

FOR DEFENDING A LIVING PLANET

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This is the speech I read yesterday at the presentation of the [2010 Naider Action and Commitment Award for sustainability and fight against climate change](#) to **Juan López de Uralde**.

September 15 of next year, 2011, will mark the 40th anniversary of the intrepid voyage the small ship Phyllis Cormack made from Vancouver to stop US nuclear tests in Alaska. A small protest gesture in defense of life and peace... and Greenpeace was born, an international organization present today in more than 40 countries, with more than three million members.

Juantxo Lopez de Uralde has been its executive director in Spain since 2001 and, as of today, the naider action and commitment award for his impeccable career in defense of life on Earth and especially for his defense of the climate. In these almost ten years as director of Greenpeace, this organization has grown from 70,000 members to over 100,000. Quite an achievement.

Juantxo spent 20 days in prison in Denmark for defending a living planet - this is how he explains it in one of the numerous interviews of his that can be found on the web. It is an expression with which I especially tune in and for this reason you are going to allow me a small digression.

I am one of those who believe that the tremendous ecological impact that human beings are causing on the biosphere - its diversity of life and the health of natural systems - has its roots in cognitive dissonance, a profound error in our perception, in our understanding , of the place we occupy in the fabric of life.

The techno-industrial civilization that emerged three centuries ago has installed us in a frame of reference in which the vital connection with a nature that we have stripped of meaning and meaning has been lost. In a basically unconscious way we perceive nature as a space of inert objects, devoid of meaning. We have turned it into a mere place to build our highways, raise our skyscrapers, erect our factories, bury our waste, dump our emissions...

We have been disconnected from the vital plot. The valleys, the rivers, the mountains, the marshes, the forests, the beaches, the wind, the trees, the birds, the flowers... continue to speak to us but we haven't listened to them for a long time, we have disconnected from the universal language of the life. As the Great Chief Seattle would say, because we do not recognize ourselves as children of the Earth, we do not know how to respect it, and our ignorance together with our greed is leading us to destroy it.

Let's not kid ourselves, these are dark times, very difficult times. The climate crisis is the most critical symptom of this disoriented relationship that we have established between human beings and the Biosphere to which we belong. Even with the near unanimity of the world scientific community warning loud and clear about the urgency of redirecting the situation, inertia overcomes us, routines crush us, misery traps us. Thus, the last summit in Copenhagen will be remembered tomorrow as the painful moment in which 115 heads of state and government of the international community did not rise to the occasion.

There, Juantxo López de Uralde, a pro from San Sebastian, raised a banner with his colleagues where hundreds of millions of people from all over the world could read 'Politicians speak, leaders act', the cry of rebellion of those who are not there, we are not, willing to attend impassively to the destruction of the climate. Not on our behalf.

Juantxo, father of two children, was born in Donosti-San Sebastián in 1963. He studied Agricultural Engineering in Madrid and in 1986 seriously began his steps as an environmental activist when he was appointed Secretary General of the CODA Federation, today Ecologistas en Acción .

He joined Greenpeace Spain in 1997 where he held the positions of Director of campaigns in the areas of Toxics and Energy. Subsequently, he was Coordinator of the Toxics campaign at Greenpeace International, which led him to live in Amsterdam for more than three years. By the way, that campaign contributed to the signing of an international agreement under the auspices of the United Nations for the elimination of POPs (Persistent Organic Pollutants).

Juantxo was detained in Copenhagen for 20 days for the action carried out during the dinner that the Queen of Denmark offered to the heads of State and Government who attended the Climate Summit and the proceedings are still open. The Danish police arrested him after posing as the head of state, dressed in a gala dress and displaying the aforementioned banner on the red carpet of the Chirstanborgo Palace.

Greenpeace's history is full of wounds. The most serious occurred in 1985 when the French secret services sank their flagship, the Rainbow Warrior, in New Zealand to prevent their protest campaign against nuclear tests on the Mururoa atoll. Fernando Pereira, a 36-year-old photographer, died in the attack.

In their four decades of international struggle, Juantxo and his colleagues from Greenpeace have accumulated many scars and wounds, but their organization there continues to be more active, dynamic and committed than ever.

Thank you Juantxo for being there, for being who you are, a committed, firm, indomitable universal Basque man for a good and noble cause. These are difficult times but the example of men like you sends a positive and bright signal to the minds and hearts of many people. On the way we have met. Our commitment to defending a Living Planet is also irreducible. Thank you from the bottom of my heart for accepting the naider award.

There are no comments yet.