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General Report on Critical World Issues and Trends
**Current status; Probable future trends if continued on present trajectories;
Preferred futures and required courses of action**

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This General Report is submitted to the Members of the World Wisdom Council for consideration at the meeting of the Council in Budapest on December 18-19, 2004.

The undertakings pledged by states at the UN Millennium Summit in the year 2000, the promises of increased development assistance, fair trade, market access and debt relief for developing countries have not been implemented. Poverty continues to be the world's most widespread and dangerous scourge. Millions of people become victims of hunger and disease and entire nations suffer from feelings of frustration and despair. This creates fertile ground for extremism and terrorism. The stability and future of the entire human community are thus jeopardized. Further, scientists are warning us that failure to solve the problems of water, energy and climate change will lead to a breakdown of order, more military conflicts and ultimately the destruction of the living systems upon which civilization depends.

Statement of the 5th Summit of Nobel Peace Laureates
November 12, 2004

We may be in a race between the increasing proliferation of threats and our increasing ability to improve the human condition. This situation drives many people around the world to fight destructive fatalism by implementing innovations benefiting humanity. Yet the emergence of world consciousness strategically focused on global challenges is too often distracted by trivia in the media, government pettiness, valueless marketing, the daily complexities of survival, and all forms of information pollution. After eight years of accumulative global futures research it has become increasingly clear that humanity has the resources to address its global challenges; what is less clear is how much wisdom, goodwill, and intelligence will be focused on these challenges.

State of the Future Report 2004

Overview of Critical World Issues and Trends

1.   HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

The current status of human development worldwide in 2004; (a) material progress or decline (sustainable vs. non-sustainable), social cohesion or conflict (cooperation vs. confrontation), spiritual growth or religious division (unity vs. fragmentation); (b) likely futures if continued on present trajectories; (c) preferred futures with the actions required to attain them. Specific issues to be analyzed include:

i)   **Sustainable Development -** can humanity achieve sustainable development on a necessary time frame?

ii)   **Population Growth** – human population of approximately 6.4 billion people and increasing by about 90 million people per year

iii)   **Technological Evolution** – the potential impact of current and future technologies including "revolutionary" technologies

iv)   **World Democratic Governance** – consideration of appropriate forms of democratic governance to promote social equity, coherence, peace, and, to resolve and prevent conflict, social fragmentation, poverty, ignorance, terrorism, war.

v)   **World Values and Ethical systems** - generally accepted values and ethics among peoples and cultures

vi)   **Consciousness Evolution** - the conscious attempt to evolve civilization to a more planetary, spiritual, wholistic-centred consciousness

2.   EARTH and NATURE

The current status of the Earth and nature in 2004 as to World Resources, World Ecosystems and World Climate Change.

Critical World Issues and Trends

1.   **HUMAN DEVELOPMENT**

Current Status

Humanity continues to face many daunting global challenges in 2004: 1.1 billion people do not have access to safe drinking water, more than 1 billion people live in slums and squatter communities, 3 billion people live on less than two dollars a day, 25 countries are facing food emergencies, and about one out of every three children under five (150 million) is malnourished with millions of children dying unnecessarily every year, and 2.4 billion people lack adequate sanitation. Yet the current population of 6.4 billion is forecast to grow to 8.9 billion by 2050, with 98% of the growth expected to occur in the developing countries. The developed countries are suffering from aging, declining populations and the need to provide retirement benefits, while the developing countries are suffering from growing populations with extremely limited opportunities. More than 30 new and highly infectious diseases have been identified in the last 20 years such as AIDS, Avian flu, Ebola, SARS, and cross-species viruses in Africa and for many there is no treatment, cure or vaccine.

Worldwide over the past 20 years: income per capita has grown almost 10%, life expectancy has increased about seven years, secondary school enrollments have grown by 30%, and infant mortality has dropped by almost 40%. However, at the same time, the ratio of average income of people in the top 5% to the bottom 5% has grown from 6:1 in 1980 to over 200:1 now. Some 20% of the world receives 80% of the income and the world's 250 billionaires have as much wealth as the world's poorest 3 billion people. These massive income and wealth disparities continue to increase worldwide.

Annual global annual military budgets have reached nearly 1 Trillion US dollars. The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute cites 19 major armed conflicts in 2003 that each had 1,000 or more deaths. Ten of these conflicts were over the question of government and the remaining 9 over disputed territory. The vast majority of conflicts are intra-state, and civilian fatalities in these climbed from 5% in 1900 to more than 90% in the 1990s. Rising terrorism and conflicts in the Middle East and the unsettled conditions in Iraq and Afghanistan continue to be major sources of global instability. The University of Maryland Minorities at Risk Project lists 285 minority groups that could be in future conflicts due to different forms of injustice. Over 53,000 UN peacekeepers from 96 countries are deployed in 15 missions on three continents. And, in addition to the accelerating proliferation of existing nuclear weapons technology, the world is today on the verge of militarizing space and developing new weapons systems with untold consequences.

Cultures, ethnic groups and religions are also in conflict, both externally and internally among themselves. Many such ethnic and religious conflicts have gone

on decades and even centuries. The current resurgence of intolerance, racism and political conflict add to the growing threats of terrorism and war.

Yet the majority of the world is living in peace, dialogues among differing worldviews are increasing, formal EU and informal East Asia regional groupings of powers are adding to stability and intra-state conflicts are increasingly being settled by international interventions. Human rights standards are increasing in importance relative to national sovereignty and the International Criminal Court has begun operations. The growth of democracy and international trade, the global visibility provided by news media, by the Internet, and by satellite surveillance, increased world travel and better living standards are all increasing evidence that conditions for a more peaceful and sustainable evolution of humanity are possible.

Probable Future Trends if Continued on Present Trajectories (10-15 years)

Probable positive trends focus on the development of much more intelligent, ecology conscious human-nature interactions. Cheaper materials and better automation can easily cut inputs in half and double outputs; better information and communications technology can aid humanity in matching ideas, people, resources, with challenges worldwide in real time; emerging global ethics and decision support systems make improved policies seem possible. The completion of the Human Genome Project, the Internet, AIDS, management of the International Space Station, globalization of communications and the evolution of the EU were all relatively unthinkable just 25 years ago and point to similar future trends.

Probable negative future trends include: increased conflict between nations and peoples over resources, increased poverty in the many parts of the developing world, nuclear and biological warfare, terrorism, disease pandemics, economic upheaval, global warming, ozone depletion, diminishing biodiversity, energy shortages, food and water shortages, extensive rainforest depletion, etc. By 2050 more than 2 billion people could be living in water-scarce areas, forcing masses of people to migrate into inhumane conditions. Without sufficient nutrition, shelter, water and sanitation it is reasonable to expect increased migrations, conflicts and disease. Increasing global instability and conflict over diminishing resources is the likely future if current trends continue.

Underlying the likely future is this core truth: Economic growth and the Earth's eco-systems and resources are currently in an inverse relationship. Increased economic growth and consumerism, in our present model, depletes natural wealth. Human well-being is presently at the expense of the Earth. This is a non-sustainable situation that must eventually end - one way or the other. If the world economy, as it now structured, continues to expand it will eventually destroy its natural support systems and our civilization will decline and collapse.

Accordingly, humanity is in a race between the increasing proliferation of threats and our increasing ability to improve the human condition. For example, one of the

greatest global challenges facing humanity today is whether current and future efforts to achieve sustainable development will be sufficient to prevent global warming from seriously damaging our civilization and life-support systems, eventually leading to a greenhouse effect growing beyond human control.

Preferred Futures and Required Courses of Action

The broadest preferred future for humanity can be simply stated as: "A sustainable, just and peaceful world based on a united humanity living in harmony with nature." Humankind, of course, is presently very far from this overall goal and appears to be moving in the opposite direction. What actions can be undertaken to shift humanity towards this shared goal? The preferred future is not a utopian goal but rather an essential one for the longer-term survival of our species. The alternative is the ultimate collapse of our global civilization.

The most fundamental action strategy towards a positive future for humankind to undertake is the re-prioritization of its budgetary expenditures – at all levels of society and in every nation in the world. One need only contemplate that annual global annual military budgets have reached nearly 1 Trillion US dollars, while the UN's estimate for nation's to meet their Millennium Development Goal commitments is only 50 Billion US dollars – just 5% of what the world spends on arms. In addition, even these modest development goals, committed to by every member state of the UN, have not nearly been met to date. Responsible leadership is urgently needed from governments worldwide in this regard. If governments will not make these essential changes it falls upon the world's people to demand them in mass popular movements. Clearly, the long-standing national funding priorities for war over peace, conflict over cooperation and weapons over food, shelter and education must be quickly reversed if humanity is to reach the preferred future. The alternative is equally clear.

Another fundamental action strategy to address global challenges and opportunities towards the preferred future is global education. Accordingly, it is crucial to identify the most effective educational materials, curricula, and distribution media for global education as well as institutional arrangements to accelerate individual and group and community learning. Educating children to become responsible global citizens will influence adults and thus the entire population. UNICEF estimates that it would cost $7 billion a year over 10 years to educate the world. World governance must evolve to address shared global challenges and opportunities. Coupled with this is the extraordinary growth of global standards and those who seek to meet them. It is clear that widespread cultural and consciousness change is necessary to address our global challenges. Reaching the preferred future and the specific goals of sustainable development, genuine world democracy and justice, ending religious and ethnic conflict, preventing AIDS and other diseases, ending violence against women, etc., requires such cultural and consciousness change. The tools of globalization, such as the Internet and global trade, need to be

utilized to help cultures adapt in a way that preserves their unique contributions to humankind while improving the overall human condition.

1 (i)   SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Current Status

Humanity may have consumed more of the Earth's natural resources in the 50 years since World War II than in all of human history prior to that time. Half the world's forests and 25% of the coral reefs are now gone. Some 9.4 million hectares of forest area are lost annually worldwide. The "consume and dispose" engine that drives today's industrial economies is a multi-pronged challenge. Subsidies for extraction and harvesting of metals, timber, and other virgin materials; advertising that equates self-worth with ownership of goods; and land use policies that promote materials-intensive urban sprawl are just a few of the engines that drive excessive consumption. Numerous international organizations have documented the massive and increasing environmental damage caused by the intensive consumption of fossil fuels, natural resources, agricultural products, forest products, fresh water supplies and countless other natural resources.

The Worldwide Fund for Nature, in its Living Planet Report 2004, states that in 2001 humanity's Ecological Footprint was 2.5 times larger than in 1961, and exceeded the Earth's biological capacity by about 20 per cent. This overshoot depletes the Earth's natural capital, and is therefore possible only for a limited period of time.

The 'global consumer' now totals some 1.7 billion people – nearly a quarter of the world population. Almost half of this class now lives in developing countries, which also have the greatest potential to expand the ranks of global consumers.

World leaders' declarations on sustainable development have not yet been matched by concerted actions for global change. The lack of global implementation of the UN's Millennium Development Goals and the modest reductions of CO_2 under the Kyoto Treaty are recent cases in point.

Probable Future Trends if Continued on Present Trajectories (10-15 years)

Increasing human population and development over the coming years can only intensify environmental damage and climate change in the future based upon our current growth model to a possible 'point of no return' for humanity. When this point will be reached is, of course, of crucial concern.

Unsustainable growth and development may well be the greatest threat to the future of humanity. Yet without sustainable development, billions of people will be condemned to poverty, and much of civilization may collapse. It is a world paradox that must soon be solved .

Preferred Futures and Required Courses of Action

A sustainable future is the preferred future and, in actuality, it is the only future. Sustainable development, however, also requires 'sustainable consumption'. This urgent shift presupposes a massive, on-going information and education campaign: continuously informing and engaging the global public through educational efforts that stress the quality of human life when in harmony with nature, along with what individuals and groups can do to change consumer behaviour; initiate environmental tax reforms; and move from a fossil fuel economy toward a sustainable 'knowledge/wisdom' based economy. Individual conservation of diminishing resources is critical as is improved efficiency and pollution reduction in industrial processes. Governments can stimulate economic investments in sustainable solutions; environmentally inefficient subsidies can be abolished; environmental costs can be include in the pricing of natural resources and products; investments can be encouraged in socially responsible businesses; the environmental standards ISO 14000 & 14001 can be adopted by more countries and companies; an international public/private funding mechanism can be created for high-impact technologies such as carbon sequestration or space solar power and for acquiring the rights to innovate "green" technologies such as alternative energy sources; key habitats can be declared off-limits for human development; a World Environment Organization with powers like the WTO can be created; clean air, water, and land can be declared a human right. Many other actions by individuals, nations and corporations can be promptly implemented if the understanding and collective will is present to address our shared challenges and secure the future through new and innovative socioeconomic opportunities.

1 (ii) POPULATION GROWTH

Current Status

Human population has grown more in the last 50 years than in all of previous human history. World population in the year 1900 was about 1.5 billion people. In late 2004, the world population is approximately 6.4 billion people – over a fourfold increase in just over 100 years - and is increasing at approximately 90 million people annually. Rapid population growth has strained many countries' capacities to address social issues, leaving many in poverty and driving a downward spiral of economic misery.

Probable Future Trends if Continued on Present Trajectories (10-15 years)

The United Nations Population Division forecasts a world population of approximately 7.85 billion by 2025 and 8.92 billion by 2050, using the medium range forecast. 98% of this population growth is expected to occur in the developing world.

While by 2050, if current trends continue, fertility rates will fall below replacement level for 75% of the developed world, the median age will increase from 26 today to 37, life expectancy will increase from today's 65 to 75, and there will be 2 billion people who are 60 or older - more people than are under the age of 15. Retirement and health care systems and culture will have to change. No industrial country has a fertility rate at or above the replacement level of 2.1 children per woman. This will be a very significant demographic worldwide shift.

Increasing stresses on nations and the planet due to rapid population growth and major demographic shifts will likely lead to greater poverty, disease and conflicts over resources.

Preferred Futures and Required Courses of Action

A stable world population without the current rapid population growth is the preferred future. The developed nations have reached population stability and future decline is forecast. In the developing world, where 98% of population growth will occur, the factors that reduce population growth must be strongly reinforced by governments, institutions and civil organizations. These factors include increased income, improved literacy, diminished infant mortality, economic empowerment and education of women, urbanization, nutrition and health programs, improved and inexpensive contraceptives and family planning.

1 (iii) TECHNOLOGICAL EVOLUTION

Current Status

Over the past 25 years, revolutions in technology have altered the human condition in countless ways. Computer chips, the Internet, telecommunications, new materials, genomics and biotechnology, computational sciences, collaborative software, etc. have changed the way people work, live and think worldwide. Scientists are now able to see proteins embedded in a cell's membrane tens of billionths of a meter across and the echo's of the "big bang' which created the cosmos, organic transistors with a single-molecule channel length have been developed, gene variants for schizophrenia, depression, and other mental diseases have been discovered, robot surgery has begun clinical trials, and nearly 13% of humankind is online.

Humanity's unprecedented technological advances, however, have also had an immensely negative impact on the planet and a dehumanizing effect on people. With our current unsustainable economic growth and consumerism model technology has in effect enabled us to transform the wealth of the Earth into the wealth of humanity at an accelerating pace. As our wealth is based on the Earth's capital, the more resources we convert the more wealth we appear to have but this conversion is, of course, finite as the Earth's resources are finite. Ultimately, the Earth's capital will be nearly all expended and the only option at that point will be

a widespread collapse. The more efficient our tools are to convert resources, the faster we convert. The faster we use up the Earth's capital, the closer we come to a collapse in the shorter or longer term.

Probable Future Trends if Continued on Present Trajectories (10-15 years)

Technology will continue to evolve rapidly over the next 25 years with many revolutionary new developments. Nanotechnology, biotechnology, genetic engineering, information technology and cognitive science will dramatically increase individual and group performance and the support systems of civilization. Such advances will range from biometrics to greatly enhanced computer modeling of the Earth's systems, from restoring brain functioning and eyesight to increased human longevity. New approaches based on the new tools will integrate sciences, engineering, medicine, and business to change the very nature of economic activity. Humankind will be able to accelerate efficiency, create better medicines and more nutritious foods using less land and water, and improve learning and mental health. Artificial intelligence with quantum computing will increase collective intelligence, and space sciences will open new technological and societal frontiers.

However, ongoing advances in technology will also continue to enhance humanity's ability to convert the Earth's capital resources to expanding human needs. This acceleration in technology will bring us ever closer to the point of civilizational collapse if we continue with the current unsustainable economic models and technologies.

In addition, with each advance in technology a corresponding threat appears. For example, in the 20th Century nuclear power gave rise to the threat of nuclear war and accident. In this Century, biotechnology is giving rise to the threat of bioterrorism. The risks of these new technologies, further frontier scientific developments and their applications are enormous, unprecedented and unpredictable.

Preferred Futures and Required Courses of Action

Humanity's preferred future must feature 'sustainable technologies' that harmonize with nature and its eco-systems, emulate natural systems and minimize human impact on the Earth and other life-forms. Such technologies will help humanity conserve the Earths capital, its non-renewable and renewable resources, and convert to alternative and natural sources of energy. Governments, institutions and corporations worldwide should utilize foresight and develop policies that will encourage societal investment in such existing and future sustainable technologies, if humanity is to avoid a collapse over the next decades.

A further essential course of action would be the creation of a global Science and Technology organization, likely associated with the United Nations, to bring together the world's knowledge in a more effective fashion, consisting of data

banks of information from many organizations. Such a system could illustrate risks, opportunities and a range of speculation on new technologies on a cumulative basis. International scientific assessments of major new technologies should be conducted and whatever is found feasible and desirable should be developed on a 'fast-track' international basis to address many of our global challenges. Those technologies that are determined to be too risky for humanity to develop at the present time should be put on hold, enforced by national governments. Global collaborations via the Internet should also be fostered for new technologies and transcultural research should be focused on how to improve the human condition.

1 (iv) WORLD DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

Current Status

Today's world is composed of over 200 'sovereign' nation-states, 191 of which are member states of the United Nations. The nation-state is a form of governance that evolved in Europe beginning in the early 16th Century. The United Nations was created in 1945 in the aftermath of the worldwide destruction and major geopolitical shifts caused by World War II. Forms of governance of nation-states range from totalitarian dictatorships to vibrant democracies. Although democracies are growing while dictatorships are decreasing, there are approximately 50 failed nation-states. Today, most of humanity lives in democracies or under partly free conditions rather than in dictatorships or totalitarian regimes.

As global challenges and threats increase so does the need for global cooperation and coordination to address them, and to take advantage of the vast opportunities these challenges provide through their solutions. However, the mechanisms and institutions currently in place to increase and enhance global cooperation and coordination by nation-states have either proved ineffective or do not yet exist. Humanity is using the tools and approaches of the old world to solve the problems of the new world. If the required global mechanisms and institutions are not quickly established, humanity may be unable to respond appropriately or in time to our many growing global challenges which simply cannot be solved by any one nation. Global problems truly require global solutions.

The Commission on Global Governance released its report in 1996. The foundation for global governance is the belief that the world must soon be ready to accept a "global civic ethic" based on "a set of core values that can unite people of all cultural, political, religious, or philosophical backgrounds." This belief is reinforced by another belief: "that governance should be underpinned by democracy at all levels and ultimately by the rule of enforceable law."

And, in September 2000, at the Millennium Summit of the United Nations, the world's leaders gathered to commit themselves and their countries to a vital global agenda. The Millennium Declaration was adopted, and in a host of other widely accepted treaties and declarations, nearly every government on Earth pledged to

devote serious efforts to ending the scourge of war, reducing the dire poverty and hunger that afflict hundreds of millions, stabilizing the global environment and ensuring the basic rights of all.

Nevertheless in 2004 the world appears to be moving in the direction of a return to the system of government of previous centuries. The terrorist attack on the USA on September 11, 2001 appears to have caused a break in the evolution to a system of global cooperation and coordination based on shared ethics and goals. The resurgence of the sovereignty of the nation-state (at least the powerful states), the 'unipolar world' perspective, the lack of faith by many powerful governments in international institutions, the lack of acceptance and enforcement of international treaties, etc., all point in this regressive direction.

At the same time, however, civil society initiatives promoting global citizenship, various forms of democratic global governance and reform of the United Nations are proliferating worldwide at the 'grassroots' level.

Probable Future Trends if Continued on Present Trajectories (10-15 years)

Existing international institutions and levels of national government cooperation will be inadequate to address growing global challenges. A case in point is the afore-mentioned Millennium Summit of the United Nations in 2000 and its Millennium Declaration Goals. In April 2004, the World Economic Forum's Global Governance Initiative released its comprehensive analysis of the world's progress towards realizing the UN's Millennium Declaration Goals, endorsed by the leaders of 189 countries. The Report's conclusions are clear: "The Millennium Development Goals are not mere pious aspirations. They are the fundamental building blocks of global stability in what has become a tightly interconnected world. But too often the governments are scarcely trying. And the "non-state" actors on the international scene - businesses and civil society groups - are neither able nor willing to compensate for the inadequacies of government efforts. Across the board the world is failing to put forward even half the effort needed to meet the world's basic goals."

Accordingly, without significant and timely changes, nations will likely be in ongoing and expanding conflicts over access to dwindling resources, wealth disparities and ideological differences. In a world armed with tens of thousands of nuclear weapons ready to be launched at a moments notice, the potential for bio-terrorism, new forms of warfare such as genetic and space warfare being developed, and annual national military budgets totaling upwards of 1 Trillion US Dollars, the future of humanity if it continues on its present course appears clear.

Preferred Futures and Required Courses of Action

The preferred future for humanity re-stated is: "A sustainable, just and peaceful world based on a united humanity living in harmony with nature." The alternative

is the collapse of our global civilization and the likely near-extinction of our species (along with many other species). Enlightened leadership for the common good is urgently required at all levels of our societies – from ordinary citizens, President's, Prime Minister's, King's and Queen's; from institutions, organizations and corporations; from academics, media, artists, etc. The global public must be informed and engaged to address our growing global challenges as true 'global citizens' on an on-going basis. Current institution of international governance must be greatly strengthened while new institutions and forms of democratic world governance must be created - if humankind hopes to survive the coming decades without unprecedented and irrevocable man-made disasters.

1 (v)   WORLD VALUES AND ETHICAL SYSTEMS

Current Status

Traditional values and ethical systems are breaking down in response to rapid globalization, unprecedented technological change and growing cultural conflict. In times of upheaval many people look to the past and traditional societal values for answers. Others look for solace, comfort and guidance from their perspective of a higher power. Still others try to maximize personal gain at the expense of others to 'ride out' the troubled times. While some look to new ways of thinking and interacting to adapt to changing times.

This appears to be where humanity is today – various groups and factions aligning themselves to one of these responses. What, however, is the best response for our collective future? Is it to become further divided, especially over our values and ethics which the 'others' somehow can never share? Or is it to become more united while maintaining our cultural diversity? Greater unity is clearly the preferable path. Such unity can only be achieved if humanity can reach a broad consensus on shared values and ethics at the world level.

Despite current rhetoric about values that one culture or another does not share, at the broadest level humanity can be seen to share many core values. Values such as compassion, cooperation, justice, democracy, human rights, peace, ecology, honesty, integrity, a safe world of opportunities for our children in the future – are all shared by the majority of humankind as are many more.

At the same time, many groups today believe it in their interests to emphasize the differences in cultural values to the point of encouraging intolerance, racism and hatred. Recent 20th century history has shown where such 'values' will lead. And moral or values campaigns from one religious or ideological perspective can only give rise to "us vs. them" divisions, making it impossible to solve world problems as conflict results rather then unity.

Values and ethics relating to economics and the future are crucial considerations at this time as well - traditional values of rapid economic growth vs. new ones of

sustainable development, consumerism vs. conservation, plunder of the Earth vs. care of the Earth. Humanity is in a period of swift change and flux.

Probable Future Trends if Continued on Present Trajectories (10-15 years)

The basis for world values and ethics may be emerging, as evidenced by the establishment of the UN system, the International Criminal Court, corporate ethics indexes, international inter-religious dialogues, think tanks, many ISO standards, individuals who are organizing themselves around specific ethical issues via the Internet, etc. The UN system, the International Organization for Standardization, Transparency International, and the Olympics are unique forces for world ethics. These ethics are emerging as important to world trade, biotechnology, climate change, countering terrorism, poverty alleviation, etc. There have also been many recent 'civil society' attempts to develop a 'global ethics', such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, UNESCO's Universal Ethics Project, the Earth Charter and the Institute for Global Ethics. The ISO's Advisory Group on Social Responsibility submitted a set of recommendations for the development of deliverables pertaining to corporate social responsibility.

These world trends are being countered by trends that try and return to a perceived simpler and more local past. Fundamentalist religious views in every religion that consider their own particular religious text or sect to be the only 'truth' are gaining credence and power worldwide today. This can be a very dangerous development as history has repeatedly shown.

Preferred Futures and Required Courses of Action

The preferred future features a core set of world values and ethics agreed upon by the vast majority of humankind and political leadership that bases policies on these values and ethics in accordance with the wishes of their constituents. The global consensus that produced the Earth Charter demonstrates the potential of such a process and the document itself sets out such core set of world values and ethics. With the power of the Internet and the increasing number of people going on-line worldwide, this potential can and must be realized as soon as possible.

Courses in world values and ethics should be required at all levels of education as an essential aspect of global education. Concrete steps will include effective worldwide policies to counter corruption, encourage the will to act (including acting in the interests of future generations and the Earth), control lobbying, reduce greed and self-centeredness, reduce the barriers to freedom of inquiry and implement cost-effective strategies for global education.

Globalization and advanced technology allow fewer people to damage more, in less time, than ever before, hence the welfare of anyone should be the concern of everyone. The planetary ethical motto of this era should be: "Live in a way that allows others to live as well."

1 (vi)   CONSCIOUSNESS EVOLUTION

Current Status

Human consciousness evolves along with its technologies, economies, organizations and governance. Over the course of history, humanity has evolved its consciousness many times, always based on new learnings and new understandings of who we are and how the world and cosmos works, and always an expanded consciousness encompassing and enlarging what was before. Humankind was originally tribal and evolved to city states and then to nation-states with the attendant phase shifts in consciousness. Today, in the face of the immense challenges before us, humanity must evolve a 'Planetary Consciousness' for it to continue to thrive and even to survive. Such a consciousness recognizes the essential interdependence of all humanity and our planetary home. Many people worldwide have already begun to evolve their consciousness to the planetary level. They view themselves as 'global citizens', in addition to being citizens of their particular country and community. Recent polling data in the USA indicated that approximately 25% of the population were in this category and it was increasing. Similar percentages are likely to be the case in many other nations.

At the same time, in reaction to our rapidly 'globalizing' world, many people's consciousness has become entrenched in the nation-state 'us vs. them' thinking of the past which, in the 20th century, led to devastating global wars and conflicts. The way to the future is forward not reverse and always has been. Due to the growing destructive power of our weapons, humanity will likely not survive a Third World War and it's possible that such a war has already started – a war between cultures and religions on a global scale.

Probable Future Trends if Continued on Present Trajectories (10-15 years)

A growing ideological battle between 'global citizens' and nationalists for the shape of the future. The global citizen sees the world as a whole and recognizes the rights of all to life and well-being. While the nationalist is primarily concerned only about the rights and well-being of his/her own nation or culture. Ultimately, as the evolution of a planetary consciousness is a natural progression, the global citizens would prevail. However, as humankind has now reached an evolutionary crossroads the question of timing becomes the crucial factor. Will we have the time to evolve the required planetary consciousness in great enough numbers or will we fail because of the systemic stresses and breakdowns unfolding before us?

Preferred Futures and Required Courses of Action

The key to humankind's future is the widespread development of the new 'planetary consciousness' and its related ethics and actions – first and foremost at the individual level. In addition to being citizens of our community and our

country, we must also become true "citizens of our world" in large numbers and in every nation. Essentially and crucially, it must first come from each person himself and herself.

If enough people around the world have the vision to see the world as one and transform our challenges into opportunities we will emerge with a new society which will be planetary, diverse and sustainable. There will be a 'macroshift' in societal thinking from living in the past to shaping the future, from domination, confrontation and exploitation to partnership, harmony and sustainability. Society's institutions and structures will be transformed accordingly and appropriate world democratic governance will evolve.

Humanity has reached the level in our evolutionary development where there is now only a single path to our future survival and success. If we can apply our new tools, skills, knowledge and understanding towards this path we will begin a new chapter in humanity's evolutionary story - the coming of the "Age of Wisdom." The only way for us to reach this preferred future is to see it clearly and to work towards it together. The time is now. Humankind has received its wake-up call.

2   EARTH and NATURE

Current Status

Consumption of the major commodities that ecosystems produce directly - grains, meat, fish, and wood—have increased substantially in the last four decades and will continue to increase as the global economy expands and world population grows. Plausible projections of consumer demand in the next few decades suggest a marked escalation of impacts on ecosystems. Global wood consumption has increased 64 percent since 1961. World cereal consumption has more than doubled in the last 30 years, and meat consumption has tripled since 1961. The global fish catch has grown more than sixfold since 1950 to 122 million metric tons in 1997. The money spent on private consumption worldwide (all goods and services consumed by individuals except real estate) nearly tripled between 1980 and 1997. Accordingly, human consumption of the Earth's resources continues to grow exponentially.

Statistics from World Resources Institute 2002-2004 report indicate an overwhelming human dependence on rapidly deteriorating ecosystems, the systems that support all life on earth. One out of every six humans depends on fish for protein needs, yet 75 percent of the world's fisheries are over-fished or fished at their biological limit. Nearly forty-one of every 100 people live in water-stressed river basins. Some 350 million people are directly dependent on forests for their survival, with global forest cover declining by 46 percent since pre-agricultural times. Nearly half of the world's population lives on less than $2 a day. In addition, water tables are falling on every continent, agricultural land is becoming brackish, groundwater aquifers are being continually polluted.

In regard to bio-diversity, the 2004 IUCN Red List of Threatened Species released this month, states that a total of 15,589 species currently face extinction. One in three amphibians and almost half of all freshwater turtles are threatened, on top of the one in eight birds and one in four mammals already known to be in jeopardy.

Human development and impact also continues to trigger rapid world climate change including global warming, catastrophic weather events, ozone depletion, widespread pollution, etc. For example, the recent report of the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment, produced by more than 250 scientists and six circumpolar indigenous peoples' organisations, provides incontrovertible proof that climate change is happening in the Arctic and that it will get worse unless emissions of carbon dioxide are cut. The report also warns that a warmer Arctic will have impacts around the world, contributing to global warming and sea level rise. Sea levels could rise by nearly one meter by the end of the century. Today, there are 17 million people living less than one meter above sea level in Bangladesh, while places like Florida and Louisiana in the US, Bangkok, Calcutta, Dhaka and Manila are also are risk from sea level rise.

Probable Future Trends if Continued on Present Trajectories (10-15 years)

The State of the World Report 2004 states that rising consumption in the U.S., other rich nations, and many developing ones is more than the planet can bear. Forests, wetlands, and other natural places are shrinking to make way for people and their homes, farms, malls, and factories. Despite the existence of alternative sources, more than 90 percent of paper still comes from trees—eating up about one fifth of the total wood harvest worldwide. An estimated 75 percent of global fish stocks are now fished at or beyond their sustainable limit. And even though technology allows for greater fuel efficiency than ever before, cars and other forms of transportation account for nearly 30 percent of world energy use and 95 percent of global oil consumption.

At the same time, growing dissatisfaction with current consumption trends has led consumer advocates, economists, policymakers, and environmentalists to develop creative options for meeting people's needs while dampening the environmental and social costs of mass consumption. Public pressure on politicians has led to many eco-friendly policies in the last 30 years and this is a growing trend.

Efforts to reduce consumption, preserve eco-systems, limit human impacts on weather, however, are failing. It is a case of too little, too late and in many cases the destruction is acceleration. Massive changes in resource consumption, energy use and appropriate technologies are urgently required if humanity is to avoid a civilizational collapse in the coming decades.

Preferred Futures and Required Courses of Action

A sustainable future is the preferred future for humankind. The best way to shift government policies is to empower citizens to demand it through increased public access to information and democratic participation in environmental decision-making. When constituencies for the environment and for the poor have a seat at the table, the resulting decisions are more likely to promote ecological sustainability, social equity and lasting conflict resolution. Democratization of environmental decision-making is one of the most direct routes to better environmental decisions and is a powerful lever for better governance in general.

Specific policy actions recommended by Worldwatch include:

- Ecological Tax Reform. By shifting taxes so that manufacturers have to pay for the harm they do to the environment, and by introducing production standards and other regulatory tools, governments can help minimize negative impacts on natural resources.

- Take-Back Laws. Now being adopted by a growing number of governments around the world, these laws require companies to "take back" products at the end of their useful lives, and typically ban the landfilling and incineration of products.

- Durability. Industries can take shared responsibility for their ecological impacts by finding ways to reduce the amount of raw material needed to create products and by making goods more durable and easy to repair and upgrade.

- Personal Responsibility. Changes in consumption practices will require millions of individual decisions that start at the grassroots- about everything from our use of energy and water to our consumption of food.

Personal responsibility is the key element in any hoped-for shift to our sustainable and peaceful preferred future. Major changes in individual consumption must occur and occur swiftly. There is at present no political will to enforce such change in the vast majority of the world's governments. Accordingly, the change must start from below - the grassroots – from hundreds of millions of people worldwide who must lead the way, together with concerned global citizens everywhere, based on the evolution of a planetary consciousness for a sustainable future. The challenge is great but so will our future be if we succeed.

RESOURCE LIST

On-line Resources

United Nations   http://www.un.org/
Club of Budapest   http://www.club-of-budapest.com/

World Commission on Global Consciousness & Spirituality	http://globalspirit.org/
Worldwatch Institute	http://www.worldwatch.org/
World Resources Institute	http://www.wri.org/
World Wide Fund for Nature	http://www.panda.org/
World Conservation Union	http://www.iucn.org/
Barcelona Forum 2004	http://www.barcelona2004.org/
World Social Forum	http://www.forumsocialmundial.org.br/
World Economic Forum	http://www.weforum.org/
World Future Society	http://www.wfs.org/
Earth Charter Initiative	http://www.earthcharter.org/
ACUNU / The Millennium Project	http://www.acunu.org/
Forum 2000	http://www.forum2000.cz/
Futuribles	http://www.futuribles.com/home.html
Earth Policy Institute	http://www.earth-policy.org/
Foundation for the Future	http://www.futurefoundation.org/
Global Issues	http://www.globalissues.org/
Global Security Institute	www.globalsecurityinstitute.org
World Federalist Movement	http://www.wfm.org/
State of the World Forum	http://www.worldforum.org/
Millennium Institute	http://www.millenniuminstitute.net/
Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions	http://www.cpwr.org/
Earth Institute	http://www.earth.columbia.edu/
Population Reference Bureau	http://www.prb.org/
Spiral Dynamics	http://www.spiraldynamics.com/
Center for International Development and Conflict Management	http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/

Publications

United Nations Annual Publications	United Nations
State of the World Report 2004	Worldwatch Institute
World Resources 2002-2004	World Resources Institute
Living Planet Report 2004	World Wide Fund for Nature
State of the Future Report	ACUNU/Millennium Project
The Earth Charter	Earth Charter Initiative
World Futures-Journal of General Evolution	Ervin Laszlo, Editor
Macroshift	Ervin Laszlo, Author
The Limits to Growth: 30-Year Update	Dennis Meadows, et al.
Future Survey	World Future Society