



SPECIAL COMMISSION ON FUTURES

(Meeting held on September 27, 2021).

THE CHAIR.— We have a quorum, so the meeting is open.

(The time is 13:26).

—As you know, the Special Commission on Futures wanted to hold this expanded working session with the people who will accompany us in this process and help us bring it to fruition, so I will begin by introducing our guests: Celia Ortega, representative of the World Bank; Stefan Liller and Gabriel Bottino, representatives of the UNDP; and Lydia Garrido, representative of the UNESCO Chair in Anticipation and Resilience, who have helped us organize this wonderful gathering and have been working very hard. Also with us is Alberto Majó, of the Ministry of Education and Culture, National Director of Innovation, Science, and Technology.

I also want to introduce the members of this commission: Representatives Gustavo Olmos, Verónica Mato, and Felipe Carballo, members of the opposition caucus –I mention this only for purposes of identification–; Representative Sebastián Cal, member of Cabildo Abierto; Representative Daniel Peña, member of the Partido de la Gente; Representative Martín Melazzi and Senator Carmen Sanguinetti, members of the Partido Colorado; and Representative Fernanda Araújo, also a member of the government caucus, who is taking part via Zoom. Bruno Gili is also with us.

The idea is to work today in as relaxed a way as possible, because we are coming off a stressful half day and we still have the other half ahead of us. We had asked Lydia Garrido for help; she is the one who has helped us over this time to think through, prepare, and in some way plan a process that we are only just starting, which is new for Parliament. The subject matter is new, and so are some ways of understanding time-related aspects and the effort to take on challenges that, because they are medium- and long-term, we have to take on together, because one party is in government today, but tomorrow that changes. So it is very important that we all get involved and that we all think it through. Another of the innovations we are making, without much noise – although no rule prohibits it, it is not an experience that has been applied before– is to bring extraparlimentary actors into our work.

As you know –we have been discussing it– for the event we held today we asked Bruno Gili for help, since he had experience in

this kind of event held in other parts of the world, and he had told us which formats might work best. Although he is not a legislator, at least for now, he took charge –always sharing and consulting, of course– of an event that is turning out wonderfully, with a panel of top-level speakers. Some of them –for more than understandable reasons– do not make statements anywhere, for professional and business reasons. As Bruno Gili said, they all said yes. We also have a number of top-level experts. We had twenty-four at most; you have suggested some who will be added. As we had been discussing, the idea –Lydia Garrido will explain it afterward– is to set out different lines of action and form a more permanent group so that this commission can consult and work with them. And they have all said yes. We have had many calls from people who also want to take part. We are going to maintain that plurality at every level, from fields of knowledge to ideological and party affiliation. Of course, we will bring in the people who are in a position to contribute knowledge. This is only the beginning.

What have we asked Lydia Garrido –and we have been working on this for some time– to present to us today? Remember that this is a new process for everyone and, of course, we have to decide it, approve it, and define it together. Naturally, we have asked for expertise in these processes from those who are working on this elsewhere, whether individually or through institutions. That is why Parliament signed a framework agreement with UNESCO. The UNDP is working with other parliaments around the world, and you know of its presence in Uruguay and its willingness to contribute. For that reason, we asked them to be here today so that you can learn firsthand about the situation and they can tell us what they have to offer us. As for the World Bank, as you know, we had scheduled them for Thursday the 30th, but we have an interpellation, which the Frente Amplio did not make any easier.

MS. NANE.— You will have to talk to the Minister, because he was the one who proposed the date.

THE CHAIR.— All right, you are right.

The World Bank is working on these issues. It is very interested in learning about and taking part in what we are doing, and it had the courtesy –as I already mentioned last week in the commission– to offer a session to share the work it is going to publish in the coming weeks or months on the outlook for Uruguay.

Now we are going to ask Lydia Garrido to present a proposal that we need to understand in order to begin placing the different activities to be carried out. The intention today is for us to leave with an idea of what the format and the methodology to be applied would be, which is very varied and has many dimensions. Then we will have to define things and split up so that we can take on everything we consider necessary. As I said at the beginning, the events are one part of a more complex process.

Now we give the floor to Ms. Garrido.

MS. GARRIDO.— Good afternoon, everyone, and thank you very much for the invitation. It is truly a privilege and an honor to be here sharing with you from my experience, which is also collective because it comes out of the work being done with an international team on the topic of the “use of the future” as it relates to decision-making, as well as out of the interactions I have had with some of you over these last six years in order to get to this point, for which I congratulate you.

I am going to share the presentation because I was told that some people would be connected by Zoom; I will try to be concise and not burden you with too many concepts, because this morning has really been very intense.

Perhaps I should clarify something that seems important to me to begin with.

Working with the future has its own specificity. Why? Because the future in itself does not exist; otherwise, it would cease to be the future. And yet we use it every day, and the purpose of this commission is to use the future to analyze opportunities and possible threats, making sense of the new things that are emerging, and relating the long term to the present. What, ultimately, are we using to work with the future? We use imagination and anticipatory systems. Why do I say we are using imagination? Because foresight, as a highly cognitive capacity that we humans have, is the capacity to imagine futures, to think about futures, to think about what does not exist, and it is precisely imagination that allows us to think about what does not exist.

In turn, imagination is linked to these anticipatory systems that we use in the form of input, of information, when we look at and analyze alternatives in the present in relation to futures. This approach –which I have been working on, accompanying UNESCO since 2012– rests on the biological sciences, on research into anticipatory systems in humans, specifically conscious anticipation and cognitive processes for decision-making. It also brings together a series of approaches and tools that are the ones we are most used to using, for example for preparedness, prevention, and planning, drawing on a series of techniques and tools within what is known as Futures Studies. With this I close this brief introduction to the basics, because this approach emphasizes anticipatory capacities; it is a capabilities approach –that is why it is called “futures literacy”– in order to be able to read, write, and understand in relation to the future.

What we have been exchanging and working on, simply as a draft of inputs, could be summarized on this slide, in four types of components. The first of them gathers the knowledge and information that we people produce through, for example, the members of the expert advisory group; the working dynamics of the members of the commission with the experts, whether with the group's advisors or with some others who are considered necessary; and with

inputs that come from studies and foresight exercises on specific topics. There are hundreds of studies related to this topic, but if you want to go deeper into some particular specificity, you will probably need to carry out a specific exercise.

It is also fed by knowledge and information from activities like the one that brings us together today, events of this kind, with the participation of multiple speakers; also through international connections with other parliamentarians or research groups on topics from a futures perspective, and through outreach activities.

There is a third block of components that also has to do with knowledge and information, and it refers to the purest and hardest side, between the conceptual and the methodological, in order to give integrality and coherence to the information and knowledge that is generated in all these kinds of activities and in more specific, more concrete, more intense or diffuse interactions, which it is interesting to gather and make use of by systematizing and integrating them.

This feeds into inputs along main axes: the identification of trends, drivers of change, disruptions or shocks, and weak signals (in the specific jargon). It is a matter of identifying emerging issues and carrying out an evaluative analysis to identify which of them are understood as threats, which can be opportunities with the aim of broadening possibilities and opportunities, and which inhibitors and enablers we identify. It is worth noting that a lot of all this came up during the morning.

In order to have certain definitions, it is necessary to work with challenges and potentialities, which will be part of what the commission discusses with the experts and of the process itself as it moves forward. That would be the third component, which is integration in the form of inputs and feedback as part of the process of collective knowledge creation.

It is also important to have progress reports –perhaps this is something to be defined, but it could be interesting for them to be bimonthly– with a view to presenting the final report, which will be presented in September of next year.

THE CHAIR.— I know it is a lot, but if we do not understand this first part, it will be hard for us to move on to the second.

In a way, what Ms. Garrido is laying out for us in the first part, on articulations, includes all the activities, the actors, and the materials that we have to articulate.

As I said at the start of my remarks, we have a very important group of experts –each in their own area– willing to work in whatever way we tell them. We are thinking of mixed working groups –made up of those experts and us– in

which we can take part more or less actively. Naturally, they can be led by the experts later on.

On the other hand, there are all the foresight studies that have been done around the world –the legislators will have seen them–; of course, we will draw on them in part, but we will also carry out others here.

There is also a part made up of events –like the one we are holding today–, which people are already asking us for, but we must analyze them. For example, people connected with culture want to have a kickoff session to find out, on this issue of adaptation, how much of our culture to preserve in that change-preservation interplay.

We have international connections. Our ambassadors are offering us opportunities to hold a meeting with futures commissions from other countries, from other Parliaments that want to exchange with us. In fact, some want to invite us to take part. At the moment, specifically, there is the Commission for the Future of Finland, but closer to home there are also others with which arrangements are being made.

We also carry out outreach activities which, although they are events, serve in some way to convey some of the things we are putting together.

Lastly, there is the whole methodological design part. At first it will be hard for us to take it on and apply it, but, as we have always said, we are not going to improvise. The inputs we produce must be the basis, even, for deciding whether or not to legislate. We must use this future with methodologies that give us guarantees about the soundness of what we are producing.

All of these things –and there are a lot of them– must have integration, integrality. We are starting a systematic and systemic process –which is also part of that methodology– and, naturally, a body of work in which today's guests will not be tomorrow's guests, but active participants who will help us with all the work of compiling and systematizing, which is enormous and beyond our strength.

Those are all the elements and the articulations that we must put on the table, in addition to the things that come up along the way. I mean everything that we know we must strive for. Naturally, all these changes generate an enormous number of risks that we must identify, and also opportunities.

As for trends, we are not going to take them deterministically, but we do have to know them, know their strength, and we are always going to do so starting from our potentialities and weaknesses. We have talked about this a great deal with the UNDP and with UNESCO, and that is why we do it here, in Uruguay. We are not going to copy what is done in Finland, in Belgium, or in the United States.

We are going to produce reports, make drafts, and we will see how to reach consensus on them. Those reports that reach consensus more quickly and that

we feel should be disseminated will be, although what the law establishes is an annual report that must be given to the public on the last Monday of September. Naturally, that will be the final report which, as has happened in other parts of the world, will trigger debates, discussions, controversies, and so on.

MS. GARRIDO.— As you can see, the horizontal line of the middle heading, “Articulations, Inputs, and Support for Processes,” which leads to a final document and has the double-headed arrows, is meant to show the back-and-forth, that is, the more iterative matters, and we could also call it “interactions, inputs, and processes.” These would be the three components needed to arrive at the final product of the report. Something key and substantial in all of this is the reading that is made, for example, of trends, drivers of change, and what can be seen as threats, opportunities, inhibitors, and enablers. I am going to mention an example, based on what I heard this morning in the excellent presentations, which I took notes on because I understand there are many interesting things that can be integrated.

I want to focus on what happens when one frames the different problems or themes, the trends, the drivers of change, or the disruptions in other frames. For example, one of the speakers mentioned some things that Uruguay cannot change and spoke of scale, geography, hard demographics, and global trends. Depending on how we frame this from a futures perspective, we do not have a scale problem because, for example, we have the conditions to go beyond our border. So that is not something we have to change; we simply need to gain access.

As for geography, under the conditions we are in, the geographic, or space and the land factor, is being given new meaning and no longer has the sense it had in the era we are leaving as we move into a new one. That would not be a limitation either. I am not going to address demographics because it would take us more time, but I do want to introduce the idea that we live in long-lived societies and, if we think about it from a futures perspective, birth rate loses relative weight in the demographic question. Nor can we change global trends, but we can quickly identify opportunities in order to take advantage of them.

The previous graphic can also be presented in this other way and, ultimately, it is a matter of going back to the differentiation of the different components and how they feed –or will feed, within the process– into the theme that brings together this first year of the commission's work, which has to do with the future of work and the work of the future. We also have to take into account the ecology of related themes, as already mentioned today, because thinking about the future of work and the work of the future means thinking about the education system and about how we learn. For example, there was talk of transformations that go far beyond the education system as we currently understand and approach it. It also means thinking about the possibilities and the change that technologies open up for new platforms that make it possible to understand new business opportunities and, therefore, different business models;

different labor relations, aspects that also have to do with the environment, for example, the pressure on planetary boundaries. All of this is linked to the theme of the future, work, and the work of the future. That is what I meant by ecologies of related themes.

As for the subject of studies, what seems interesting to us here is that a selection, a compilation, a small systematization and synthesis of some that may be significant could be made. I am also including The Millennium Project, Global Futures Studies & Research, a global think tank. The Millennium Project alone has, on this topic –which is what we worked on from 2015 to 2018– more than a thousand reports, and they are updated continuously. There are many, many other databases, institutions, and research centers that are constantly generating knowledge.

We already talked about the experts and the various forms that interaction with them can take, whether in the working groups –as the chair of this commission explained–, through interviews that may be needed to go deeper into certain issues, or using the questionnaire format. There is a specific methodology within the field of futures studies that some of you may know. I am referring to the Delphi method, for example, which consists of questionnaires for experts that can be done in real time in order to see what is being understood collectively about a given topic. But it also lets us analyze the tails of the bell curve –that is, not only everything that falls in the center– and that can give us certain clues to check and explore further.

That is what I meant by the design, within the process, of some specific foresight exercises as they become necessary. By this I mean that the other option could be to define a foresight study, a specific foresight exercise on the future of work, and choose some kind of modality like the traditional ones used in Latin America, French-style foresight, of which there is a lot of experience, but that would mean embarking, perhaps, on projects of one, two, or three years. At this moment it is understood that this would not be the most appropriate modality. What is needed –as was reiterated today– is much more agile approaches, which appeal more to collective intelligence and to collective intelligence systems, with the focus grounded in what is ours, in the local. The component, the sphere of processes, is placed there to make visible that what we are ultimately talking about are processes of knowledge creation. Otherwise, it is data, disjointed information. As for access to information, it is (almost) all on the Internet, but the issue is how to systematize it, how to select it and give it relevant meaning.

Obviously, from our perspective, the key lies in methodological integration, in a hybrid methodological integration. Here we are not talking about downloading a manual or following a single path, but about designing a research process because, ultimately, the report is a piece of research that we could define as hybrid because of this different articulation of sources, methodologies, and timeframes. Are there any questions about this?

MS. SANGUINETTI.— Thank you all for your time. For many legislators this is one of the commissions that excites us the most. I do not know if it is so much about this, but I have had a question since earlier and I was thinking of mentioning it to the Chair.

I would like to understand a little better what has been –for you, who have so much experience in other countries– the effect of the Commission on Futures on the other commissions and on Parliament in general. I imagine the Commission on Futures pulling Parliament toward something closer to the future in its whole way of working. I wanted to know whether you have any input or comment on that.

Thank you very much.

MS. GARRIDO.— I am going to try to answer the question with something else, placing ourselves, from a futures perspective, in the need that exists today to integrate the future into decision-making at the level of public policy and in the recommendations and implementations that, for example, the European Parliament is carrying out in calling for, and asking that, every government have its own Ministry of Futures. The relevance of the need to integrate the future into decision-making is such that it would go beyond a commission and we would be talking about ministries.

Now then, to address the specific question, we can take the case of Finland as a reference. I would also have to answer it taking into account the context of maturity in terms of incorporating the use of the future, not only at the government level, but also at the broader level of society, including, obviously, academia, but also the private sector. Although they are many years ahead of us, perhaps almost thirty years, since they started from the crisis of the early nineties in Finland. The first to react was academia, establishing the Finland Futures Research Centre (FFRC) at the University of Turku and the creation of some other institutions such as Sitra. In 1993 the Commission on Futures was created in Parliament, with a direct link to the Prime Minister's Office and, in turn, with requests that each ministry have an office that would analyze the different themes from a futures perspective. Two or three years ago they began a second or third restructuring of the system in order to look at it and approach it in a truly ecosystemic way because, in any case, the process itself carried a certain history, not of fragmentation –that would not be the right word– but of different parts and departments that incorporated foresight. Today they are in an integral design phase. So the fact that it works in such an extended, such a pervasive way, I think, explains some of the achievements Finland has had in recent years. All of this is due to the incorporation of that way of thinking from a futures perspective. As some members of the commission mentioned, the decision Finland made to come and invest in Uruguay was a recommendation made on the basis of the Special Commission on Futures. That is, the identification of opportunities and possibilities is part of the analysis from a futures perspective.

MS. NANE.— Some of the questions I had to ask have already been answered in the course of the conversation.

One of the things I was trying to imagine was whether, within the methodology, we have an assessment of the level of maturity which, as was said, is not only the level of maturity we have at the institutional level, but also that of education and of private and public infrastructure. So that is one of the first questions: Is there a kind of diagnosis of the level of maturity? Previously, I worked quite a bit with quality models that are based on maturity levels. The typical thing is to ask yourself where you stand, in order to start moving.

The other issue I wanted to raise, which for me is a major source of sleeplessness, is the following. One moves toward the future, but we do not all go equally; we do not all go from the same starting point in terms of time, because primary school kids do not do it the same way as secondary school kids, or university students, or adults, or older adults, or us, who are kind of in the middle and know we will perhaps live another twenty years. Nor do we all go equally toward the future in terms of opportunities, and on this subject we could start talking about all the gaps you like, or make whatever classifications and cross-sections you like.

Although within State policies I understand that we are heading toward a Uruguay of the future, I do not know whether we should think a little about different institutional arrangements that move toward the integral. Precisely, one of the problems we have to solve in order to establish State policies is to look at the country in an integral way.

I am going to make a small parenthesis of a political nature. I was just looking for the Uruguay 2050 foresight study that was done by the OPP and it is no longer there. Why is it not available? We can say that it was of no use at all, but perhaps it was useful for something. Why do we not have it available so we can start working on something and change whatever needs changing? This is a small political consideration; we cannot reinvent the country every five years. In that sense, where does one typically begin? In that diagnostic report, would we separate out, for example, what would have to do with the institutional framework we need? In this country we have been conducting some institutional experiments that have not had enough integral strength.

There is an institutional issue that often has to do with doing something with science, technology, and innovation. But it is not only that. We stand as a country in which a great many kids learned computational thinking thanks to Plan Ceibal. It is something totally different from how our generation learned, which in turn was completely different from how my mother's generation learned. Because of the way they learned, those kids have a level of abstraction and a relationship with their environment that is completely different from what we may have.

So, in analyzing all these different realities, in these fifteen or twenty years –I am not referring to political matters of government, but to the world– Uruguay has had a lot of rollout, which it did not have in another era.

So, do we go first toward the institutional or first toward the diagnosis? How do we get those institutions to talk to each other? Today primary school practically does not talk to secondary school in terms of education, right? So how are we going to generate abstract thinking in certain generations that are outside of abstract thinking? I imagine the kids learning chess so that they can later learn computational thinking, and in that way begin to level certain opportunities where the State can act. I imagine a National Integrated Care System that takes in the care work that women do, as a way to begin working on the gender gap. So the institutional would come first, but how is this approached from the integral standpoint? We do not solve it with a ministry of science, innovation, and technology.

I put a lot of things on the table, because the truth is that we have a complex country; we are few, but the reality of public happiness is always complex. So where do we start? What are the international experiences in this regard?

THE CHAIR.— One of the things we can do in all of this is to build relationships with all the parties. I remember that in the previous five years I was always shouting that very good things were being done, but they were not going through Parliament. I must have gone to every session that was held at the OPP; I had a perfect attendance record on that. Now, in my experience, when things do not go through Parliament –and I am not saying that is right– they are left very exposed. This country is very parliament-centric. Perhaps all of this generates changes, but for now that is how it is. That is why, when I am asked about the role of Parliament in this matter of the future, my answer is that it is at least a place where an attempt is made to relate to everyone.

In the group we already have, we invited everyone who worked on that Uruguay 2050. We even invited some of them to this event, but they could not attend. Perhaps that will be our main contribution: generating that network of relationships. Unfortunately, Uruguay is very fond of its fiefdoms, and we, in some way, have a commitment to making sure there is integration; that is the first thing. Perhaps Lydia Garrido can share some experience with us, without giving an opinion, because for now we have to be thinking about how we are going to do it.

MS. GARRIDO.— Thank you very much. You raised a good question that I would take in two parts, and I am going to focus on the more methodological side; I am not going to get into what the political decision is, ultimately, the evaluative side of the matter.

Regarding the degree of maturity, although what I am about to answer is not the result of a study that has been done, it is my own calibration from having worked since 2008 –for example– with the Uruguay 2030 vision and what was the basis for the sectoral councils, to which I want to add that already in 2000 or 2001, under an agreement with UNIDO, a series of foresight exercises was carried out in Transportation, in Logistics, and also in Environment. Also, in terms of precedents, we generally take the CIDE of the nineteen-sixties as our anchor.

Now, without going back that far and taking these last ten or fifteen years, I think it is important to take into account everything that was generated, driven by La Diaria, around the day of the future. That is, Uruguay is not starting from scratch, and neither is Parliament –which is what interests us.

I found it extremely interesting what was raised at the last panel, that of the three branches of the State, Parliament inherently has a sense of orientation toward the future. So it is true that we do not have the maturity, the capacities, or the strengths that Finland has, but we are not at zero. We have other things that contribute to how to use the future for collective decision-making, beyond decision-making at the government level. For example, last year MIT –this was also brought up this morning– did a survey of the innovation ecosystem and assessed the maturity of our innovation ecosystem, and within that maturity one of the qualities is the willingness to collaborate and the ease with which we manage to build trust when we step out of polarized logics that separate people into mutually exclusive antagonists. So let us look at the glass as half full, and I think we have a good place to start from.

The other thing –this focuses even more on the methodological and theoretical-conceptual basis– is that we can imagine that we are walking toward the future, but we could also think that the future is coming toward us or that it is already being, in the form of emerging issues, and what we have to do is recognize them, give them meaning, and take advantage of the opportunities there so that, as was also said this morning, what was changing was change itself, and it is not only a matter of acceleration but also of depth; it is a matter of the change of change. This is, precisely, one of the strengths of the futures literacy approach: learning to recognize change in terms of change. For what? In order to have an influence on change. How? By identifying and broadening alternatives. This connects to the concern raised about inequities or inequalities, because it aims to broaden the alternatives and options we have in the here and now, in the present, but including the future, that is, bringing the future into the present as something that is in turn generative of futures (through the alternatives that are discovered, or created), and not starting from a flat analysis or diagnosis of what exists, which, although it has to be done, requires changing the logic of the approach. That is why I said that when working with the future it is necessary to make a change at the inflection point.

(Crosstalk).

MR. LILLER.— Thank you very much to the Chair of the commission and to all the members for the invitation to be here today. We are very happy and honored to be speaking about these issues.

I really like a quote that says “the future is already here,” it is just unevenly distributed; that is, there are signals of the future, as several colleagues were saying, that are everywhere.

The UNDP –I do not know how many of you know us, some more than others– is the development arm of the United Nations; we are working in 170 countries, in large part with parliaments on the subject of democratic governance. In this case we have also worked a great deal with Parliament. Last year, as in the last four legislative transitions, we took part in the parliamentary dialogues, and I know several of you were present. So we have a lot of interest in working with and supporting Parliament.

As an organization we have also worked a great deal, over the last few years, on innovation and its complexity. For example, over the last five years 115 acceleration or innovation labs have been established around the world; one of them has been here in Uruguay since last year. So that whole agenda of the future interests us very much, and we have been accompanying several countries in that kind of process, dialogue, and reflection.

We wanted to offer the commission –we have also discussed this with Lidia Brito, regional director of UNESCO– a kind of technical secretariat to provide support over a somewhat longer period; like a team that walks alongside the commission, and ensures that all those methodologies from abroad arrive, as well as experts, in order to connect with other countries and experiences. This is, more or less, the proposal that we came to put forward jointly with these two United Nations agencies in order to move forward. I am not going to raise specific topics because that is for later –those same processes generate those conversations– but we do want to support you in walking that path.

That is what we have come for. Thank you.

THE CHAIR.— Thank you very much. We are going to accept it. As we say, very frankly, we are only just starting a process that we know will be very complex, and we need the help of many people and especially yours. Naturally, without haste but without pause, we will work out the appropriate forms through agreements. From the presidency of the General Assembly, but also from the presidency of the Chamber of Representatives, there is willingness for that. And even though it is not a well-trodden path so far, we are going to innovate in this too.

The floor goes to Ms. Celia Ortega, representative of the World Bank in our country.

MS. ORTEGA.— Good afternoon. Thank you very much for the invitation. This is the first time we have met face to face. Thank you for knocking on our door. I am delighted to be here with the members of the commission. The truth is that I think we could not have arrived at a more opportune moment.

Not long ago we were talking at the World Bank, with other colleagues and other development partners, and we felt that we were very much in the present, in the agenda of today and tomorrow –perhaps the day after tomorrow– but since we think about medium- and

long-term issues, we were missing it a little, because we cannot be careless. Perhaps because at the World Bank we have it as part of our DNA: we are always thinking about what will happen fifteen years from now, thirty years from now. To know that this initiative is under way, I think, is very good news.

This morning's meeting seemed excellent to me. The truth is that I learned a great deal and was very inspired –I hope the others were too– and I think it shows the high standard that the commission is setting for itself. So I am delighted to be able to sit down as well and see how we can complement the work of our colleagues at UNESCO and UNDP in order to support something that is already under way and that we hope will continue beyond next year. Truly, a commission on futures is something that calls for investing a great deal of time.

We want to put something concrete on the table, because it also seems timely to us – curiously, someone spoke of a maturity diagnostic and perhaps we already have one–: a study that the World Bank does systematically, in every country where we work, every five years, which is why we call it the “systematic country diagnostic.” This study is like a photo from above; it is like when you are on Google Earth and you are looking at your street, your house, your neighborhood, and then you see the city, and you say wow. What is happening? It is a taking of the pulse of where we are looking and what the engines of growth are. What is clear –and I think it will be clear when we sit down to look at it together– is that what has brought us this far is not going to take us further, above all if we want to maintain these levels that Uruguay has had, of which we are proud, in terms of economic and social growth. I will give a very simple example. If we think that each country has different plates or packages of capital, you do not need to be a great economist to think, in terms of natural capital, about land and water, which, evidently, are limited, are in danger, and whose productivity has a limit for growing exponentially and sustainably, because agriculture is going to hit a limit. So what has brought us this far will not be able to keep sustaining us in the future and at this standard of living.

With respect to human capital, the same; human capital was the pride in terms of emigration, quality, education, but now we know that our education is in danger, that we are getting older, and that we need human capital that maintains and raises those levels of growth. This morning there was also a lot of talk about institutional capital. We have institutions that we are very proud of, but they were from the last century, so we have to do something.

I think this conversation has a good starting point in terms of laying out where we are, which I think is very important for managing the conversation, because I think it is very exciting to think about the future, but it frightens all of us a little. We all have a terror of changing things, nobody wants things to change; becoming aware that we have no other option because the engine is running down on us is, I think, very important for bringing all of us around the table and making us realize that change is necessary, important, and increasingly urgent.

So we extend the invitation to present this analysis and this photo from above, which, coincidentally, we are going to go out and present in a month or two to the Executive Branch, but which we also want to share with the commission. Obviously, afterward we will look at this year's agenda and analyze how we can complement it. A lot of work in terms of the future and tomorrow may perhaps be useful. So we are ready to work and to support how to make this vision of the future a reality and capitalize on it.

MR. MELAZZI.— First of all, I want to thank everyone, Mr. Chair, for this opportunity. When I was invited to take part in this Special Commission on Futures, I was glad not only to be a part of it, but also to try to leave a great legacy to our children and our grandchildren.

As a new legislator, what I always perceive is that, from the political class, the first thing we have to do is be honest with ourselves: acknowledge the things that have been done well and the things that have been done badly; in the latter there were always good intentions, and sometimes it is the management that did not work properly. That is why, in order to think from a futures perspective, as was well said, it is very important that we work on a solid foundation, in which, especially, all of us legislators look forward, set aside our political flags, and think that the future is possible if we build it together. I think it is important to start slowly and at a steady pace in order to build a great castle on a good foundation.

It is hard to imagine the future, but I think that Uruguay has far more strengths than weaknesses. And I think that, ultimately, weaknesses are built by man, and many times they come hand in hand with the fact that we find it hard to break many paradigms. While the world moves forward, while the world dares, while little kids make mistakes playing and learn something from it, we adults find it very hard to make mistakes because we feel it is a step toward failure, but it is the opposite: what life gives us is that as we go on making mistakes we go on learning. So I appeal to the maturity of this Body and of this commission. Without a doubt the panelists will always enlighten us, but I appeal to understanding, to setting political flags aside and to really working, once and for all, for our children and our grandchildren.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

MR. CAL.— I greet the entire delegation that is with us today, which is truly a pleasure. I am one of the many who are eagerly awaiting this Special Commission on Futures, among other things, for being the youngest legislator in Parliament. I took office on February 15, 2020, at the age of 29; being a complete outsider in politics, adapting to this new world has been a great challenge for me.

Something that as a young person I have always criticized is the short-termism of politics in general, but I think it is part of what we are as humans. We are short-termist as humans, more so as Latin Americans, and even more so as politicians,

because we clearly think about the prominence we want to have during the five years we are here. It is very hard to fight against that nature we carry as humans. I think that in this commission it will be a great challenge to aim for what is called cathedral thinking, which the philosopher Roman Krznaric defines this way, inspired precisely by those great European cathedrals that were begun knowing they would be finished eight hundred years later. I do not know how they did it, because it goes against human nature to begin a work that one cannot hope to see completed. It is very hard to fight against that, but I think this commission is a very important first step that Uruguay is taking.

I fully agree with what one of the speakers this morning raised, who said that Parliament is the future itself, that Parliament as such is a great commission on the future. Ms. Lydia Garrido also highlighted that, and it is one of the things I jotted down on my phone today, which I saved for later reflections during the day. I cannot imagine a Parliament without a commission on the future, and I thank the Chair for his persistence in inviting me to work on this commission. I think it is strange that there was not a commission on the future before, because on most of the issues we work on, we do so with the future in mind.

We recently presented a bill on cybersecurity that seeks to define three or four offenses in our Penal Code precisely with the future in mind and with the need to create a legal and protective framework for certain types of companies that are not established in Uruguay today. So there are few issues we work on that do not have something of the future in them. The vast majority of the issues we work on in Parliament have something that is being thought of for the future. In the Special Commission on Innovation, Science, and Technology of the Chamber of Representatives –which several members of this one also sit on– we are constantly talking about the future.

So I want to thank you. I think this is going to be a commission that people will talk about, one from which we must squeeze out all the juice we can. I am as eager as the vice president, who stated it publicly today. I have said on more than one occasion that it is the commission that generates the most expectations in me.

Thank you very much.

MR. MAJÓ.— My remarks are going to be very brief, but first I want to congratulate you on the initiative, which I think is a very good tool, led, no less, by the representatives of the people.

I congratulate the organizers of this first event because the topics chosen and the panels are very good. Truly, these are the issues –everything has happened just as it was organized– that we need to reflect on, each in our own sphere, in order to begin establishing strategies and thus adapt to the new times. I am referring to the legislative sphere as well as the executive and that of the institutions themselves, which have to begin taking signals of the changes and thinking about their own reforms.

It is very good that this is the venue where analyses of the future are channeled and where trends are looked at across the different fields of knowledge in science, technology, culture, and society.

As you may know, from the Executive Branch, in particular from the Ministry of Education and Culture, we are starting a process of institutional redesign of the science, technology, and innovation system. These days we are beginning some consulting studies that will give us precisely the inputs to then develop a debate with all the actors, which will probably take place during the first half of next year. It seemed to me very timely to convey to you, at least from the ministry, that accompanying this process is for us a way of engaging in a space that is not that of this or that commission, since those sometimes have rigidities. It is a space for all the political parties, the experts, and institutional representatives to interact in order to generate inputs for that building of dialogues, beyond the consulting studies, the reports, and the documents. Together we have to go on building an institutional design that, as was well said today, must have some strategic guidelines but must also be flexible enough to adapt, because it is much more important to adjust quickly to changes than to have perfect knowledge of what will happen five or ten years from now.

Simply put, my message is that we are here to accompany the process and to deepen the dialogue, because it is going to do all of us a lot of good.

Thank you very much.

THE CHAIR.— I want to put on record that Bruno Gili organized an excellent event, as our guests said from the outside; I make the comment because sometimes we get subjective. It is clear that a very important platform is being set as a starting point, and naturally the journalists were surprised by such a long day of such high quality.

MR. GILI.— First, I want to say thank you, and second, to say that it was a pleasure to work with the commission and put this group together.

I am going to repeat what I said when I started out as a private citizen, because everyone answered quickly; we are in Uruguay and we know that the immediate answer is “we are here to help,” but this time it is serious. The truth is that you took on a great responsibility, and I must say that almost all the speakers I spoke with left happy. I think there will be significant demand to continue and there is expectation about what is going to happen, so I do not know what allocation of hours you will set aside among all the commissions, but my impression is that you will have hard work ahead to sustain that expectation. In fact, I am getting WhatsApp messages from people asking why they were not there. As I said before, you will have to put something together if the friends of mine who could not take part keep being my friends.

By the way, it was another arduous task –a complex algorithm– to bring together twenty-four people, given the multiple constraints, which, for that matter, are logical.

In short, I am grateful for the opportunity to have been able to collaborate with you. I should clarify that I am doing this as Bruno Gili and not as a firm, but in any case I asked Gaspar and Victoria for help putting all this together –she is an accountant and he is an economist, he studies economics and political science, so it was a great fit for them and they will be very happy– so I also thank them. My only message is that you now have a great responsibility ahead of you.

THE CHAIR.— Bruno: on behalf of the commission we thank you especially and, of course, we will keep counting on you.

MR. OLMOS.— I simply wanted to thank Bruno Gili and all the speakers. I would also like to apologize because I had to step out for a while, since I had to attend the investigative commission.

Usually, when we interact with ministers or the senior officials of the various agencies in the specific commissions, the discussions are more about short-term messes like, for example, “you cut my funding at ANII and that is why I am calling you” and that sort of thing, but not about thinking in the long term. I am convinced that a great effort is needed to have State policies and that there are many things on which there is room to agree and to move forward, while also leaving room for the political arena.

In fact, there is room, and there should always be, to think about cryptocurrencies or the shift to electric transportation and everything that implies in terms of energy and fiscal impact, jobs that will no longer be done, mechanics who will have to retrain, or the multiple dimensions the topic has. That is, there is room to discuss those things and reach agreements independently, without having our eyes on 2024, to put it bluntly.

I believe the Chair is doing a good job of promoting and driving this forward, and we are counting on you to help us along this path.

Thank you very much.

THE CHAIR.— To finish, I want to say that we will have another session to, in some way, soak up a little more of the methodology that Lydia Garrido has proposed to us, who will leave all of us her graphics. Lydia is also offering us a training and capacity-strengthening process for the legislators and advisors of this commission, which I believe begins in about two weeks. We are starting with this event, but there is also demand for this training, so I tell Lydia Garrido that she will have to help us understand and become familiar with the methodologies we are going to apply.

In turn, we are going to generate other sessions –as it appeared in Lydia's first graphic– because inputs always help. I take what Representative Melazzi said, that although we have to be agile and adapt quickly, in this process it is very important to keep stepping on solid ground. We cannot be naive because there are those in the stands –in Uruguay this is very common– hoping that this will not work.

We commit to following a serious, solid, systemic, systematic, comprehensive, and professionalized process. For that, in the early going, beyond the inputs we generate with the upcoming events that we are going to entrust to Bruno, we will also have to be soaking up that methodology and we will probably have to use a half day –which is more effective and efficient than several short ones– especially for this topic.

MS. GARRIDO.— We have shown the slides with the aim of presenting some elements, components of the process, that have to do with the methodology. But there is also another way of using the methodology that is specifically related to how we are making sense of the use of the future, that is, how we are reading, how we are interpreting those trends, those signals, those novelties of change. In one of today's presentations it was said that the future cannot be predicted. And that is so.

From the most conceptual, theoretical, and applied point of view, because this is an approach that handles and articulates theory, methodology, and practical sense, we agree that we cannot predict the future. We live in a world of complexity and we cannot predict it. As far as I understand, that is not what this commission is seeking either. The issue is how to use the future to be able to anticipate, to accompany change in the terms of change, or to generate new conditions for change. In that regard, I am going to make a small clarification: agility is key. But it is not only a matter of adapting in response to something that has already happened because, if we only see it that way, we will continue to be reactive, reacting only after the fact. We need to understand that they go in tandem: anticipation that transforms beforehand and reaction that responds to what has already happened. So we have to walk on both legs.

We are much more accustomed to responding, whether more slowly or more nimbly, but once things have happened.

This also has to do with distinguishing three different ways of using the future. Two of them are those we are more used to: one that has to do with preparation and the other with planning, which are organized to respond to or achieve something that is imagined out ahead in time. There is another way –which is the one this approach integrates– which is the use of the future to make sense of the emerging, of what Ms. Aramendia was expressing, that, in the end, algorithms are a construction and it is important to understand them because they will later determine a number of things.

With regard to the use of the future the same thing happens because, ultimately, we are decoding the reality that is presented to us. Now, how do we encode and decode? That is what this approach contributes. And –I will close with this– it is an approach of research, learning, and action and, speaking more from the soft methodological side, it is about design. Design of processes to create knowledge collectively, which can be applied to work with a diversity of participants: children, farmers, Indigenous peoples, and decision-makers. That is, you will not need a graduate degree or to learn dense conceptual material. No! Of course, those who want to will do so, and as far as they want to, but it has an applied, practical sense that aims at how to make sense of something that is not yet, that does not exist. The future in itself –I end with what I began with– does not exist, but exists as imagination and as an anticipatory system that we activate in the present.

In sum, futures literacy contributes to making sense, to orienting ourselves, to making anticipatory readings. Sometimes we need to respond and react quickly, but other times we need to invent, create, generate the conditions for diverse futures to be.

THE CHAIR.— Thank you very much.

We thank everyone for their participation.

The meeting is adjourned.

(The time is 14:52).

Montevideo, Uruguay. Legislative Branch.