

# **The Hague Conference on Environment, Security and Sustainable Development**

**Discussion Paper  
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## **INTRODUCTION**

The primary objective of this discussion paper is to distil the most salient ideas, messages, observations and conclusions from the extremely rich intellectual and political debate, which has been carried out on the environmental security challenge in recent years.

For the purposes of contributing to the discussion and debate that will be carried out throughout the Hague Conference, these key points have been organised around the five main headings of the parallel roundtables:

- Diplomacy
- Law
- Finance
- Science
- Education

## **1. DIPLOMACY**

### **1.1. THE CRITICAL CHALLENGES**

#### **The crisis of politics**

World politics are in a state of crisis. Preventive diplomacy and dialogue, which are meant to avoid conflicts are being replaced by policies of preventive wars aimed at eliminating alleged threats. As never before, the “post-Iraq” world community beckons for a new understanding of the global situation.

In a world increasingly besieged by corruption, greed and self-interest, we face an utter paucity of political leaders who have the moral courage to ground their decisions in the

ethics of universal responsibility, global interdependence and the Ghandian concept of “enoughness”.

### **The new security threats**

Despite the pervasive threat of international terrorism and the terrifying prospect of nuclear war in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the reality is that security in this new millennium is not just about protection from aggression, but also from disease, economic shocks and environmental degradation and resource scarcity. For most of the world, security tensions center less on boundaries and external might, but more on internal conflict that stems from poverty, social exclusion, dispossession and marginalisation, as well as economic instability and competition over shared resources, such as water and arable land. The reality is that security on all these fronts is an illusory exception to the general state of affairs. Former Swedish Prime Minister Carl Bildt makes the point that while the possible presence of weapons of mass destruction is a source of acute concern, so should the absence of human rights and institutions and processes necessary for economic and social development, as well as environmental protection. Sadly, most of the world’s most powerful leaders continue to be blind to the fact that the growing environmental, economic and cultural stresses are just as critical as the political and military factors in the maintenance of international peace and security.

### **Limitations of conventional approaches to security**

Conventional approaches to security based on national sovereignty cannot adequately deal with transboundary conflicts related to the exploitation of natural resources, migration, terrorism, disease or crime. In addition “at risk” groups, such as the poor, migrants and women are increasing in number in both developed and developing countries, which in turn contributes to the creation and perpetuation of civil conflicts within nations. Conventional security approaches do not recognise the special needs and considerations of the poor, particularly as regards the tangible threats that overwhelm their lives on day-to-day basis. Moreover, the poor and dispossessed are also largely unequipped, or uninvited, to participate in global security and sustainability discourses.

## **1.2. The Critical Path Forward**

### **Make the culture of violence obsolete**

We must replace the overriding culture of violence and conflict with a new culture of peace. This means not just strengthening and democratising our institutions of peace and security to better respond to and prevent violence, war and conflict. It means developing, at all levels and in all spheres of life, a complex of attitudes, values, beliefs and patterns of behaviour that promote not just the peaceful settlement of conflict, but as well, the quest for mutual understanding, and opportunity for individuals to live harmoniously with each other and the larger community of life.

### **Replace the culture of violence with a culture of peace**

The culture of violence that underlies every aspect of our individual and collective lives must be replaced by a new ethic that promotes peace, non-violence and mutual

understanding. The culture of peace expresses a concept that goes beyond ideas of disarmament or the prevention of conflict. It implies that peace means much more than the absence of violence, war and conflict. The culture of peace represents a complex of attitudes, values, beliefs and patterns of behaviour that promote the peaceful settlement of conflict, the quest for mutual understanding, and which enable individuals to live harmoniously with each other and the larger community of life. It presumes that peace is a way of being, doing and living in society that can be taught, developed, and improved upon.

### **Promote a new form of political leadership in the new millennium**

More than ever, world leaders must recognise that the new path to peace and sustainability into the 21<sup>st</sup> century will require not only a fundamental change in the culture of conflict, but as well, a change in the way humanity relates to the greater community of life. This new global ethic must assert that real security and sustainability can only exist in a world where finite ecological and economic resources are protected in a spirit of stewardship to enable all to meet their basic human needs and to live a life of material and spiritual well-being.

We need leaders who understand that, in the words of the Earth Charter, “when basic needs have been met, human development is primarily about being more, not having more”. And, in a year in which there will be an unprecedented number of national elections around the world, we especially need leaders who care not only about the results of yet another election campaign, but who take decisions that respect the increasing interdependence of the community of nations. This means leaders who have the moral rectitude to transcend narrow national self-interests and to recognise that the new generation of global survival problems are only resolvable through multilateral channels, and in a true spirit of global solidarity, which recognizes that the culture of peace and sustainability is really the only viable path forward.

## **2. LAW**

### **2.1. The Critical Challenges**

#### **The global governance deficiencies**

The World Commission on the Social Dimensions of Globalisation asserts that the most critical problem is the vast inequality in the economic power of nations, which translates into imbalanced playing fields in the global governance arena, which creates a built-in tendency for the process of global governance to be dominated by the interests of the most powerful states. The Commission asserts that these inequalities are reflected in the democratic deficits that currently characterize global governance and which are most evident in the case of the Security Council and the Bretton Woods institutions. Moreover, developing countries face a wide range of handicaps in making their influence felt in global governance, particularly in light of the increasing technical complexity and multiplicity of multilateral negotiations. The Commission further asserts that these problems are compounded by the low democratic accountability and transparency in the process of global governance, whereby the positions taken by governments in international arenas are rarely scrutinized by national parliaments. The final problem highlighted by the Commission is the lack of coherence in global decision-making whereby negotiations on global governance

take place in highly compartmentalized sectors such as trade, finance, health, social affairs and development assistance with processes often working at cross purposes.

### **The UN Secretary-General's perspective on the global governance reform challenge**

In the "Globalisation and Governance" chapter of the UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's Millennium Report, he outlined the key political challenges that must be addressed together with the institutional reforms needed to ensure the transition from an "international to a global world". The Secretary-General asserts that the United Nations must play a stronger role in ensuring that globalisation provides benefits for all member states and in brokering the differences among states in power, culture, size and interest, serving as the forum where the cause of common humanity is advanced. He also maintains that stronger systems of global governance must be grounded in a robust international legal order, together with the principles and practices of multilateralism which would be needed to define the ground rules of an emerging global civilization.

Moreover, decision-making structures through which governance is exercised internationally must reflect the broad realities of our time. This relates in particular to the reforms needed to ensure that the Security Council and other key economic forums better represent the characters and needs of the globalised world. Better governance means greater participation, coupled with accountability. Therefore the international public domain, including the UN must be opened up further to the participation of non-state actors.

The Secretary-General further recommended that the more integrated global context also demands a new degree of policy coherence together with the filling of important gaps. The international financial architecture, as well as the multilateral trade regime requires strengthening, however greater consistency must be achieved among macro-economic trade, aid and financial and environmental policies to ensure the common aim of expanding the benefits of globalisation.

### **The institutional gap regarding environmental security**

As regards this particular institutional gap, there are two key challenges that the governance debate should address. The first challenge is to address the issue of natural resources scarcity and the need for equitable distribution. We have an enormous challenge in marrying, in a just way, the mechanisms to handle scarcity on one hand, and social equity for current and future generations. The other challenge pertains to the importance of stimulating and harnessing human creativity and innovation. How do we stimulate innovation without falling into the traps of top-down command and control and without falling into the traps of remaining in a business-as-usual scenario of increased resource use possibly leading to our own ecological detriment.

## **2.2. The Critical Path Forward**

### **Breaking the cycle of conflict**

Gareth Evans, former Australian Foreign Minister asserts that breaking the cycle of conflict requires strengthening our international institutions so that they can undertake the following challenges:

- Effective prevention – assessing the roots of the situation
- Effective reaction – when prevention fails, using military force as a last resort
- Follow-through – peace building efforts in the wake of violent conflict to preclude the risk of reoccurrence.<sup>1</sup>
- The global order has to be consciously constructed and mechanisms found to tackle the negative consequences of social dislocation.<sup>2</sup>
- A key component of this involves establishing in developing nations the type of resilient institutional mechanisms that have evolved in Western nations.<sup>3</sup>

### **Security Council reform**

Despite efforts of the Open-ended Working Group on Security Council reform, no formula has yet been developed that would allow an increase in Council membership. According to the Secretary-General, the perceived shortcomings in the Council's credibility in light of its size and composition contribute to a slow and steady erosion of its authority, which in turn has grave implications for international peace and security. Numerous recommendations have been advanced that must be given renewed consideration. These include: creation of a new class of five standing members to serve until further review in 2005; increase to 13 the number of non-permanent rotating members; eliminate the use of the veto power except in exceptional circumstances and commit to a further full review in 2005; the right to petition for non-state actors to bring situations massively endangering human security within member states to the attention of the Security Council. In articulating new norms for global security policy, it is interesting to note that the Commission on Global Governance asserted that environmental protection, alongside conflict prevention, should in fact be the primary goals of global security policy.

### **Trusteeship Council for the Global Commons**

The Commission on Global Governance also proposed that the existing Trusteeship Council should be authorised to exercise a trusteeship responsibility over the global commons and to serve as the central forum on global environmental and other related matters, with functions to include the administration of international environmental instruments, as well as the articulation of rights and responsibilities of member states regarding the global commons. The newly constituted Trusteeship Council could serve as the principal forum through which UN member states could exercise their collective trusteeship for protecting the integrity of the global environment and common areas like the oceans, atmosphere and outer space. It would serve to link together collective trusteeship with emerging concepts of global governance.

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<sup>1</sup> Evans, Gareth. "Preventing Deadly Conflict and the Problem of Political Will", Lecture. 2002.

<sup>2</sup> Mishra, Brajesh. "Global Security: An Indian Perspective", Address at National Defence Institute, Lisbon. 13 April 2002.

## **Transformation of UNEP**

The issue of upgrading UNEP into a UN Environment Organisation is currently under debate in a NY and Nairobi-based working group that has been initiated by the French Government. Initiated by the government of France, a NY and Nairobi-based working group will consider three courses of action for the UNEO in the context of improving international environmental governance: (i) enhancing implementation and enforcement (including building UNEO's horizontal mobilisation capacity and strengthening the observance mechanisms by giving UNEO a specific monitoring and reporting role); (ii) building the institutional capacity of developing countries (including coordinating capacity-building action and assistance in mobilising financing for environmental projects); (iii) rationalising the existing system of MEAs (including giving UNEO a driving role in the convention alignment process and making UNEO a driving force for the integration of environmental concerns in other UN and non-UN bodies).

## **Independent Body for Assessment and Early Warning**

In a recent report entitled "Decisions for the Earth: Balance, voice and power", the World Resources Institute called for the establishment of an independent body endowed with universally accepted ethical and intellectual authority and charged with identifying and assessing risks of global change in addition the Council supports the formation of independent scientific panels based on the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

## **Economic Security Council**

The Commission on Global Governance proposed in order to elevate the economic security dimensions on the international political agenda, it would be critical to establish an Economic Security Council to provide leadership and to promote consensus on international economic issues and sustainable development. It would play a role in assessing the overall state of the world's economy and as well, to secure coherence and consistency in the policy goals of the international economic institutions. The Commission argued that the establishment of an Economic Council as a new principal organ of the UN would be a first step towards the realisation of sustainable development. Its objectives would be to integrate the work of all the UN bodies engaged in economic issues and promote the harmonisation of the fiscal, monetary and trade policies of all member states and to encourage international cooperation on technology transfer, financial flows and the functioning of commodity markets. The Independent Working Group on the Future of the United Nations not only endorsed the concept of an Economic Council, but as well, recommended the establishment of a corollary Social Council that would integrate all UN activities relating to social development such as environmental protection, education and health care.

## **3. FINANCE:**

### **3.1. The Challenges**

#### **The ODA challenge**

By not dealing seriously with the ODA challenge, the North sends a very dangerous signal to the South that will simply exacerbate an already tense and hostile negotiating climate. Without increased ODA, it is inconceivable that the Millennium Development Goals will be reached, particularly since as we know that FDI only reaches about 11 countries in the world. However, it is important to highlight the fact that Northern

development cooperation policy has tended to be unduly focused on the financial fix. Indeed many in the South argue that in many cases, ODA has actually increased the poverty of “recipient” countries and in many other cases has engendered a relationship of dependency, especially in light of ODA conditionalities which must be thoroughly assessed. The broader challenge therefore is evolve the classic donor/recipient relationship to a higher form where partner countries can play a more significant role in determining their future course.

### **Deficiencies in the international financial architecture**

The fundamental problem is that the international financial architecture simply does not work, and is ill equipped to address new global challenges. While the outcome of the International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD) did represent an important step forward addressing the reform challenge for international financial institutions, the reality is that many important reforms disappeared from the Monterrey Consensus. These included reforming and democratising the World Bank, the IMF; the Jubilee proposals for debt cancellation; allowing countries to seek bankruptcy protection under rules similar to Chapter 9 of the US Bankruptcy Law; currency transaction taxes, as well as the Soros proposal to earmark \$10 billion of the IMF’s new issue of Special Drawing Rights for the provision of global public goods such as health and education were rejected.

### **The debt challenge**

There is a growing consensus that the HIPC initiative has not been completely successful in solving the debt crisis and that concrete measures are needed to ensure that developing countries are not excluded from that process. Dealing seriously with the debt crisis will require assessing the debt issue in terms of both the financial and ecological debts owed by Southern and Northern countries respectively. It is estimated that the North is indebted to the South for its carbon debt in the amount of \$13 to 15 trillion dollars. Another critical challenge is to address the continuing problem of negative flows, whereby the rate of repayment flowing from the South to the North is still 3 to 4 times greater than the rate of aid flowing from North to South.

## **3.2. The Critical Path Forward**

### **As regards global economic governance reform**

Efforts are needed to improve global economic governance and strengthen the UN leadership role in promoting development. It is critical that international efforts to reform the international financial architecture are sustained with greater transparency and the effective participation of developing countries. As well, multilateral financial institutions should work on the basis of sound, nationally owned paths of reform that take into account the needs of the poor and efforts to reduce poverty.

### **As regards ODA**

Besides of course necessary measures to re-energize ODA commitments, governments must: (i) must thoroughly assess impacts of ODA conditionalities; (ii) decentralize aid delivery while at same time strengthening capacity of local governments to manage and disperse aid; (iii) reorient development assistance to create and strengthen

environmentally and socially sustainable livelihoods; (iv) ensure that ODA is focused on poorest countries and that development cooperation policy is more transparent and participatory; (v) make new commitments for increased funding for the GEF in forthcoming replenishments and of course reform of GEF;

#### **As regards debt relief**

The most concrete measure that can and indeed should be undertaken at this point is to evaluate how and where the HIPC Initiative needs to be strengthened and what steps are needed to broaden its reach and scope to ensure that more developing countries are included?

#### **As regards foreign direct investment**

One of the most important steps that must be taken as regards foreign direct investment (FDI) is to ensure that the FfD implementation process is better linked, integrated and embedded with the overarching goals and principles enshrined in the Millennium Development Goals and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation.

## **4. SCIENCE**

### **4.1. The Challenges**

#### **The knowledge gaps**

The study of ecological systems has advanced considerably since the 1972 Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment. However, there are considerable knowledge gaps in humanity's understanding of the natural world, let alone the link between resource scarcity and degradation and conflict.

The promotion and advancement of the study of ecological sustainability can provide this understanding through increased research into the underlying ecological processes and through the application of modern, effective and efficient tools that are now available, (such as remote-sensing devices, robotic monitoring instruments and computing and modeling capabilities). The study of ecological sustainability should continue to play an increasing role in providing for an improvement in the efficiency of resource utilization and in finding new and more sustainable development practices, resources and alternatives.

The open exchange and wide application of the new knowledge is essential to the achievement of sustainable development goals, especially in developing countries. Of critical importance is the need for scientists in developing countries to participate fully in international scientific research programs so as to allow all countries to have equal access to the most advanced and state-of-the art sustainability knowledge.

## **5.2. The Critical Path Forward**

### **Promote scientific research on environmental challenges**

Scientific research and development in the context of environmental problems, must be promoted in all countries, especially the developing countries. Equally critical is the need for the free-flow of up-to-date scientific information and transfer of experience to facilitate the solution of environmental problems.

### **Strengthen endogenous capacity building**

The Rio Declaration calls for the strengthening of endogenous capacity-building for sustainable development by improving scientific understanding through exchanges of scientific and technological knowledge, and by enhancing the development, adaptation, diffusion and transfer of new and innovative technologies.

### **Operationalise Agenda 21's Chapter 35**

There are a wide range of measures that are included in Chapter 35 of Agenda 21 addressing what governments should do to promote scientific knowledge in the area of sustainable development. These include: preparing inventories of natural and social science data related to sustainable development; developing methods to find the links of the established sciences with the indigenous knowledge of different cultures, which methods should be tested using pilot studies; supporting the development of an expanded monitoring network to describe global, biogeochemical, and hydrological cycles; encouraging the coordination of satellite missions; promoting the education and training of scientists, not only in their disciplines but also in their ability to identify, manage and incorporate environmental considerations into research and development projects.

## **5. EDUCATION**

### **5.1. The Challenges**

#### **Education and the fundamental ethical challenges**

The present environmental and security crises raise a number of fundamental questions about what we as humans value, how we conceive a meaningful life, how we perceive our place in nature, and the type of world we wish to bequeath to our children. Education must play a critical role in catalysing a paradigm shift in our feeling and thinking, in our hearts, spirits and minds. This shift has several dimensions, including: enhancing our caring capacity; connectedness; the notion of the web of life; the notion of equity, human rights and social justice; and the notion of enoughness.

### **5.2. The Critical Path Forward**

#### **Enhancing our 'Caring Capacity'**

The way we are able to care for others, the world and ourselves is a key factor for sustainable development. Education systems must demonstrate how our 'caring capacity'

supports and strengthens the ‘carrying capacity’ of the earth and at the same time also sustains the ‘living capacity’ of present and future generations and other forms of life.

### **Connectedness**

Education systems must demonstrate that the connectedness challenge is to enable people to be linked, related, rooted and involved with their direct environment and the larger community of life. The ethical dimension of connectedness calls for the consideration of the realities and impacts of living in increasingly larger social groups, as well as the relationship between humanity and the larger community of life. We must recognise that humanity is part of a greater web of life that must be respected and cared for with compassion. We need to understand that we are an intrinsic part of the larger Earth Community and take that as a starting point for all we do. This is an enormous challenge that lies before us, as it means a total change in mindset in every field, be it economic, political, academic, and in our daily lives. We must recognise that humankind is a component of the interdependent web of life, if it damages the web, it damages its future.

### **Promote equity, human rights and social justice**

The principle of equity embraces the imperatives of human rights, social justice and inclusion. Education systems must promote the importance of recognising the fundamental right of all living species to live in a way that they are meant to. This concept is inherent in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in the Earth Charter. This requires a feeling of ‘global citizenship’ and of inclusiveness. Indeed, no one should be excluded from a meaningful and healthy life in the global village. This notion calls for the imperative of responsibility, which is outlined in the Valencia Declaration of Human Duties and Responsibilities, which calls on humanity to ensure that the consequences of our decisions and acts are fully considered and integrated into the decision-making process, and that we move from individualism to a support of the community and a greater sense of responsibility towards all living species.

### **Enoughness**

Gandhi stated that “the Earth has enough for everyone’s need but not for anyone’s greed”. Education systems must promote the value of enoughness as a sense of limits, and of things one does not do, not because they cannot be done, but because they should not be done. This means that humans must limit the acquisition of material goods to what Earth can afford rather than what humans want. It also implies a sense of trusteeship. As the Earth Charter states, when basic human needs have been met, development is about “being more rather than having more”. Thus, the focus is on quality rather than quantity of human activities and it implies a sense of limits by implementing a precautionary principle.