements aiming to control the climate change taking place and the progressive destruction of the environment.

Despite these facts, the truth is that the efforts carried out in this direction not only appear to be insufficient, but the situation is worsening. Albeit important advances taking place, particularly in the field of information technologies and others, food and water securities become ever more wretched everywhere. While what can be considered as a true environmental crime is perpetrated, the challenges to democratic coexistence, the growing oppression by autocratic regimes and the violent menaces of extreme solutions to international conflicts further reduce the expectations for a welcoming planet for the generations to come.

The horrifying mortality brought about by the current pandemic that does not seem to end yet turns to be a minor evil if it is compared to the loss of the tree cover of the planet, consequence of the global warming, the change of use of lands, plagues and, sadly, of the fires. The latter were

responsible, in 2021, for over a third of such cover losses, which in turn are enormous.

In turn, in our region the search for wealth and profits at any price leads to the uncontrolled and disproportionate exploitation of the forests of Amazonia and Guayana, as well as of the animal life in the rivers and oceans. It would seem as if the disappearance of jungles from the surface of the earth or the filling of oceans with plastic wastes is less important and has less consequence than the accumulation of wealth. Faced with a higher yield of the invested capitals, the destruction of the planet that has allowed to evolve to the point at which mankind nowadays seems to be of lesser importance.

An interesting example of the foregoing is clearly revealed in one of the papers included in the current issue of *Interciencia*. In it, the perusal of the licenses granted over forty years for the industrial exploitation of salmon farms in Southern Chile brings to light the dangers that the business voracity of an important industry represents for the environment and the natural resources in one of the few locations that are still conserved in relatively pristine conditions in the Americas. The observed and the foreseen effects reach beyond the specific framework of pisciculture and alter the cultural ecology of the region as well.

Thanks to its remoteness, the southern extreme of the Chilean Patagonia and its aborigine inhabitants hold still traits of its virginity and, up to now, have been able to survive the treacherous maelstrom of income seekers.

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