

## Philea Forum 2025 – Power and Equality: A Balancing Act

# Pursuing balance

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*Opening Plenary speech, 3 June 2025*

Hello everyone. *Bom dia*. Welcome to Lisbon!

We are gathered here in this very beautiful city to discuss a very ugly truth: that, in the words of George Orwell, “all are born equal, but some are more equal than others.”

To open this Forum, I would like to say a few words about the importance of this year’s topic.

Equality is the pursuit of balance. The pursuit of fairness, of rights and of justice, and of access to opportunities.

Balance is surely one of the most important and underrated elements in life. From our own individual work/life balance to the balance between people and planet, it is a key requirement and vital ingredient for our mental and physical wellbeing.

It is also a cornerstone for building anything which can be considered sustainable and strong and worthwhile.

When things are not in balance, it creates tension, and this tension only increases and leads to ever greater pressure and stress.

The universe only allows this to increase for so long.

Inevitably, wherever you find imbalance in the world around us, be it in a figurative or literal sense, then the result is that something bends, breaks or fractures, sometimes beyond repair. It is therefore better to avoid such a fracture in the first place, and that means righting imbalances before it is too late.

We pursue equality, and greater balance, because as philanthropy organisations we aim to build and create, not break and discard.

Our gathering here in the next few days is an opportunity to discuss how we can pursue greater equality, greater balance. We don’t need to look far or read much at the moment to see examples of inequalities... or the dark and dangerous paths they lead us down.

For many of those living in the shadow of inequality this must sometimes seem like a very lonely planet. But it is our only planet, and I hope in the coming days to take part in and overhear many critical discussions on how philanthropy can help achieve greater equality and the myriad benefits it would bring.



Thank you to our wonderful hosts, the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, for all their kindness and generosity in hosting this Forum.

Thank you for being here with us on this, Philea's third birthday, and especially all of you who helped us craft our vision of philanthropy using its full potential to co-shape and support pluralistic, just and resilient societies that centre people and planet.

This vision remains as critically relevant as ever, as do Philea's three cross-cutting themes of climate, democracy and equality, as defined three years ago by our membership as being the most important issues for philanthropy to invest in.

Thank you, I wish you a successful and inspiring Forum. We have some serious work to do, so let's get started!