

**Unity as a Transformative Pathway to Achieving Sustainable Development,  
Using Three Fundamental Critical Entry Points:  
*Nature, Society, and the Economy***



**Written for the United Nations, its Member States and all others working on achieving sustainable development goals.**

## **Synopsis**

Unity is the force that has driven the evolution of matter and life, as well as the formation of human societies and economies over time. It lies at the heart of sustainable development and thus can be seen as a transformative pathway to achieve all of the SDG's at the same time.

This paper shows how unity and conflict are playing out today in our relationship to Nature, Society and the Economy; the 3 dimensions of sustainable development. It describes how we can use-and are using; the long-term evolutionary force of unity consciously as a transformative pathway to achieving individual SDG's. Examples are taken from the fields of education, law, human rights, health and forms of global governance that are already firmly established. In addition, we include some approaches to building sustainable economies, banking systems and financing for development already being practiced. This demonstrates how governments and civil society alternate in taking the lead in restoring balance, as needed.

The completion of the 2030 Agenda is by no means a given. Yet we have the means at our disposal to consciously and knowledgeably apply the evolutionary force of unity to achieve all of the SDG's, as written.

This paper is being offered by the Commons Cluster with thanks to all of our colleagues both inside and outside of the UN that provided examples and guidelines from around the world.

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**“It always seems impossible until it's done.”**

**— Nelson Mandela**

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS:**

**BIEN** - The Basic Income Earth Network

**BIRD** - Business Innovation Research Development

**DEPART** - Economic Development and Regional Action Plan for the Creation of Decent Jobs for the Youth in Tunisia

**EO** - Earth Observation

**EU** - European Union

**GCNL** - Green Cross Netherlands

**GPF** - Government Pension Fund Global

**HETAVAD** - Hetavad Skills Academy and Networks International

**HLPF - High Level Political Forum**

**ILO** - International Labour Organization

**ISE** - Inspiring Stories and Examples about Education

**LETSystem** - Local Exchange Trading System

**MGoS** - Major Groups and other Stakeholders

**MOI** - Means of implementation

**NGO** - non-governmental organization

**OECD** - The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

**PROMESS** - Promotion of Organizations and Mechanisms of Social and Solidarity Economy

**SDG** - Sustainable development goals

**SSE** - Developing a Social Solidarity Economy

**UNCCD** - Convention to Combat Desertification

**UNFCCC** - United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

## Background

On 9th July 2019, at the Annual Meeting of the Commons Clusters of the UN non-governmental organization (NGO) Major Group members undertook writing a paper on Critical Entry Points to support UN Member States as they prepared for their Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Summit, which was subsequently held on 24th to 25th September 2019. The paper was then sent to UN Ambassadors in New York, Geneva, and Nairobi for their preparation for the Summit.<sup>1</sup>

This paper, titled, **“In Harmony with Nature: Accelerating the Achievement of the SDG's using three Fundamental Critical Entry Points,”** outlined three fundamental critical entry points, which coincide with the three dimensions of sustainable development: Nature, Society, and the Economy. It set out to show that progress towards these three points brings about progress on all of the SDG's.

To accommodate the valuable information supplied by the NGO Major Group that was unused in the first document, and to include additional input received from the Major Groups and other Stakeholders (MGoS) worldwide, the Commons Cluster compiled this second document. Its title, ***“Unity as a Transformative Pathway to Achieving Sustainable development Using Three Fundamental Critical entry points: Nature, Society and Economy”***, is inspired by the theme of the 2020 United Nations High Level Political Forum (HLPF): “Accelerated action and transformative pathways: Realizing the Decade of Action and Delivery for Sustainable Development”.

<sup>1</sup> Cover Photo provided by <https://unsplash.com/@laynelawson>



## General Introduction

In our first paper, we examined how the three dimensions of sustainable development, Nature, Society, and the Economy, are three *fundamental* critical entry points. Progress on these three points strengthens the foundation for the achievement of all SDG's.

We saw how these three points form a unity. Nature provides all necessary resources for survival. Nature also fuels the economy. It is critical for achieving any of the SDG's.

Society, in the form of groups of human beings, is an integral part of Nature; Society is the agent that creates the economy. It is also the instrument through and for which the SDG's are achieved.

The economy is fueled by resources that derive from Nature through the endeavours of people within the context of societies. The economy provides the means to achieve the SDG's. Nature, society and the economy are inextricably linked, and must be treated as such if the SDG's are to be achieved. Bringing out the unity that lies at the very heart of our reality and also the SDG's is a way of working at the whole at the same time.

Agenda 2030 refers to Nature as 'the environment.' Nature itself is a unit consisting of many parts, including the subsystems and spheres that together form the Earth System: the atmosphere, the hydrosphere, the geosphere, the biosphere, and the noosphere, which are in constant interaction with one another.

It became clear in our previous paper that unity is a transformative pathway that must be implemented if the SDG's are to be achieved.

Without unity,<sup>2</sup> some people will inevitably be left behind, making it impossible to end poverty in all its forms everywhere (SDG 1). It will also be next to impossible to end hunger, ensure healthy lives, well-being, education, water, electricity, and sustained economic growth for all. Inclusive industrialization cannot take place (SDG's 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, and 9).

Additionally, it will be difficult to have fair and enforceable laws and peaceful societies where people work together for the well-being of all (SDG's 5, 13, 16), and people are unlikely to respect the natural environment, for they are likely to treat it as a means to satisfy their greed, thereby undermining the ability to implement SDG's 14 and 15.

In this paper, we shall explore how unity begins with our individual connection to Nature within, and how sustainable societies and economies naturally grow out of this connection. Additionally, we shall look at how people are already building unity in all of these contexts and how we can build on what is already taking place when we consciously understand how unity works in all of these contexts.

<sup>2</sup> For the purposes of this paper, we will use the Cambridge Dictionary definition of unity: "*a situation in which everyone agrees with each other or wants to stay together.*"

Within each of the three main segments are the following headings, in order of importance:

- An introduction outlining how unity expresses itself in that section;
- How this affects the implementation of the SDG's;
- A Warning: The effect on the achievement of the SDG's where unity is lacking;
- Means of Implementation (MOI);
- Each of these (MOI) with the relevant Inspiring stories and Examples around the world (ISE)
- Observations
- Conclusion

### Sustainable Development Goals





## **NATURE**

### **Unity as a Transformative Pathway in the Context of Nature**

#### **Introduction**

Nature is subject to wildly divisive and disruptive forces, such as storms, fires, tsunamis, and power struggles for food and to produce.<sup>3</sup> Since they often go hand in hand with disintegration and destruction, they tend to be local and to take place within a particular time frame and then lead to renewal and change. Two such disruptive situations stand out today.

One involves the chaos, violent fears, and conflicts that accompany globalization as we attempt to take the step between separate and opposing religions, cultures, and nations to a united world enriched by national, cultural, religious, and other diversity. The processes of disintegration and renewal that take place are clearly visible when one structure changes into another.

<sup>3</sup> Cover Photo provided by ©Leonidas Zeferino Lex.

The second is the virulent pandemic of the SARS-CoV2 coronavirus, which causes COVID-19. At this stage, we know very little about this coronavirus except that it spreads rapidly, can be deadly, and is leading to incisive sociological and economic changes worldwide.

At the same time, there are unifying forces that act over much longer periods of time. They bring diverse phenomena together in forms and processes that are found throughout evolutionary history, almost since the Universe began. These unifying forces are responsible for bringing subatomic particles together to form diverse types of atoms. They have brought atoms together to create molecules. With these molecules, unicellular organisms evolve into diverse plants and animals, including human beings. Humans, in turn, use these unifying forces to create ever-larger societies and economies.



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Since the beginning of life on Earth, these unifying forces have formed ecosystems. These encompass minerals and water in its three states: ice, liquid and steam. They form spheres, such as the atmosphere, the geosphere, the hydrosphere and the noosphere, which merge and pass through various phases of life.

As human beings, we absorb these systems with the air we breathe, the water we drink, the food we eat and the thoughts we think, as well as our subsequent actions. In this way, each human being is an integral expression of an all-encompassing Nature.

We are unable to fully understand Nature's complexities, which are always in flux due to constant interaction. We have the capacity to radically affect the systems of Nature, which are at present delicately poised to still support human life. In order to avoid extinction, humans must be finely attuned to Nature and the balance that allows us to survive and thrive.<sup>4</sup>

Attunement to this balance is the most critical step in achieving unity. With this, we can achieve the SDG's and thus make sure human life continues. Nature must guide humans through phases of physical and psychological growth.

The developmental psychologist Abraham Maslow,<sup>5</sup> states humans can chart personal development via a hierarchy of needs that increase as they move through phases of growth. He

<sup>4</sup> Planetary Boundaries: Exploring the Safe Operating Space for Humanity  
[https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1063&context=iss\\_pub](https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1063&context=iss_pub)

<sup>5</sup> Hopper, Elizabeth *Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Explained*, Updated February 24, 2020,  
<https://www.thoughtco.com/maslows-hierarchy-of-needs-4582571>

thus created Maslow's Hierarchy of needs to illustrate this. The base of the hierarchy (often depicted as a pyramid) is physical needs and safety. This is especially vital when we are small children, and remains of utmost importance as we become adults who participate in groups such as communities, in which the needs for esteem and caring become dominant.

When our physical needs are satisfied, it is easier to achieve our need for self-actualization, which Maslow saw as our ultimate need. Self-actualization focuses on fulfilling our individual potential. While all of these needs are always present, the emphasis of each need can change with each phase of life.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs includes the need to unite with other humans as we develop. Our capacity to hunt and gather food, to feel secure, and to feel esteem and love all increase when we are united in purpose with other human beings. As individuation emerges more strongly as a conscious need, we often discover the necessity to develop our unique potential by connecting with other groups, cultures, societies to better take this step. This is one of the incentives for groups to develop into interconnecting societies and eventually into a global community.

The development of new groups has taken place myriad times throughout Nature. It is deeply embedded in the human psyche, and is consciously expressed as an overarching objective in the 2030 Agenda with the 17 SDG's and 169 targets.



We must reestablish our connection with Nature, by allowing Nature to guide us as we recreate local and global societies and economies.

The inextricable unity that exists between human beings is both physiological and psychological. We can become conscious and heed its guidance by being in tune with how we feel. When inner and outer selves are in harmony, it is accompanied by a sense that what is taking place is right.

This is usually accompanied by an increase of energy. Nature also communicates with us through intuition, visions and dreams. Although many of us are not conscious of it, communication with Nature is ongoing, independent of our background or age.

Our relationship with Nature is critical if we are to survive. Nature is constantly offering us resources to nurture the bonds that naturally grow between people. In this way, we can move from a divided humanity to a unified one, and thereby build a firm foundation for achieving all SDG's. ***Unity is a powerful force because it connects and amplifies all areas in our relationship with Nature.***



## Examples of conscious unity with Nature throughout the ages

Unity has existed throughout history, providing a common identity for people in diverse cultures worldwide. It creates ties of identity to many different ancestral cultures. Examples include the indigenous peoples of North America and Taoist societies in China in 500–400 B.C.



The Great Wall of China

Unity further developed in the civilizations of ancient Greece and Rome. These ancient peoples have contributed greatly to the drawing of the cultural, political, and religious civilizations of the region and have affected several other movements throughout world history.

Civilization and culture,<sup>6</sup> are hallmarks of the collective life of human beings. Civilization signifies the moral evolved state

of the society, which includes arts and learning. For example, historians tell us that Indians of the Vedic age, known as Indo-Aryans, were an energetic race of people. They exhibited a love of life and indulged freely in poetry and war. They also were deeply spiritual and adept in bold philosophical speculation. Spirituality, that often links people with Nature, was omnipresent during those times and the true essence of Indian culture.<sup>7</sup>

Culture originally developed within the context of humans' connection to their natural environment. The understanding that human beings are an integral part of Nature is found in many ancient cultures. China in the Shang Dynasty (1600-1046 B.C.) introduced acupuncture as a form of healing. Yoga was first mentioned in India's Vedas scriptures circa 1500 B.C. Japan has exemplified unity for centuries with the practice of martial arts. The Islamic Golden Age (8th through 13th century), the European Middle Ages (5th to 15th century), and the Modern Era (from the early 20th century into present day) all bore witness to an original history that must be taken into account to understand the renaissance of the Euro-Mediterranean identity<sup>8</sup>. These ancient forms of healing and spirituality that are closely connected to natural laws are now practiced worldwide.

<sup>6</sup>The UNESCO- sponsored book 'Traditional Cultures of SouthEast Asia' gives the definition of Culture thus: Culture means the total accumulation of material objects, ideas, symbols, benefits, sentiments, values and social forms which are passed on from one generation to another in any given society. "In short, Culture signifies refinement of minds and manners as also cultivation of aesthetic faculties in a particular society; <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000064580>

<sup>7</sup> Spiritual Dimensions of Indian Culture; Dr. Shiva's Goswami Journal of Sociology and Social Work March 2014, Vol. 2, No. 1, pp. 241-256 ISSN: 2333-5807 (Print), 2333-5815 (Online) Copyright © The Author(s). 2014. All Rights Reserved. Published by American Research Institute for Policy Development; also see The Foundation of Indian Culture. [http://jsswnet.com/journals/jssw/Vol\\_2\\_No\\_1\\_March\\_2014/16.pdf](http://jsswnet.com/journals/jssw/Vol_2_No_1_March_2014/16.pdf)

<sup>8</sup>Unity and Diversity in Euro- Mediterranean identities Euro- European and Arabo Mediterranean Dimensions AFFAYA RIM Al-Akhawayn University, Morocco [https://emuni.si/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/2\\_187-200.pdf](https://emuni.si/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/2_187-200.pdf)

Approximately 3100 B.C., shortly after humans first appeared on earth, Egyptian civilization began. Early Egyptian culture owed its success to its ability to unite with Nature, creating a vital connection to the survival and growth of the civilization. They adapted their life circle to the Nile River, by charting the predictable flooding and controlled irrigation of the floodplain. They respected Nature by using its fertile plains in the development of impressive agriculture that produced abundant food for its population.

The worship of Nature was ritualised and institutionalised, giving their culture stability and predictability, and the surplus resources of the Nile River encouraged cultural and social development for the Egyptians so they could explore, trade and make diplomatic agreements with the surrounding regions in Africa and Asia. They developed writing, literature, mathematics, medicine, pharaonic constructions, architecture, agriculture, shipbuilding, technology and a viable military.<sup>9</sup> Acknowledging the importance of unity made this great civilization possible.



Another key concept to the implementation of SDG's is *Ubuntu*, an African ethical concept of engagement in unity. *Ubuntu* makes us realize that our humanity depends on solidarity from humanity in harmony with Nature. ***Ubuntu is exemplified in the Zulu expression "umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu", which translates in English to "we are only someone through others"***<sup>10</sup>. *Ubuntu* emphasizes the necessary unity of the members of a community, where each individual is interlinked to the others.

Here is a listing of some of the ways unity manifests as an evolutionary force and therefore can function as a transformative pathway to achieving the SDG's.

- Acts that come forth from unity and produce other forms of unity, through synergy, cooperation, and solidarity;
- Groups that unite diverse elements into stable wholes: systems, ecosystems, taxonomies; communities;

<sup>9</sup> MERKUS, Edward. THE IDEA OF UNITY. The idea of unity in ancient egypt. © Copyright [Arc-Design.com.au](http://Arc-Design.com.au). Sydney Australia, 2018. Available at: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/331025241\\_THE\\_IDEA\\_OF\\_UNITY\\_in\\_Ancient\\_Egypt\\_THE\\_IDEA\\_OF\\_UNITY](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/331025241_THE_IDEA_OF_UNITY_in_Ancient_Egypt_THE_IDEA_OF_UNITY)>. Access: 10 may, 2020.

<sup>10</sup> WINKS, Benjamin Elias. A covenant of compassion: African humanism and the rights of solidarity in the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. African human rights law journal. v. 11, n. 2: AHRLJ, 2011. p. 454. Available at: [http://www.ahrlj.up.ac.za/images/ahrlj/2011/ahrlj\\_vol11\\_no2\\_2011\\_benjamin\\_e\\_winks.pdf](http://www.ahrlj.up.ac.za/images/ahrlj/2011/ahrlj_vol11_no2_2011_benjamin_e_winks.pdf)>. Access: 12 may. 2020.



- Unifying forces of cohesion, which maintain these relatively stable wholes, as decay and growth are integrated;
- The guiding principle is Nature’s Ethic: “One for all and all for one.”

How these relate to the achievement of the SDG's is discussed in the video *The Heart of the Matter: A systems approach for achieving the SDG's*,<sup>11</sup> which was mentioned in our first paper. It is being translated into multiple languages.

## **The Warning of Living in Disunity and Fragmentation**

Unity takes place at all levels, starting with individual biological systems affected by air, water and available food. In this way, each individual is directly connected with Nature. When this primary connection is disrupted, all other relationships are affected. Instead of being an ally, Nature becomes a powerfully disruptive force, as evident in the natural disasters caused by climate change.

When people are at odds with themselves (Nature within), conflict mars their relationships with others, replacing cooperative action with competition, in which “losers” get left behind. This compromises the SDG's, as their basic premise is to leave no one behind.

Rethinking our responsibilities to future generations, and doing our best to preserve Nature in a world without social and economic injustice, will enable us to rediscover unity and transform it into a powerful ally. If Nature is destroyed beyond a certain point, society will be extinguished. There will be no more trade, no more economy and possibly no more human life.

We need to act now to better attune ourselves to Nature. Global engagement is needed to fully understand unity in all forms to achieve the SDG's.

In this chapter, we shall look at unity as it relates to each individual’s inner and outer relationship with Nature.

<sup>11</sup> For all of the versions of the video, along with the video description in each language and the info about the course and the book: <https://www.capracourse.net/heart/> To access just the videos on Vimeo: <https://vimeo.com/showcase/6000769>

## Means of Implementation Inner Connection to Nature Student-Centered Education (MOI)

Education comes from the Latin word *educere*, meaning “to lead forth”. Therefore, achieving inner unity to be in harmony with Nature via education might involve:

- Student-centered education that prioritizes “inner Nature” as our primary means of absorbing information. Education includes all that is necessary for students to function well and contribute to diverse societies and cultures, with connection to Nature as the top priority.



Ashaninka-Yanesha: Santa Teresa Community,  
Puerto Inka district- Huanuco- Peru

- Student-centered education encourages students to listen to their inner Nature to determine what they want to learn, while teachers provide guidance. Students are thus attuned to Nature in daily life, and use it to develop their individual potential and to experience what it means to feel truly alive, inspired and fulfilled.

Z

- Education is a fundamental human right, as mentioned in art. 26(2) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights<sup>12</sup>. Although this document has been transformed into Economic and Social Covenants, to which governments can accede, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights itself has become *Jus Cogens*, an imperative international

norm that means it is valid regardless of whether a nation has ratified the Economic and Social Covenants, the legal instruments that have been developed from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

***Effect on the Achievement of the SDG's:*** Student-centered education builds a solid foundation for sustainable development and the example of unity, as an important factor for development, through the interconnection of all elements. Helping people increase their moment-to-moment connection with the Natural order and sensitivity towards Nature and the beings that compose it, and implement the Units of change, based on this approach. This form of education promotes all SDG's and in particular SDG's 4, 5, 10 and 13.

<sup>12</sup> “Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms” <https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>

## **Inspiring Stories and Examples: Inner Connection with Nature and Student - Centered Education (ISE)**

Indigenous people and small-scale farmers have developed the sensitivity, tools, and techniques for living in harmony with Nature, passing their knowledge from generation to generation. Because both individual and communal survival is so intimately tied to taking cues from the natural environment, communities seek to make the most of each member's capacities.

In some communities, those entering adulthood are sent on “vision quests<sup>13</sup>,” spending several days in Nature to discover the essence of their individual potential.

Generally, student-centred educational approaches from primary to tertiary levels encourage students, supported by staff and faculty, to take charge of both the process by which they are educated and of their own education itself.

An example is the Montessori method, which has been used for over 100 years in many parts of the world. The Montessori approach “views the child as the one who is naturally eager for knowledge and capable of initiating learning in a supportive, thoughtfully prepared learning environment. It attempts to develop children physically, socially, emotionally and cognitively.”<sup>14</sup>

### **Schumacher College<sup>15</sup>**

Schumacher<sup>16</sup> College an international college for ecological studies offering masters programmes, short courses and a horticulture residency. It focuses on interactive and experiential education to develop practical skills and strategic thinking required to face 21st century challenges. Students work together in small groups which embrace the learning principles of head, hand, heart. Many of their courses<sup>17</sup> feature guest teachers who are world-renowned thinkers, activists and practitioners.

Their masters programmes are tailored to help students craft their learning experience to meet their individual goals. Their learning community provides an active and deeply immersive learning experience; connections to a global network of leading thinkers, teachers, makers, growers, and activists; and a generative catalyst for using one's skills to make meaningful change in communities around the world.

<sup>13</sup> Vision quest, supernatural experience in which an individual seeks to interact with a guardian spirit, usually an anthropomorphized animal, to obtain advice or protection. Vision quests were most typically found among the native peoples of North and South America.

<sup>14</sup> <https://librivox.org/the-montessori-method-by-maria-montessori/>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.schumachercollege.org.uk/about>

<sup>16</sup> German born British economist E. F. Schumacher published in 1973 a collection of essays called " Small is Beautiful" ranked by The Times Literary Supplement as the 100 most influential books published since World War II. A further edition with commentaries was published in 1999.

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.schumachercollege.org.uk/courses/postgraduate-courses-2020>



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### **The Sedona International School for Animal and Nature Communication**

Specializes in direct communication with Nature. Maia Kincaid, Ph.D is a pioneer in the field of Animal and Nature Communication. She founded and has worked at the school since 1997.<sup>18</sup> Students gain experience working with real cases and the school also gives free workshops for people working in sustainable development associated with the UN.

**Project Drawdown** Project Drawdown was founded in 2014 by environmentalist Paul Hawken to measure and model the most substantive solutions to stop global warming, and to communicate those findings to the world.

Project Drawdown<sup>19</sup> is a world-class research organization that reviews, analyses, and identifies the most viable global climate solutions, and shares these findings with the world (SDG 1). Associated with communities, policymakers, nonprofit organizations, businesses, investors and philanthropists, the company identifies and deploys effective climate solutions based on science, in the fastest, safest and most equitable way possible. Project Drawdown is changing the global conversation about climate change from defeatism to one of possibility, opportunity, action, and empowerment.

<sup>18</sup> To see more about Ph.D Maia Kincaid, check: <https://www.animalcommunicationworld.com>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.drawdown.org>

## Means of Implementation about Law (MOI)

### International Agreements help develop a common language that links Unity with Nature

The International Agreements are intended to ensure that people act in harmony with Nature, with impressive means of implementing and enforcing these laws. The law's effectiveness will ultimately depend on people recognizing the importance of connecting with Nature and making sure they are fully implemented.



Peace Palace – International Court of Justice  
Hague, Netherlands

As modern society has removed people from their initial unity with Nature, legal entities have developed mandatory rules that have the highest prominence in international law. These are known as the “*jus cogens*” rules and the “*erga omnes obligations*”, which guarantee the supremacy of shared common values in the fields of validity of legal acts<sup>20</sup>.

Thus, the concept of unity, through social solidarity, finds expression in both *jus cogens* and *erga omnes obligations*. The norms of *jus cogens* symbolize the unity of the

fundamental values legally shared by all states, for the cohesion of the international community. This is perhaps the most powerful example of international unity, because they are at the top of the world legal order,<sup>21</sup> as an expression of the common concerns of humanity, which transcend state interests.<sup>22</sup>

Leibniz's Law states that no two things can share all their properties in common. Thus, unity presents the idea that it is not in the “Whole” in which global unity must be found, but rather in each of its parts, which contains in itself the totality of the universe.<sup>23</sup>

20 KOLB, Robert. *Ius contra bellum. Le droit international relative au maintien de la paix*. Bruylant: Bruxelles, 2003. p. 25 apud DÉTAILS, Julien. *La charte des Nations Unies et le principe de solidarité*. In: DOUMBE-BILLE, Stéphane; GHERARI, Habib; KHERAD, Rahim. *Mélanges en l'honneur de Madjid Benchikh: droit, liberté, paix, développement*. Editions A. Pedone: Paris, 2011. p. 246.

21 BOURICHE, Marie. *Les Instruments de solidarité en droit international public: connaissances et savoirs*. 2012. p. 322.

22 DÉTAILS, Julien. *La charte des Nations Unies et le principe de solidarité*. In: DOUMBE-BILLE, Stéphane; GHERARI, Habib; KHERAD, Rahim. *Mélanges en l'honneur de Madjid Benchikh: droit, liberté, paix, développement*. Editions A. Pedone: Paris, 2011. p. 247.

23 LEIBNIZ, Gottfried Wilhelm. *Monadology and Other Philosophical Essays*. London, Macmillan, 1965. Apud PROST, Mario. *The Concept of Unity in Public International Law*. 1st edition. Hart Monographs in Transnational and International Law. Hart Publishing, 2012.



This theory suggests that, without consideration of unity in the international legal system, there can be no meaningful understanding about SDG's. As the SDG's change what international justice means, we need to develop more unity in Public International Law, especially in the International Environmental Law. In this way, the concept of Unity in Public International Law explores the various possible meanings of Unity, through a monist established vision of international law as a unitary whole (unity - unification - universality) to fight the rising nationalism, xenophobia, corruption, humanitarian crisis and climate change.<sup>24</sup>

Efforts to reach agreements with global impact to protect Nature build unity from two perspectives: one, our relationship with Nature, and two, a common language. There are different types of law at play simultaneously and internationally. This conviction states that unity is never absolutely objective, but rather requires a certain degree of construction and interpretation about norm conflict, fragmentation and pluralism.

Thus, the unity of international law stems not just from the compatibility between the great amount of different legal norms, but rather from elements of rational (epistemological unity) and abstract (axiological unity) transcendence of positive rules.<sup>25</sup>

The Stockholm Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment of 16 June 1972 represents the milestone in environmental-oriented international political awareness, in a clear manifestation that international law publicly recognizes the importance of cooperation and solidarity in the interrelation of economic and environmental development and established: *“Man has the fundamental right to freedom, equality and adequate conditions of life, in an environment of a quality that permits a life of dignity and well-being, and he bears a solemn responsibility to protect and improve the environment for present and future generations.”*

Demonstrating the concern for unity, common objectives and consideration for neighbouring states,<sup>26</sup> Principle 21 of the Stockholm Declaration provides that, in accordance with the United Nations Charter and the principles of international law, the sovereign right of States to exploit their natural resources and implement their autonomous environmental policy within their jurisdiction



United Nations Office at Geneva.  
The Allée des Nations, with the flags of the member countries.

<sup>24</sup> PROST, Mario. *The Concept of Unity in Public International Law*. 1st edition. Hart Monographs in Transnational and International Law. Hart Publishing, 2012.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> HESTERMEYER, Holger P. Reality or aspiration? Solidarity in international environmental and world trade law. In: HESTERMEYER, Holger P. et al. (eds.). *Coexistence, Cooperation and Solidarity: Liber Amicorum Rüdiger Wolfrum*, Volume 1. Editora: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers: 2011. p. 52–53.

or under their control shall be subject to the greater obligation not to harm the environment of other States or of areas beyond their jurisdiction.<sup>27</sup>

In addition to this direction, Principle 22 requires States to cooperate in the further development of international law with respect to liability<sup>28</sup> and compensation for the victims of pollution and other environmental damage that activities within the jurisdiction of a State, or under its control, cause to others in areas outside its jurisdiction.<sup>29</sup>

On 11 May 1976, the Organisation for Development Cooperation and Principles (OECD) announced the *Council Recommendation on Equal Access in Respect of Transboundary Pollution*, known as the Principles on Transboundary Pollution, which states in its preamble the responsibility of the governments of the Member States: "to cooperate in solving transboundary pollution problems in a spirit of solidarity and with the intention of further developing international law in this field".<sup>30</sup>

The World Charter of Nature, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 28 October 1982, is another important international instrument for an understanding of the spirit of unity in international environmental law, because the interpretation of its articles acknowledges the need for international cooperation and solidarity in the search for appropriate measures, at national and international level, for the protection of the environment.<sup>31</sup>

The second 1992 World Conference on environment and development (Eco-92/Rio 92), held in Rio de Janeiro, formulated documents related to the exploitation of the world's natural resources and sustainable development.

The discussions culminated with very important documents that, since this, are standards documents for sustainability, such as:

27 KOROMA, Abdul G. Solidarity: evidence of an emerging international legal principle. In: HESTERMEYER, Holger P. et al. (eds.). *Coexistence, Cooperation and Solidarity: Liber Amicorum Rüdiger Wolfrum*, Volume 1. Editora: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers: 2011. p. 110.

28 The international liability of states for transboundary environmental damage, as set out in the Stockholm Declaration Principles 21 and 22, demonstrates the direct influence of the "Trail Smelter Case" paradigm, an international dispute that began with air pollution and transboundary waters between the United States and Canada. (ONU, (2006). *REPORTS OF INTERNATIONAL ARBITRAL AWARD: Trail Smelter Case (United States, Canada)*. Decision of 11 March 1941. Available at: <[http://legal.un.org/riaa/cases/vol\\_III/1905-1982.pdf](http://legal.un.org/riaa/cases/vol_III/1905-1982.pdf)>. Access em: 20 jan. 2020.)

29 ONU, (1972). *DECLARATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON THE HUMAN ENVIRONMENT*, Stockholm from 5 to 16 June 1972. <<http://www.un-documents.net/aconf48-14r1.pdf>>. Access: 21 jan. 2020.

30 OCDE (1976). *Recommendation of the Council on Equal Right of Access in Relation to Transfrontier Pollution*. 11 May 1976 - C(76)55/FINAL. <<http://acts.oecd.org/Instruments/ShowInstrumentView.aspx?InstrumentID=13&InstrumentPID=11&Lang=en>>. Access em: 24 jan. 2020.

31 ONU (1982). G.A. Res. 37/7 (Annex) UN. Doc. A/37/51 (1982). *World Charter for Nature*. Available at: <<http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/37/a37r007.htm>>. Access:: 25 feb. 2020.



**Agenda 21** A global participatory partnership action plan instrument (SDG 17) for sustainable development formulated internationally to be adopted on a global, national and local scale about environmental conservation, social justice and sustainable economic growth (SDG 11), listing the objectives to be achieved by societies to achieve sustainability with attention to the economic and social dimensions, through the conservation and management of resources for development strengthening in working towards sustainable development, and its means of implementation. Second, the document, as no nation can achieve this on its own we need to take a balanced and integrated approach to environment and development questions.

### **Biodiversity Convention**

This is one of the most important international instruments related to the environment. The



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Convention is structured on three main bases: the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of biodiversity and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources. It refers to biodiversity at three levels (ecosystems, species and genetic resources), arguing that the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity (SDG 15) will strengthen friendly relations among states (SDG 17) and contribute to the peace of mankind (SDG 16). The Convention states in its Preamble that the conservation of biological diversity is a common concern of humanity (our shared Unity) so it is therefore vital to predict, prevent and combat at source the causes of the significant reduction or loss of biological diversity.

### **Convention on Desertification - Convention to Combat Desertification in those countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification, particularly in Africa (UNCCD)**

This Convention is a commitment that established joint action, working standards and international targets converging into coordinated actions in the search for qualitative solutions that meet social and environmental demands to eradicate poverty (SDG 1) and promote sustainable development (SDG 11) in arid and semi-arid areas, particularly where the poorest populations reside. Nowadays, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development makes some implications for a more global commitment to combat desertification. The result is a new UNCCD 2018-2030 Strategic Framework.

**Convention on Climate Change - United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)** This is an international environmental treaty that aims to stabilize the concentrations of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere resulting from human actions, in order to prevent them from interfering in a harmful and permanent way with the planet's climate system (SDG 13). It

seeks to combat climate change on the basis of the principle of '*common but differentiated responsibility*' taking into account the States respective capabilities and their social and economic conditions.<sup>32</sup>

### **Rio Forest Principles - Forest Principles: Non-legally Binding Authoritative Statement of Principles for a Global Consensus on the Management, Conservation and Sustainable Development of All Types of Forests**

This represents the first major international consensus on advances in forest use and conservation (SDG 15). It contains a set of 15 principles to guide national and international policies aimed at more sustainable protection and use of global forest resources. Forest issues should be examined in a holistic and balanced way in the overall environment and development context, taking into account the multiple functions and uses of forests, including traditional uses, as well as economic and social stress and the potential development of sustainable forest management, reflecting a first global consensus on forests and increased international cooperation on forest issues.

### **The Rio Declaration on Environment and Development**



Rio de Janeiro, Brazil  
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The Declaration aims to establish a new and equitable global partnership (SDG 17) through the creation of new levels of cooperation among States, key sectors of societies and peoples, leading to international agreements that respect the interests of all and protect the integrity of the global environment and development system (SDG 11), in full recognition of the integral and interdependent nature of our home (SDG 15).

This timeline of international environmental law shows a marked growth in the recognition and application of unity in close relation to the concepts of solidarity and cooperation.

International Legal norms is an effective means of implementing the SDG's. These international laws seek unity through global agreements. One example is the implementation of the 2030

<sup>32</sup> This means, according to this principle, the States must act to protect the environment and the climate system at the national, regional and global levels having in consideration the different real and special circumstances of each of them: how each State has contributed to the problem and also its capacity to prevent, reduce and control threats to the climate.

Agenda for sustainable development with the participation of all countries strengthening global solidarity at all levels.

Other examples of international agreements that involve the protection and preservation of various natural resources include:

- The Antarctic Treaty<sup>33</sup> (signed 1961) which regulates international relations with Antarctica, the only continent without a native human population.
- The Outer Space Treaty<sup>34</sup> (signed 1967) forms the basis of international space law. Signed by the United States, United Kingdom and the former Soviet Union, it now has 109 countries as parties, with an additional 23 awaiting ratification.
- The Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer<sup>35</sup> (signed 1987).
- The Convention on Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora<sup>36</sup>(signed 1973) focusing on biodiversity.
- The Montego Bay Convention on the Law of the Sea<sup>37</sup> (signed 1982), which governs all laws pertaining to the oceans and its resources.
- The Latin American Water Tribunal<sup>38</sup> (signed 2000) to protect the region's waters.
- The Paris Agreement<sup>39</sup> (signed 2016), which deals with greenhouse-gas-emissions mitigation, adaptation, and finance.

○

These illustrate a clear result of the unity, and common effort, for a sustainable future. These international mechanisms are designed to advance all of the SDG's and point to a call for a global ethic to forge governance and solidarity to respect and promote the common obligations of all states with Nature and human rights, in the defense and protection of the Natural Resources and proposing new actions on the implementation and further development of policies and regulation of international trade in wild fauna and flora.

33 The Antarctic Treaty is also a sustainable governance tool to Antarctica and also a means to implement (SDG's 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 and 17). On that international document that rules those continent the SDG's can be easily identified in all articles of the Antarctic Treaty text. [https://www.ats.aq/index\\_s.html](https://www.ats.aq/index_s.html)

34 The Outer Space Treaty, provides means of implementation of the SDG's through cooperation (SDG 17) and peace (SDG 16) for Governing the Activities of States with a basic framework on international space law for the benefit and in the interests of all countries and being the province of all mankind and developing the rule of law in this new area of human endeavour <https://www.unoosa.org/oosa/en/ourwork/spacelaw/treaties/introouterspacetreaty.html>

35 ONU, (2000). The Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer. Disponível em: <<http://unep.ch/ozone/pdf/Montreal-Protocol2000.pdf>>

36 The Convention offers 183 countries Parties a mechanism through which they can balance the biodiversity trade with their conservation by regulating the trade of some 36,000 species of wild animals and plants, as well as the products derived from them. <https://www.cites.org/eng/disc/what.php>

37 The Montego Bay Convention on the Law of the Sea, it is a universal commitment with a general rule coverage of all matters to its implementations and consolidation concerning the law of the sea common to all forms of marine pollution. [Unclous\\_e.pdf](#)

38 In July 1998 a meeting was held with representatives of Central America in the framework of the process towards the consolidation of the first Regional Court of the Latin American Water Tribunal, from which the Central American Declaration of Water emerged. <http://tragua.com/tratados-y-declaraciones/>

39 The Paris Agreement, which establishes binding and quantifiable measures to curb global warming. The best known of these is the objective of reducing carbon dioxide emissions to zero by 2050. <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/the-paris-agreement>

In a spirit of solidarity and cooperation between the states, and the duty that Nature should benefit all humanity, all States promoted a sustainable intergenerational development, emphasizing the importance of an order, for the maintenance of peace, justice and progress for all the peoples of the world.

As unity develops, laws are implemented of which people recognize the direct benefit to individuals and to the community.

National constitutions, by showing solidarity with international interests, promote the unification of values that should govern the legal system of all states, especially with regard to the civilizational aspirations of our era: the paradigm of human rights and protection of the natural environment.

The international call for the preservation of the environment has been noted in the national legal systems, notably the constitutions, confirming that the preservation of the environment is a universal constitutional value.

*Effect on the Achievement of the SDG's:* The Paris Agreement is strongly connected to the fulfillment of all SDG's. The Law of the Sea is relevant to achieving SDG's 13, 14, 16 and 17, and all SDG's indirectly, the ability of nations to work with a good management of the marine natural and social environment to exercise the administration of the oceans. The Antarctic Treaty can have an impact in particular through SDG's 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 and 17. The mandate of the Antarctic Treaty helps inspire the protection of global commons in other regions and can be considered as an Alliance for Objectives, which is a means of implementing SDG 17.

The Outer Space Treaty is potentially related to all SDG's and objectives and should be used in support of the 2030 agenda for sustainable development. It is especially important for the role of Earth Observation (EO) and geolocation (provided by GNSS) to support the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development. The CITES achievement of the SDG's capacity-building helps countries link the conservation objectives set out in SDG's 1, 8, 11, 12, 14 and 15.

The Latin American Water Court sees the defense and protection of these natural resources, water is explicitly reflected in the language of fundamental human rights<sup>40</sup>, and by consequences, it affects all SDG's, but particularly SDG's 6, 7, 13, 14 and 15. It provides a supply of safe drinking water and sanitation, which is clean, accessible and affordable for everyone (SDG's 3 and 6).

<sup>40</sup> In November 2002, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights adopted General Comment No. 15 on the right to water. (Article I) Observation No. 15 <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/4538838d11.pdf> . On July 28, 2010, through Resolution 64/292 ( <https://undocs.org/A/RES/64/292> ) the United Nations General Assembly explicitly recognized the human right to water and sanitation, reaffirming that clean drinking water and sanitation are essential for the realization of all human rights.

# Inspiring Stories and Examples about Legal Initiatives as a Next Step to Achieve Unit Laws (ISE)

## The Global Pact for the Environment

The Global Pact for the Environment<sup>41</sup> is an international commitment dedicated to the principles that guide environmental action. The Global Pact applies to environmental politics as a whole. The Global Pact results from an initiative from 100 experts from over 40 countries, coordinated by the *Club des juristes* (a legal think tank<sup>42</sup>). Although the Global Pact did not receive the full support of the international community, the idea lives on among the many who supported the initiative, and is likely to be brought up for consideration at a later date

## The Earth Charter

The Earth Charter<sup>43</sup> states in its Preamble that we must join forces to generate a sustainable global society based on respect for Nature, universal human rights, economic justice and a culture of peace. To achieve this, it is imperative that all humanity unite to declare our responsibility to one another, to the great community of life, to the planet and to future generations (Universal Responsibility), to form a global alliance to care for the Earth and for one another. Anything less runs the risk of us decimating Earth's biodiversity.

Our unity in this task comes from the inescapable realization that the global environment with its finite resources is a common concern of all people. The protection of the vitality, diversity and beauty of the Earth is a sacred duty of all of us who must pay attention to the global crisis situation in various sectors because of the dominant patterns of production and consumption that are causing environmental devastation, reduction of resources and a massive extinction of species. The Earth Charter was also an important influence on the Plan of Implementation for the UNESCO Decade for Education on Sustainable Development.<sup>44</sup> The Earth Charter can be considered as the ethical foundation for the implementation of Agenda 2030, of which all 17 SDG's are an integral part.

41 <https://globalpactenvironment.org/en/>

42 <http://www.leclubdesjuristes.com/pacte-mondial-pour-lenvironnement/>

43 The Earth Charter was brought up at the 1992 Earth Summit by the Baha'is. When UN Member States did not act upon the proposal, civil society took over and with input from around the world, this powerful document was born. The Earth Charter is increasingly recognized as a global consensus statement on the meaning of sustainability, the challenge and vision of sustainable development, and the principles by which sustainable development is to be achieved.

44 <https://earthcharter.org>



## Ecocide the Fifth Crime Against Peace

The Ecocide discussion dates back to a talk by Olof Palme, former Prime Minister of Sweden, at the 1972 Environment Conference. It remained on the agenda until the mid-1990s.



<https://pollyhiggins.com/>

Polly Higgins, an international environmental lawyer and advocate, proposed the term “ecocide” to the United Nations, arguing that it should become the fifth UN sanctioned crime against peace.<sup>46</sup> She defined ecocide as “the destruction, damage, or extensive loss of ecosystems in a given territory, whether by human agency or other causes”.

As discussed at the United Nations Conference on Climate Change 2015, COP 21 and the resulting Paris Agreement, legislating Ecocide as a crime against peace will prove to be the most effective deterrent. Ecocide is enforced as the Fifth Crime Against Peace and can be considered as fundamental for the protection of the planet at present and in the long term.

By saving the natural environment, the fulfillment of all SDG's becomes possible, benefiting SDG's 13, 16, 17 in particular. Legal ramifications will spur the creation of several constructive resources and tools. Many of these will help further the completion of the SDG's, making it possible to achieve the 2030 goals. Moreover, the constructive changes will have benefits that continue long after all the SDG's and targets have been achieved.

## Universal Jurisdiction Code

Baltasar Garzón of Spain is a judge, leading a movement of legal warriors globally to guarantee the international punishment of major economic, financial and environmental crimes. The movement composed of judges, prosecutors and lawyers, attempts to promote the international denouncement of actions such as food speculation, issuing junk bonds, squandering public funds and large-scale contamination. The aim of the group is to foster a new Universal Jurisdiction code of principles. Five working groups spread across the world and more than 100 prestigious legal experts of all nationalities, are working together to draft a new Universal Jurisdiction code of principles to fight the “dark side of globalisation”. They are overcoming everything that separates them: language, culture, background, justice, and law.

The movement started in Madrid, Spain after the first Universal Jurisdiction Congress in May 2013. An initial draft emerged from the meeting and was then approved during a second Congress in Buenos Aires in September 2015, leading to the Madrid-Buenos Aires Principles for Universal

<sup>45</sup> Ecocide is criminalized human activity that violates the principles of environmental justice, such as causing extensive damage or destroying ecosystems or harming the health and well-being of a species (including humans). It has not yet been accepted as an international crime by the United Nations

<sup>46</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u9ErjSd8xu0>

Jurisdiction.<sup>47</sup> From there, the Principles started spreading around universities and institutions with the hope that, someday, they would be included in national jurisdiction. Fighting together for the common good and a fairer future, where legislation and politics take humanity into account and stop letting crimes go unpunished anymore.

### **The Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador**

The Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador is an example of the constitutional protection of Nature. Since 2008, Ecuador has expressly protected the Rights of Nature in its Constitution. Article 71 of the Constitution states that Nature (or *Pacha Mama*) has the right to its existence and the maintenance and regeneration of its life cycles, structure, functions and evolutionary processes fully respected and that any person, community, people or nationality can demand from the public authority the fulfilment of the rights of nature.

Moreover, in the application and interpretation of such rights, all other principles present in Ecuador's Constitution shall be observed. In addition, the State of Ecuador, constitutionally, encourages legal persons and groups to protect Nature.<sup>48</sup> In this way, anyone can defend Nature when they see it being violated, as a sort of citizen's arrest.<sup>49</sup>

In addition, Article 72 of the Constitution of Ecuador still guarantees that Nature has the right to restoration. This restoration is independent of the obligation of the State and of legal persons to compensate individuals and groups that depend on the natural systems affected. In cases of serious or permanent environmental impact, including those caused by the exploitation of non-renewable natural resources, the State shall establish the most effective mechanisms for achieving restoration and shall take appropriate measures to eliminate or mitigate harmful environmental consequences. In the same sense, Article 73 of the Constitution of Ecuador reinforces that the State shall apply precautionary and restrictive measures to activities that may lead to the extinction of species, the destruction of ecosystems or the permanent alteration of natural cycles.

### **The Constitution of the Plurinational State of Bolivia**

Despite not having the Right to Nature in its Constitution, Bolivia has expressed strong concern and commitment to environmental protection with The Law of the Rights of Mother Earth<sup>50</sup> in 2010, and The Framework Law of Mother Earth and Integral Development for Living Well<sup>51</sup> in

<sup>47</sup> <https://thecodedoc.com/en/the-film/>

<sup>48</sup> ECUADOR, 2008. CONSTITUCIÓN DE LA REPÚBLICA DEL ECUADOR. <[http://bivicce.corteconstitucional.gob.ec/local/File/Constitucion\\_Enmiendas\\_Interpretaciones/Constitucion\\_2008.pdf](http://bivicce.corteconstitucional.gob.ec/local/File/Constitucion_Enmiendas_Interpretaciones/Constitucion_2008.pdf)>

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>50</sup> BOLÍVIA, 2010. The Law of the Rights of Mother Earth (Ley de Derechos de la Madre Tierra). Available at: <<http://www.worldfuturefund.org/Projects/Indicators/motherearthbolivia.html>>.

<sup>51</sup> BOLÍVIA, 2012. the Framework Law of Mother Earth and Integral Development for Living Well (La Ley Marco de la Madre Tierra y Desarrollo Integral para Vivir Bien. LEY N° 300. LEY DE 15 DE OCTUBRE DE 2012). Available at: <[http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user\\_upload/FAO-countries/Bolivia/docs/Ley\\_300.pdf](http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/FAO-countries/Bolivia/docs/Ley_300.pdf)>.



2012. Expressing a strong sense of unity, The Law of the Rights of Mother Earth<sup>52</sup> recognizes the obligations and duties of the Multinational State and society to ensure respect for these rights.

The rights of Mother Earth, as recognized in the Bolivian Law of the Rights of Mother Earth (Article 7), are the following: 1) to life; 2) to the diversity of life; 3) to water; 4) to clean air; 5) to equilibrium; 6) to restoration: the right to timely and effective restoration of living systems affected by human activities directly or indirectly; and 7) to pollution-free living.

## **Unity as it relates to Nature and the achievement of the SDG's**

### **OBSERVATIONS**

Lack of unity with Nature takes two forms. The chaos accompanying globalization is a natural phenomenon found in the caterpillar-to-butterfly phenomenon. It is found when one structural form (here the nations state) makes way for another (the emerging global community.)

The depletion of natural resources and pollution of the environment have occurred because we are in disharmony with Nature. This makes it impossible to achieve the SDG's.

Is it possible to use the evolutionary forces of unity to meet both the natural challenges and those we ourselves have created and by implementing the SDG's build a sustainable global community? We know reconnecting with Nature is paramount. We have the educational know-how, and evidence that many people have developed into socially- and globally-minded world citizens when we see the international laws and the civil society initiatives that have been developed.

We also know that, throughout human development, there has been a steady progression to form ever-larger communities beginning with tribes, progressing to nation states to a global community. The aforementioned shows we know how to restore our connection with Nature and it is already being done. We have an impressive body of law that shows that we know how important it is. It is a matter of enforcing it.

A great deal remains to be done. Overwhelming physical and psychological suffering in both the materially and spiritually impoverished forms an inner numbness that makes it hard to reestablish our inner connection with Nature. It leads to a scrambling for resources that depletes Nature, and an unwillingness both to abide by international laws and to take the steps necessary to make them globally enforceable. It is a sad fact that, although people from every culture and economic background connect with Nature, schools that foster this sort of creativity exist mainly in rich countries and are accessible only to those with means.

Before we can truly capitalize on this knowledge and can apply it fully to achieve the SDG's, there will have to be greater both social and economic unity and solidarity.

<sup>52</sup>The law provides the following definition of "MOTHER EARTH": Article 3. (Mother Earth). Mother Earth is considered sacred, from the worldviews of nations and peasant indigenous peoples.



# **SOCIETY**

## **Unity as a Transformative Pathway in the Context of Society**

### **Introduction**

Society, or the building of social unity, has been a driving evolutionary force throughout human history.<sup>53</sup> Society, as within the rest of Nature, is prompted by the perception of a communal interest, be it as a way of developing agriculture, the fostering of trade, or the search for common security. Society, therefore, is embedded in the human psyche, and spans time and place. The dimension of unity throughout history and across cultures creates ties of identity in diverse ways. This idea coincides with the concept of unity in diversity that is used worldwide.

The Indigenous peoples of North America lived in harmony with the land and used governance structures. Taoist societies in China (circa 500–400 B.C.) had a profound focus on unity as a spiritual principle.

<sup>53</sup> Photo provided by Photograph by @chuttersnap - unsplash.com

Evidence of the first occupants throughout Latin America are seen in the ruins of pre-Columbian civilizations, such as the Aztec in Mexico, the Mayans across Central America, the Inca in Peru and Bolivia and southward throughout South America, and the old Indigenous civilizations of the Amazon in Brazil, Ecuador, Venezuela, Guyana, and French Guiana. They cultivated plant species and built architectural structures with stone, earth and clay, with a community work that remains an historical example of structured societies with a complex social cooperation system.

### **Society, Unity and Human Rights**

Unity within nations has always played an important role in the existence and enforcement of human rights. When we look at the original processes that formed civilizations, we see that the relationship between humans and Nature was reciprocal. This resulted in an integrative conception with society<sup>54</sup> as a unifying force, establishing bonds of continuity and reciprocity, and formative elements of a culture, where everything is recreated and renewed. From this point of view, no one is self-sufficient. The integrity of all means standing up for the rights of a group, who are all representatives of human rights<sup>55</sup>.

The American philosopher Alan Gewirth<sup>56</sup> argues that the existence of human rights consists in social recognition and the legal obligation to fulfill them. This view postulates that human rights are morally justified by their own existence.<sup>57</sup> So, the unifying principle inherent in human rights has existed since early in human existence and remains important to this day.

This is inherent to the UN Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Declaration on the Right to Development and the SDG's. The 2030 Agenda reaffirms the responsibility of all States to respect, protect and promote Human Rights without distinction. This implies collective action that can only be achieved in a spirit of solidarity, accounting for the universality and indivisibility of the human rights of all.

### **Unity and working for the common good**

Unity is a powerful dynamic that amplifies when people feel supported. Its path is not always smooth, as seen in the backlash towards migrant workers and refugees, as fearful host countries

<sup>54</sup> Rengifo, G. (1993). Education in the modern West and in the Andean culture. In *Development or decolonization in the Andes*; (pp. 165-187). Lima: PRATEC.

<sup>55</sup> Flórez, C. G., & Mosquera, J. (2013). The human-nature relationship in relation to fundamental rights in the territory. *Food Today*, 21 (28), 79-96. ISSN 2027-291X.

<sup>56</sup> Alan Gewirth (November 28, 1912 – May 9, 2004) was an American philosopher, a professor of philosophy at the University of Chicago, and author of *Reason and Morality* (1978), *Human Rights: Essays on Justification and Applications* (1982), *The Community of Rights* (1996), *Self-Fulfillment* (1998), and numerous other writings in moral philosophy and political philosophy <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/rights-human/>

<sup>57</sup> These are fundamental human rights as Right to life: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)-- art. 3; <https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/> ICCPR art. 6); <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/ccpr.aspx> particularly of women (CEDAW art. 12; <https://www.ohchr.org/SP/HRBodies/CEDAW/pages/cedawindex.aspx> and children (CRC art. 6); <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>, (ICESCR art. 12); <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cescr.aspx> particularly of women (CEDAW art. 12); and children (CRC art.24), Right to enjoy the benefits of scientific progress and its application (UDHR art. 27); ICESCR (art. 15(1)(b)), International cooperation (UDHR art. 28, DRtD arts. 3-4), then related with the SDG 17, particularly in relation to the right to health and children's rights (ICESCR art. 2(1); CRC art. 4) all at all ages.

create barriers. The lockdown caused by the COVID-19 pandemic could ease the next step of globalization.

Societies empower people to work closely together on the SDG's. This fosters a greater understanding of the interconnectivity and interdependence between all humans. Society adopts many aspects found in Nature and therefore are sustainable: solidarity, cooperation, strong communities, and peaceful and friendly social relations; incorporating marginalized communities and allowing them the opportunity to take advantage of their ancestral knowledge in society. This social cohesion can reduce poverty.

The creation of the United Nations, its Charter, and the Declaration of Human Rights in 1949 created a framework for unity between and within nations. International unity is the cornerstone of the United Nations and inherent in SDG 10. No SDG can truly be achieved without such unity.

The more societies collaborate<sup>58</sup>, the faster the 2030 Agenda can be implemented. This will occur on the foundation laid by the increasing ratification of the Covenants, and the subsequent adoption of the legal instruments. The principals involved here have a powerful track record. They coincide with those that have existed since life first appeared on Earth in myriad combinations of cooperation and solidarity found back in ecosystems and Nature's Ethic: "All for one and one for all".

## **The Warning of Living in Disunity and Fragmentation**

Presently, there are nations at war, and abuses of human rights by governments and peoples in all countries. This will continue until effective global enforcement mechanisms are agreed upon and put into place.

Wherever human rights are not universally implemented, people are left behind. This prevents the full implementation of the SDG's. They constitute a pocket of poverty where food insecurity and poor healthcare persist (SDG's 1, 2, 3). Lack of education leads to gender inequality and weak legal institutions (SDG's 4, 5, 16). It is likely that human conflict will arise, leading the poor to resort to plundering terrestrial and maritime ecosystems (SDG's 11, 14, and 15.) Equity and inclusion require the full implementation of human rights.

In this section, we shall look at three: the right to inclusive and equitable social education of all the children, youngs and adults, the right to health, the right to good governance

<sup>58</sup> <https://concordeurope.org/blog/2018/09/25/sdg-good-practices-from-across-europe/>



# **Means of Implementation about Inclusive and Equitable Social Education as a fundamental human right Universal Declaration of Human Rights article 26 and SDG 4 (MOI)**

## **Equitable Social Education as a fundamental human right**



Equitable education can help local populations develop innovative solutions to the world's greatest problems (SDG 4). “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” can come about if Society and the Economy unite to increase access to education. The more secure people are about natural resources, the more effective education is.

The UN specialized agencies provide education in their various fields. Recently, education has begun to radically change. Education is freely available on the Internet. Some of the world’s most prestigious universities offer free courses. As people around the world unite in shared interests, they become teachers and students. This empowers people through their dynamic relationship with others by allowing them access to more information and skills.

This wealth of learning opportunities allows people to explore what interests them most. It enables them to develop their potential. We do this by following the spark of our interest, indicating the degree to which Nature “outside us” is in harmony with Nature “within”. Therefore, the multiplicity of learning opportunities provides a way for each of us to live in greater harmony with Nature. This freedom in learning affects our ability to implement human rights.<sup>59</sup>

The rights to education and health are also integrated into many international agreements, including the Action Program of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Once Nature, Society and Economy all are in place, SDG 4 becomes a powerful tool to accelerate the implementation of virtually all other SDG's.

<sup>59</sup> In the USA alone free courses are offered by: Carnegie Mellon University, Duke University, Harvard University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Stanford University, University of California, Berkeley, Yale University.

Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia is placing a vast amount of knowledge at people's fingertips and the partnership sharing economy is allowing people from diverse national, cultural and professional backgrounds to, sometimes without realizing it, become one another's teachers and students. This is complemented by greater mobility through tourism, migrant workers, etc that bring people together who otherwise might not have met and who then learn from and about one another and broaden one another's horizons.

***Effect on the Achievement of the SDG's:*** Education is a human right and a powerful driver of sustainable development. It is also the great, 'equalizer' in which we can mobilize humanity everywhere and at all levels of the population for its implementation. SDG 4 is a fundamental human right covered in Article 2 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as well as the Covenants. It is a powerful catalyst to achieve sustainable development.

## **Inspiring Stories and Examples about Inclusive and Equitable Education as a fundamental human right Universal Declaration of Human Rights article 26 and SDG 4 (ISE)**

***Inclusive and high quality education that integrates the sense of unity of States:***

- ***Republic of Peru:*** Education is inclusive in all its stages, levels and cycles. Educational institutions adopt measures to ensure conditions of accessibility, availability, acceptability and adaptability in the provision of educational services; and develop personalized educational plans for students with special educational needs.<sup>60</sup> In 2018, the "Visual Dictionary" or "Diccionario visual en la lengua originaria shiwilu" was published in the original Shiwilu language". This dictionary contains words or terms in both Spanish and Shiwilu, arranged alphabetically according to the spelling in the Shiwilu language<sup>61</sup>.
- ***The Plurinational State of Bolivia:*** The Foundation for Sustainable Development provides training, tutoring, child care and workshops to assist Bolivians with their educational needs. When given support and better learning conditions, children typically stay in school and will learn at higher levels than their peers who are not given that support.<sup>62</sup>
- ***The Republic of Ireland:*** the Inclusive Education Law effectively guarantees the education of persons with disabilities, to provide the same right to use and benefit from an adequate education, to participate at the level of their capacity. The National Board of Special Education or, on Chomhairle Náisiúnta um Oideachas Speisialta<sup>63</sup>, has the function of addressing issues related to the education of persons with disabilities.

**Teach for All** - Teach For All<sup>64</sup> is a network of 53 independent, locally-led and governed partner organizations and a global organization that works to accelerate the network's progress. It aims to improve education in countries that have a clear deficiency in this sector.

The Teach For All network develops collective leadership in classrooms and communities around the world. The network captures the best students of the universities by paying them a monthly stipend to teach in the neediest areas. The result is that many of these teachers are so committed to their work that, in countries like Chile, 80% of teachers continue to work full-time in education.

<sup>60</sup><https://busquedas.elperuano.pe/download/url/ley-que-promueve-la-educacion-inclusiva-modifica-el-articulo-ley-n-30797-1662055-2promotes>

<sup>61</sup> <http://repositorio.minedu.gob.pe/handle/MINEDU/6744>

<sup>62</sup> <https://www.fsdbolivia.org>

<sup>63</sup> <https://ncse.ie>

<sup>64</sup> <https://teachforall.org>

Meaningful, sustainable change requires leaders who are rooted in their local culture, challenges, and opportunities, and who believe in the potential of children and their communities. Teach For All is developing collective leadership to improve education and expand opportunity for all children, so they can shape a better future for themselves and the world around them.

**The Federative Republic of Brazil: Traditional community heritage living in peace with Nature / Marabaixo Cycle** - The “Marabaixo”<sup>65</sup> is a cultural ritual developed by the Black communities of Amapá, a state in the extreme north of the Brazilian Amazon. This ritual expresses itself through “ladrão”, a kind of oral heritage education, comprising dance and songs using percussion instruments. On the day of this ritual of the “cutting of the mast”, or “o corte do mastro”, owners of each Marabaixo association go to the Amazon forest to cut down a tree with a thin and long trunk. This trunk, or “mast”, is then paraded through the neighborhoods where the parties take place. Currently, there are dialogues between environmental authorities and defenders of the Marabaixo heritage to create a Regulatory Framework to the “Marabaixo Cycle”, in order to guarantee the perpetuation of the traditional cultural heritage while obeying Brazilian environmental laws related to deforestation. This is an inspiring example of building cohesive societies in harmony with Nature.

<sup>65</sup> IPHAN, 2018. Instituto do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional. Dossiê de Registro Marabaixo. Available at: [http://portal.iphan.gov.br/uploads/ckfinder/arquivos/DOSSIE\\_MARABAIXO.pdf](http://portal.iphan.gov.br/uploads/ckfinder/arquivos/DOSSIE_MARABAIXO.pdf). and see also: MP-AP, 2019. Ministério Público do Amapá. Available at: <https://www.mpap.mp.br/noticias/gerais/meio-ambiente-e-cultura-em-audiencia-publica-promovida-pelo-mp-ap-gt-e-formado-para-criacao-do-marco-regulatorio-do-ciclo-do-marabaixo>.



## Means of Implementation about Unity as a tool to guarantee healthy lives and promote well-being Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and SDG 3 (MOI)

Unity with Nature has played an important role in health and healing. Acupuncture, Shiatsu, and Do-In are just a few of the approaches to health whereby the energy systems in the body, referred



Integrative Medicine and Complementary Therapies; Magazine "Vivo Sano Foundation".  
Traditional Indigenous Medicine

to as *meridians*, are revived<sup>66</sup>. Thus, the life-force is increased and blocks that cause disease are dissolved. Since the 1960s, people worldwide have engaged in many approaches imported from ancient cultures to build a wide range of approaches to holistic health. In many sacred traditions, healers pass on secret knowledge of holistic healing considered too advanced to be used by those without the necessary preparation. Such approaches are practiced by shamans in South America and the Kahunas in Hawaii. The unity between doctor and patient is referred to as the "therapeutic

relationship". Some contend that the quality of this relationship determines the quality of subsequent healing. Similarly, unity found in collaborative and inclusive societies tends to generate significant changes in our quality of life and health.

Today, global pandemics highlight the imperative role for international implementation of safeguards to protect life. Unified action through global strategic alliances are fundamental. The World Health Organization (WHO) states that health is a pillar of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Promoting health empowers people to take care of their health and quality of life. This is fundamental to the achievement of many of the SDG's.

***Effect on the Achievement of the SDG's:*** Guarantee healthy lives and promote well-being is critical to achieving progress on the whole 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, because health is an integral part of human capital and a precondition, driver and outcome of sustainable development, SDG 3 is linked to around 50 health-related targets across the SDG's and the pledge to leave no one behind.

<sup>66</sup>Another example is Yoga originated in the Indian subcontinent consists of physical and mental exercises to increase health. Tai Chi, Judo, Jiu-jitsu, and other forms of martial arts use the forces of physical and mental unity to promote spiritual, mental and physical health.

## **Inspiring Stories and Examples about Unity as a tool to guarantee healthy lives and promote well-being Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and SDG 3 (ISE)**

### **A Civil Society's contribution to the implementation of the SDG's related to water<sup>67</sup>**

Developed to unite a number of initiatives by civil society in water-related areas<sup>68</sup>. There are examples of a number of challenges, with some related initiatives and links, to further information both by intergovernmental agencies and civil society organizations.<sup>69</sup> Our current water management regime, which minimizes further expansion of surface water reservoirs, reduces our damping to climate variability and makes us more dependent on accurate forecasting with a long wait time. In addition, efforts to balance the competitive uses of water and provide effective ecosystem conservation and restoration are hampered by a limited ability to predict responses of hydrological systems to management actions and climate fluctuations.

Meanwhile, water resource management decisions have the potential to alter the climate system so that it can affect the predictability of the components of the water cycle. The USGCRP water cycle research, therefore, intersects directly with all focused research required by the CCSP, especially in the context of delivering scientific results, observing and attributing trends and variability, gathering integrated data and information sets and improve forecasting products as necessary for the development of decision support tools for water management.

Ultimately, the challenge of water security is about fundamentally redefining and reshaping humanity's relationship with water as it flows through communities, economies and the ecosystems that support them. Facing this challenge requires that human society visualize and allow new ways of living in harmony with the natural water cycle.

### **One Health Initiative**

One Health Initiative,<sup>70</sup> is dedicated to improving the lives of all species—human and animal—through the integration of human medicine, veterinary medicine and environmental science, and thus stimulate the idea of interconnectedness between SDG's and the impact imbalance with regard to one may have on other goals. One Health seeks to promote, improve, and defend the health and well-being of all species by enhancing cooperation and collaboration between physicians, veterinarians, other scientific health and environmental professionals and by promoting strengths in leadership and management to achieve these goals. One Health (formerly called One Medicine) is dedicated to improving the lives of all species—human and animal—through the integration of human medicine, veterinary medicine and environmental science.

<sup>67</sup> [https://www.un.org/waterforlifedecade/waterandsustainabledevelopment2015/stakeholders\\_civil\\_society.shtml](https://www.un.org/waterforlifedecade/waterandsustainabledevelopment2015/stakeholders_civil_society.shtml)

<sup>68</sup> <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/20304/06.2003.pdf>

<sup>69</sup>

[https://www.un.org/waterforlifedecade/waterandsustainabledevelopment2015/pdf/OP\\_CivilSociety\\_4themes\\_FOR\\_MAT.pdf](https://www.un.org/waterforlifedecade/waterandsustainabledevelopment2015/pdf/OP_CivilSociety_4themes_FOR_MAT.pdf)

<sup>70</sup> <http://www.onehealthinitiative.com>

## Means of Implementation about Governance and Society as a Whole Unit (MOI)



Good Governance combines policies that promote peaceful and inclusive societies, rooted in transformative relationships which sustain genuine unity, solidarity and cooperation between people, groups, places and States. This provides access to justice for all and builds effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels, accelerating the accomplishment of all the SDG's.

In fact, members of society, groups and States are empowered to contribute in their own ways to good governance, since all are needed for the survival and well-being of all, even though at every level, relations are becoming ever more complex between people and between peoples and their governments<sup>71</sup>. For example, Switzerland, even though it is divided into different language units, is a nation that has found a way for governments and people to

work together in unison by allowing people to hold referendums about topics they wish their government to deal with.

Although unity at the international and global level seems to be lacking, countries like Germany and Japan have clauses in their constitutions that prepare them to become parts of structures with supranational governance.

Strides have been taken at the international level toward good governance, particularly in the areas covered by the UN Specialized Agencies. As example, no one considers questioning the laws followed by the Universal Postal Union when it comes to the sending and transportation of mail; or the regulations in the air or on the sea that have been laid down by the International Civil Aviation Organization and the International Maritime Organization.

However, Nations States still shrink from full transference of power to the international level when it comes to the implementation of peace and security. At the same time, Chapter VII of the UN Charter, which provides the framework within which the Security Council may take enforcement action, has been invoked, be it seldom. Global governance has moreover been steadily increasing when it comes to the use of Ad Hoc Tribunals with regard to genocide and the creation and use of the International Criminal Court.

The proposal of an enforceable Global Compact for the Environment, as mentioned above, would be a direct step in the direction of good global governance by expanding the sense further that we are all one and must work together to combat a threat to the well-being and even the survival of all. Each step in good global governance increases the understanding of the advantages of unity creating vibrant solidarities.

<sup>71</sup> As example: Switzerland, even though it is divided into different language units, is a nation which has found a way for governments and people to work together in unison by allowing people to hold referendums about topics they wish their government to deal with. Although unity at the international and global level seems to be lacking, countries like Germany and Japan have clauses in their constitutions that prepare them to become parts of structures with supranational governance.

With these solidarities, it is possible to reach a tipping point where effective systems of good governance can be implemented. This will allow for an increasing focus on the transformative character of good governance politics and practices to shape the SDG's with firm foundations, based on new social relations, connections, and economic linkages.

***Effect on the Achievement of the SDG's:*** Without the implementation of SDG 16 at the global level, the gap between the “haves” and “have-nots” is unlikely to be lessened and conflict is likely to persist. This undermines the necessary foundation for the achievement of all of the SDG's without leaving anyone behind. Governance and leadership at the international level, however, increases in importance as human beings create ever larger units. In fact, the concept of unity that lies at its heart is expressed in the processes of collaboration and unity that have underpinned the negotiations. The concept and practice of unity led to the creation of the SDG's.

## **Inspiring Stories and Examples about Governance and Society as a whole Unity (ISE)**

### **Truth and Reconciliation Commissions around the world (TRC)**

The TRC conducts restoration of peace and reconciliation in special hard cases and periods of internal unrest, civil war, or dictatorship around the world. It has been found throughout Africa, in nations such as post-apartheid South Africa, Ghana, Morocco, Rwanda and Mauritius; and in Latin American nations such as Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, El Salvador, Honduras and Peru. It is seen in the USA and Canada, and throughout Europe in the Czech Republic, Germany, Poland, Ukraine, and the former Yugoslavia. It is in Asia, from Bangladesh, to South Korea, and in Oceania, in New Zealand and Solomon Islands.



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It is no secret that all the above are examples of learning processes that are far from being perfected. All of these examples shows that the management of social conflicts requires more comprehensive resolution policies to shape new solutions and opportunities, through positive solidarity mechanisms, to change the bad aspect of the past and to find a harmonious pathway to our social behavior over society, but also over Nature and economy, by a good will for adjustment, mutual respect and solidarity. This sense of positive unity, with the hope of resolving conflict left over from the pain and sorrows of the past, is found in

The Truth and Reconciliation Commissions (TRC) from around the world, also contributed to the exchange of experience through coordinated work between countries, taking into account the primary defense of human rights and the restoration of peace and the unity of society. The success of these Commissions in other countries served as a model that could be replicated in other societies and adapted to the reality of each country. Primarily, it also promoted the creation of a democratic and more inclusive state.

## Progress towards the SDG's: Society, Unity, and the Implementation of the SDG's

The report by the Secretary General (Document E/2019/68<sup>72</sup>) details a number of ways in which society, as a whole, can be mobilized to work together on the SDG's to help mobilize a truly global response.

### At top national levels:

- Interministerial commissions or similar bodies which have sufficient authority and powers to mobilize the entire government, including regional and local levels, and the entire society around the SDG's and focus on developing and overseeing the implementation of comprehensive integrated and coherent policies and the required results-based budgets.
- Placing a high-level entity, such as a department, in the office of a President or Prime Minister, to promote, oversee, coordinate and in some cases review the implementation of the SDG's. Countries that have taken this initiative include: Bangladesh, Belarus, Costa Rica and Nigeria, among others.
- Involving Parliaments in the implementation, monitoring and review of the SDG's. In a few countries, such as Finland and the Netherlands, the Government reports annually to the Parliament on the SDG's. Some Parliaments have also taken the initiative to engage in the implementation of the SDG's, for example, through the creation of dedicated parliamentary committees or the convening of hearings.

## Global consultations organized by the United Nations

Consultations with different groups can provide insights to address some of the most pressing problems. Global consultations under auspices of the UN have contributed to a globally unifying field that capitalizes on diversity. Throughout the Final Agreement of the June 2012 Rio Summit, *The Future We Want*, UN Member States agreed that the full participation of all stakeholders was vital to a sustainable future. Within six months, the UN Secretariat had involved one billion people, via 11 global consultations in providing a strong basis from which to develop the SDG's over a period of two years. (See the Report of the UN Secretary General QA/68/202.) The fact that people who were most marginalized were connected was important, as these can provide important perspectives on problems and effective solutions at all levels. **Global Landscape Forum**

The Global Landscapes Forum (GLF)<sup>73</sup> is a movement that puts communities first in addressing landscape-level issues. With science and traditional knowledge at its core, GLF outreach, events and projects are designed to spark dialogue and follow through on its impact in addressing some of the most complex and multi-stakeholder problems facing our earth and our communities.

GLF takes a holistic approach to create sustainable landscapes that are productive, prosperous, equitable and resilient and considers five cohesive themes of food and livelihood initiatives, landscape restoration, rights, finance and measuring progress. It is led by the Center for

<sup>72</sup> <https://undocs.org/E/2019/68>

<sup>73</sup> <https://www.globallandscapesforum.org>



International Forestry Research (CIFOR), in collaboration with its co-founders UN Environment and the World Bank and its Charter Members.

### **The Clean Seas Campaign**

Water is necessary to sustain life on Earth and unites land, oceans and atmosphere in an integrated system.<sup>74</sup> Recognizing that water is the core of sustainable development, as it is closely linked to a series of key global challenges.



Clean Seas Campaign, Peru, Plastic Free Peru  
©Leidy Depaz

The Clean Seas Campaign<sup>75</sup> is a great example that demonstrates the joint efforts of countries that use unity as a mechanism to achieve the protection of this natural resource, which promises to eliminate all single-use plastics by 2022, a potentially revolutionary movement to reduce its plastic footprint. The governments are regulating single-use plastics when approving several prohibitions. Citizens are taking measures through cleanings and massive campaigns of education.

Throughout Latin America and the Caribbean, governments are taking bold and exemplary measures to combat plastic pollution and protect their valuable marine resources, to promote actions for the health of Nature. Citizens are rethinking single-use plastics, and individual measures will generate collective changes.

Reducing the use of single-use plastic makes us individuals committed to our daily actions to generate positive impacts on our environment, oceans, soil, air and human health (SDG's 1, 2, 6, 7, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17). Promoting an individual sustainable environmental culture, we generate changes that impact the entire society. Protecting this important natural resource, ensuring the existence of all life on the planet, and the fulfillment of all SDG's.

## **Means of Implementation about Unity and the Right to Food (MOI) Preventing hunger and malnutrition**

<sup>74</sup> “This water cycle is closely related to the exchanges of energy between the atmosphere, the ocean and the Earth that determine the Earth's climate and cause much of the natural climatic variability. The impacts of climate change and the variability in the quality of human life occur mainly through changes in the water cycle,” states the report of the National Research Council on the research pathways for the next decade.

<sup>75</sup><https://www.unenvironment.org/news-and-stories/story/surfing-wave-change-clean-seas-campaign-celebrates-two-years-action>



The right to food is a human right,<sup>76</sup> and international solidarity is imperative in the realization of this right. It addresses today's key nutritional challenges and identifies the need to improve international cooperation and solidarity on the right to food.

In addition, the promotion of international cooperation, symbolizing unity, is required to guarantee investment in the infrastructure and technology necessary to improve agricultural productivity. Realizing the right to adequate food is not simply a promise that must be kept through charity. It



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is a human right of every woman, man and child that must be fulfilled through appropriate actions by governments and non-state actors to enable people to survive and thrive, and thus be able to implement all other SDG's.

The Millennium Development Goals aimed to halve poverty worldwide, which was achieved. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development prioritizes transformed and expanded action to eradicate poverty and end hunger and all forms of malnutrition, recognizing that the permanent eradication of hunger and the realization of the right to adequate food for all are achievable goals, when they are developed through patterns of unity, and integrated work. It states such action “approaches and addresses today's key

nutritional challenges and identifies the need to enhance international cooperation and solidarity on right to food.”<sup>77</sup> SDG 2 seeks to end all forms of hunger and malnutrition by 2030 and ensure the access of all people, especially children, to sufficient and nutritious food throughout the year (SDG's 1 and 2). This task involves promoting sustainable agricultural practices through support to small farmers and equal access to land, technology and markets (SDG's 9 and 10).

***Effect on the Achievement of the SDG's:*** In this regard, SDG 2 cuts across SDG's 1 and 10 (ending poverty and reducing inequalities, respectively) and 3 (ensuring healthy lives). It also speaks to SDG's 6 (water-related), 7 (energy-related), 13, 14 and 15 (on climate change, marine issues and biodiversity, respectively), as well as 8 (employment-related) and 16 (on peaceful societies), as peace and stability comes about with food security, preventing hunger and malnutrition.

### **Inspiring Stories and Examples about the Right to Food (ISE)**

The UN SDG Goal 2 is to end hunger, achieve food security, improve nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture. The goal seeks sustainable solutions in all its forms by 2030. The aim is to

<sup>76</sup> Rome Declaration on World Food Security and Plan of Action of the World Food; <http://www.fao.org/3/w3613e/w3613e00.htm>

<sup>77</sup> See the article from Phd. Sailesh Rao, “

ensure that every individual has enough good-quality food to lead a healthy life. By incorporating biodiverse and edible planting initiatives into our rural, suburban, and urban communities, we can consciously make strides to meet those goals.

Due to the natural ecosystem design of food forests and edible landscapes, society can reap the benefits of abundant food, leading to a path ending hunger, improve nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.

We can also look to Geoff Lawton, and his reference to a 2000 year-old Moroccan food forest that is still in use today, known as the Inraren's food forest. Or perhaps consider the work of Robert Hart, who first popularized the concept among European and North American gardeners with the publication of his book *Forest Gardening: Cultivating an Edible Landscape* in 1980. More recently in the United States, Seattle (Washington) and Austin (Texas) became the first U.S. cities to plant a public food forest, Atlanta (Georgia) will soon follow suit. These are small 1.7 to 10 acre food forests providing the opportunity for those living in the community to pick fruit and berries and forage for mushrooms and roots in open common land.

### **The Republic of India: The Right to Food Campaign and People's Union for Civil Liberties**



When many people in India's drought-affected state of Rajasthan were starving while food stocks from the Food Corporation of India reached unprecedented levels of availability, the human rights NGO People's Union for Civil Liberties appealed to the Supreme Court<sup>78</sup> with regard to this critical situation arguing that the Indian Constitutional right to life (Article 21), and thus to food, was being denied to the citizens.

In response to this, the Indian Supreme Court ruled that all individuals in India have the right to food, which should be fulfilled by the state. The state would be responsible for implementing social assistance schemes to get food to citizens.

After this, the Indian Parliament adopted the National Food Security Act (also called the "Right to Food Act"). This Act converted food security programmes into legal entitlements for approximately 800 million people.<sup>79</sup> With the Covid 19 pandemic considerable additional challenges have arisen.

<sup>78</sup> Indian Supreme Court, People's Union for Civil Liberties v Union of India & Ors, Writ Petition (Civil) n<sup>o</sup> 196/2001.

<sup>79</sup> See the website of the Indian right to food campaign, [www.righttofoodcampaign.in](http://www.righttofoodcampaign.in) *Animal Agriculture is The Leading a Cause of Climate Change*" <https://www.climatehealers.org/animal-agriculture-white-paper>

# Unity as it relates to Society and the achievement of the SDG's

## OBSERVATIONS

This section observes how humans are drawn to one another as we form a global society. This is accompanied by upheaval as local and national units accommodate this greater context.

We can see how development into societies is a process that is deeply embedded in the human psyche. Every invention and technological advance, from simple tools to the Internet, began with a creative insight in the psyche of individuals and collaborative efforts of social groups, developing their unique potential to make these systems a reality. These creations then formed the structures along which global development has proceeded.

When we look at the ever-widening inequalities between rich and poor, unity can seem a far-off dream. Yet, if we look at the many varied forms of unity in a social context, we realize that these are affecting these challenges from multiple sides.

Unity has played an evolutionary role in the development of societies since humans first formed tribes. Global governance structures and regulations, such as those used in global postal and other telecommunications services, the Internet or travel by road, sea and air, are obeyed by the majority of people throughout the world. Chapter VII of the UN Charter shows us a way forward in the area of security. And these global governance structures have done much to build the foundation for the emerging global community.

In 2001, the Club of Madrid was founded by 35 former Heads of State and Government to *pro bono* place their experience at the disposal of present Heads of State and Government to collaboratively improve the rule of democracy worldwide. Yet people only voluntarily allow themselves to be bound by such governance structures because they realize that this is in their direct self-interest. Global governance and the worldwide implementation of human rights are now a part of the global conversation that is fast developing at the global level.

On the one hand, people are more assertive in regard to their governments. On the other hand, collaboration between governments and people worldwide is gaining momentum through the global consultations organized by the UN, and through the acknowledgement of civil society as indispensable if the SDG's are to be achieved.

Since the Earth Summit in 1992, the numbers of NGOs accredited to the UN's Economic and Social Council have increased from 350 to around 6000. These NGOs collaborate to ensure that all give input to the High Level Political Forum where progress on the SDG's is assessed. Throughout the year, members of civil society speak at governmental meetings at the UN and discuss their concerns with delegates from UN Member States. Over the past decade, the Commons Cluster has provided a constant flow on many different subjects between civil society and UN Member States. Government and grassroots initiatives complement one another.

At the same time, we realize that there are other forces, more powerful than humans, at work. The aforementioned evolutionary forces play a role in the increased unity between people. We see this emerging unity in numerous inspirational examples, large and small, of people working together to clean the seas of plastics, manage the water cycle, and rehabilitate landscapes.

When we look at the increase in interpersonal connections globally, we notice that as these escalate, so does human creativity and collaboration, particularly via the Internet. The awareness of the existence of human rights and Nature-based healing approaches are just two examples of knowhow that is shared by people worldwide.

At the same time, any step forward is accompanied by periods of adjustment, evaluation and, often, resistance before integration can take place. It helps to nurture the development of humanity with the forbearance and caring that we would bestow on any other living thing, while realizing that the time frame involved is considerably longer.



# ECONOMY

## Unity as a Transformative Pathway in the Context of Economy

### Introduction

Nature is the prototype for a healthy, all-encompassing economy. It is constantly recycling everything, ensuring that nothing goes to waste, while creating and recreating its inherent unity. Human economies are social constructs formed via interaction with other dynamics in culture, politics, history, technology and the ecosystem. Some types of economies stand out, such as one that is rooted in the needs of people, in which money is not treated as a commodity. Today, it is often found at local levels where money is in short supply. It also takes the form of the sharing/partnership economy where people make goods and services available, many for free. Here the Internet plays an important role and is helping this to expand globally. It is important that access to the Internet become universal so as to give everyone access to this economy.

This economy is based on people's needs and as such it is reminiscent of an ecosystem where the parts contribute to one another's needs, thereby strengthening one another while, together forming an increasingly strong unit. Free online meeting and conferencing services and the Internet itself are examples of products that are available through this people-centred economy.

At the other end of the spectrum is the present global economy, which is less focused around the needs of people. In part, it is debt-based and must rev up consumption and production in order to

endure. This divides humanity into the “haves” and the “have-nots” as it increases the chasm between rich and poor and destroys rather than mimicking Nature. This economy is a challenge, interwoven with the power struggles that accompany the competition for dwindling resources. It is marginalizing ever-larger numbers of people, who are critical to keeping the economy going. It is polluting and depleting the environment. And yet there is the sense that it is immutable and permanent. It is clear that such a world economy based on unlimited material growth is environmentally unsustainable. This growth is depleting the natural environment. It is imperative that we follow Nature’s example of promoting inclusive qualitative growth that allows humanity and the world economy to thrive in unison.

The SDG's are goals to restore the balance within the present global economy. They recognize that healthy economies depend on healthy societies. Societies determine the degree of collaboration and solidarity through which goods and services are produced, marketed and consumed. They can guarantee that humanity can maintain standards where prosperity and individual fulfillment are sustainable; and where economic, social, and technological progress are in harmony with the environment. Societies can ensure that individual interests are in harmony with the common good, so that both society and the economy can flourish together. To achieve the SDG's, economy, society and the environment must prosper in unison.

Healthy economies relate to SDG 8 (sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all) and SDG 9 (infrastructure for economic development and human well-being). Healthy economies are necessary to live in a healthy natural environment that has not been plundered to obtain food and commercial profits, in the service of survival and basic well-being, to maintain food security; and to develop and maintain a well-functioning education and legal system (SDG's 2, 4 and 16) as well as have the energy, leisure and discipline to appreciate their natural environment (SDG 14 and 15). Well-functioning global economies are necessary for people to be willing to spend money on infrastructure (SDG 6, 7, 9 and 11) and respect human rights, law and order rather than resort to violence and intimidation (SDG 4, 5, 10, 12, 13 and 16). In fact, healthy economies are a means of implementing all of the SDG's. (SDG 17).

For unity to be a transformative pathway, the economy networks must encompass all people and connect them from local to global levels, so that everyone can fully participate in peaceful societies that function well and use the environment in a sustainable way.



## **The Warning of Living in Disunity and Fragmentation**

Conflicts of economic interests are visible from local to global levels. Here is an example of a project that is rife with problems that are potentially found from local to global levels. The area in question has experienced a severe energy crisis. A hydropower project was begun--a US\$80 billion expansion to existing hydropower plants, built on the same river, with the goal to supply all of the sub-region region with hydroelectric power. The development is rife with political, geostrategic, and financial challenges, most notably the suspension of the World Bank's funding. Due to electromobility development, the companies located downstream want to secure cobalt, one of their most valuable natural resources. Mining companies of the copper-cobalt belt could fail to respond to the downstream companies' needs, given the lack of a reliable and affordable energy supply. Policy recommendations suggest that further transparency in implementing the project is required for restoring donors' confidence, while the region strives for political stability and sustainable development.

With this example we want to demonstrate when projects, let alone entire economies, are thwarted with contradictory interests and disunity, the achievement of all SDG's is in danger, most notably SDG 8 (promotion sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all). There can be no end to poverty (SDG 1). There will be a lack of means of implementation (SDG 17), the production of food will suffer (SDG 2), and all services will suffer (SDG 6, 7, 9, 11). If desperate enough, people will disregard laws and social norms and agreements (SDG 5, 10, 12, 13 and 16) and degrade the environment (SDG 14 and 15).

Conflicted economies can create a rift between environmental and social health, the base upon which every economy rests. It is therefore critical that the dimension of unity be fostered as is described above in relationship with Nature., and Society

### **Means of Implementation: Fostering Economic Unity the Social Solidarity Economy (SSE) as a means of implementing a healthy economy (MOI)**

#### **Developing a Social Solidarity Economy (SSE)**

Previously, we saw how when people are in harmony with Nature, they develop into benevolent human beings due to the inner satisfaction they experience. As people develop individually, and



## **Inspiring Stories and Examples Fostering Economic Unity Social Solidarity Economy (SSE) as a means of implementing a healthy economy (ISE)**

### **The Collective Brain: The UN's International Labour Organization (ILO) Academy on Social and Solidarity Economy:**

The Collective Brain<sup>81</sup> is a virtual, multilingual, interactive space that aims to enrich the ILO Academy on Social and Solidarity Economy, and to facilitate cooperation beyond face-to-face interactions. Its main purpose is to allow current, former and future participants and other key players in the field of SSE to remain engaged, to cooperate and to deepen their knowledge through an online platform that crosses geographical distances and language barriers. A forum is available to all users. News, various documents and publications on the SSE are available, along with the SSE Academy Collections.

### **Republic of Tunisia: Promotion of Organizations and Mechanisms of Social and Solidarity Economy (PROMESS) <sup>82</sup>**

The main objective of this project is the creation of sustainable jobs for young people in Tunisia through the promotion of organizations and mechanisms of the social and solidarity economy. PROMESS will assist the Tunisian government, social partners and civil society in establishing a conducive legal and institutional environment for social and solidarity economy in Tunisia. The project will continue to improve the successful rural youth employment initiatives implemented under the DEPART project (the Economic Development and Regional Action Plan for the Creation of Decent Jobs for the Youth in Tunisia, a Dutch-funded project on Local Economic Development) in the Le Kef Governorate. It will replicate those initiatives in three additional governorates, thus covering the entire North West region. Moreover, PROMESS will make its expertise, strategies and tools available to other development projects that promote social and solidarity economy organizations in Tunisia. The project will support at least 50 SSE organizations per governorate, and create a minimum of 1,000 jobs per governorate over the project's lifetime.

### **The Green Cross, Netherlands<sup>83</sup>: A Basic Income for all People**

The mission of the Green Cross is to respond to the combined challenges of security, poverty and environmental degradation. It has hundreds of thousands of members in 28 countries. It will soon fund several installations worldwide via this platform, with 25% return on investment.

After paying off the borrowed funds, it will use annual profits to provide its members with a basic income for the duration of the initiative. A reward system will be linked to the collection of plastics. In this way, plastic processing will provide both jobs and funds for local communities at the grassroots level, thus contributing to two critical entry points: the revitalization of the natural

<sup>81</sup> <http://ssecollectivebrain.net>

<sup>82</sup> [https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/cooperatives/projects/WCMS\\_532871/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/cooperatives/projects/WCMS_532871/lang--en/index.htm)

<sup>83</sup> <https://www.gcint.org/our-network/green-cross-netherlands/>

environment through cleaning up plastics found on land; and the strengthening of the economy to empower people at the grass roots via the basic income and the provision of jobs.



In Thailand, Dr. Metta Vesessombat, Founder and CEO of Sepco Industries, has developed a PolyPetron installation that converts 20,000 kilos of plastic per day into 15,000 liters of bio-oil. In June 2019, the first PolyPetron plant in Thailand went into operation. Since then, no less than 1.46 million kg of plastic waste found on land has been cleaned up and converted into 945,000 liters of clean, low-carbon oil with an ultra-low sulfur content. The Netherlands is duplicating this initiative, in which the 3.5 million Euros per PolyMetron will be raised by Green Cross Netherlands (GCNL) using its own crowdfunding platform.

### **Business Innovation Research Development (BIRD)**

Business Innovation Research Development (BIRD) economic systems include social solidarity economies based on exchange and cooperation; circular economies, which are based on recycling; and cooperatives. These mimic ecosystems. One way to address this challenge is through Maslow's hierarchy of needs, as mentioned earlier. This is a motivational theory in psychology that consists of five levels within a pyramid.

These are physiological needs at the base of the pyramid, followed by safety. Once people feel physically well-cared for, they can be increasingly open to love and belonging, self-esteem and, finally, self-realization.

In such a context, the material economy would be linked to the physical level and, in some way, at the level of security, while the immaterial economy would focus on love, belonging, and esteem. The beauty of deeply integrating this hierarchy of needs into our cultures and educational systems is that it would allow us to provide a space to meet the needs of poor people while adapting our technologies, infrastructure, production and consumption, organizational behaviors and corporate patterns. Moreover, the principle of unity plays an important role. This kind of approach to the economy brings people's individual development in harmony with Nature together with the development of a Nature-based global economy.

### **The Kingdom of Norway: The Norwegian Government Pension Fund**

The Norwegian Government Pension Fund<sup>84</sup> facilitates government savings to finance raising, public pension expenditures, and support of long-term considerations for government petroleum revenues.

<sup>84</sup> <https://www.regjeringen.no/en/topics/the-economy/the-government-pension-fund/id1441/>

The strategy for the Fund's management is designed based on the expected long-term effects of different investment choices. Norway's sovereign wealth fund is becoming more active in proxy voting. In 2013, the sovereign fund voted in 6,078 general meetings as well as 239 shareholder proposals on environmental and social issues. Norway's Government Pension Fund Global (GPF) has the potential to greatly influence the corporate governance market in Europe, and possibly China as well. The principle of unity plays a powerful role: The funds generated ensure that future generations benefit from Norway's natural resources, even when these diminish since the monies generated by the oil are invested in the pension fund for future generations.

### **The Trickle Up Project <sup>85</sup>**



Since 1979, Trickle Up has helped vulnerable people in extreme poverty to advance their economic and social well-being, in large-scale change by partnering with governments, global institutions, and local organizations.

Trickle Up has been a pioneer in lifting people out of extreme poverty. It has helped over 1.5 million of the poorest, most vulnerable people, living on less than \$1.90 a day, move to greater economic self-sufficiency and connection with their communities. This is done via seed capital grants, skills training and coaching, and support they need to create small businesses.

support they need to create small businesses.

Trickle Up connects them to groups where they save money and access credit with others, create plans for the future and enact change in their communities. The focus is on helping women, people with disabilities, refugees and other vulnerable people who live beyond the reach of most organizations and social service programs in the very poorest parts of rural Asia, Africa, and the Americas.

Committed to the global goal to eradicate extreme poverty by 2030, Trickle Up has set a five-year goal to lift more than a million people out of extreme poverty by establishing partnerships with local organizations, global institutions and governments.

## **Means of Implementation Nature-inspired approaches to the Economy and business (MOI)**

### **Financing for Education**

Free universal education is included in most SSEs. The right to education requires funding in order to build schools, pay teachers' salaries and training, provide teaching materials, etc. Under

<sup>85</sup> <https://trickleup.org>





international law, states have the obligation to use the maximum of their available resources to realize the right to education. Even when resources are limited, a state is obliged to prioritise certain immediate obligations, such as the introduction of free primary education and to guarantee education for all without discrimination. It is also obliged to provide progressively free secondary and higher education, and to continuously improve the quality of education.

To implement the right to education effectively, nations should ensure that a sufficient proportion of the national budget is allocated to education financing and that the money is used effectively and equitably to guarantee education for all, as well as to redress inequalities.

International Declarations, such as the 2011 Jomtien Statement, recognize that nations should spend at least 6% of their gross domestic product (GDP) and /or at least 20% of their national education budgets in order to achieve quality education for all. In nations such as Brazil, Costa Rica and Indonesia, the national education budget is guaranteed by legislation.<sup>86</sup> At the same time, careful step-by-step development of the economy is important. Taiwan began to direct education first on the production of food, then on the manufacture of clothing and then electronics for export. In this manner, Taiwan connected the education of its people with their development needs, as a whole. This, in turn, led to increasing national income.

In 2013, Costa Rica began to develop a national plan for sustainable development, drawing on the needs and inherent knowledge of its people, so that they could contribute to their own development, regardless of the effectiveness of their local administrations. This was outlined in more detail in our first paper on accelerating the achievement of the SDG's.<sup>87</sup> By harnessing this knowledge from all parts of society, governments can build an economy where all can cooperate and flourish as soon as they realize their government's inherent integrity and goodwill.

***Effect on the Achievement of the SDG:*** Financing for Education is recognized as an obligation States have toward the realization, development and protection of this Human Right regardless of economic status, socio-political, sex, race, age, creed or religion. Financing for the fulfillment of this human right positively affects all SDG's.

### **Circular Economy for Plastics Economy Global Commitment**

Worldwide, people are coming together to demand change in the way we make and use plastics. Millions of dollars are invested in cleaning up our oceans and beaches in an effort to turn the tide on plastic pollution. In a new plastics economy, plastic never becomes waste or pollution. Three

<sup>86</sup> <https://www.right-to-education.org/issue-page/education-financing>

<sup>87</sup> Footnote:, **IN HARMONY WITH NATURE: ACCELERATING THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE SDG's. USING THREE CRITICAL ENTRY POINTS**, August 2019. Link in footnote: <https://www.allwinnetwork.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Achievement-of-the-SDGs.-Critical-Entry-Points-Final.pdf>

actions are required to achieve this: 1) Elimination of all problematic and unnecessary plastic items; 2) Innovation to ensure that the plastics we do need are reusable, recyclable, or compostable; and 3) Circulation of all the plastic items we use to keep them in the economy and out of the environment.

In 2019, the Ellen MacArthur Foundation and the UN Environment Programme published the first annual New Plastics Economy Global Commitment progress report at the Our Ocean Conference in Oslo. The report provides an unprecedented level of transparency on how nearly 200 businesses and governments are reshaping the plastics system. This report is an important step in the Foundation's mission to accelerate the transition towards a circular economy. Since 2018, the Global Commitment has gathered over 400 signatories, including companies representing 20% of all plastic packaging produced globally.<sup>88</sup>

***Effect on the Achievement of the SDG :*** Circular Economy can help combat unsustainable consumption and patterns of production and climate change (SDG's 12 and 13), while making people value quality more than quantity. These efforts to generate a sustainable and circular economy, which address the problem of plastic pollution, strongly promote the fulfillment of sustainable development goals. (SDG's 8, 9, 11,12 and 17). Creating and innovating a circular economy for plastic ensures that plastic never becomes garbage or pollution, reducing economic costs and generating common benefits.

### **Cooperatives, a sustainable business model**

Cooperatives are a major part of the global economy. They are active in almost all sectors and contribute daily to the delivery of sustainable development goals.

The main figures for the cooperative movement worldwide are:

- 2.6 million cooperative enterprises;
- 1 billion members;
- Annual revenues of USD 3 trillion;
- 250 million jobs (12% of jobs in G20 countries)

Cooperatives are a business model that is based on natural ecosystems.

Our main differences:

- People-centered

Cooperatives are, by design, a people-centred model of enterprise. They are owned and democratically controlled by their members. At the same time, the members are the producers, workers or consumers of the products and services the cooperative offers.

<sup>88</sup> <https://www.newplasticseconomy.org/assets/doc/Global-Commitment-2019-Progress-Report.pdf>

For this reason, all the benefits and wealth generated by cooperatives is redistributed in a fairer way to members, workers and society at large, instead of investors.

- Values-based

Cooperatives act on the market according to globally established ethical values and principles. Cooperative values include self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity. These constitute the Cooperative Identity.



@linkedin-sales-navigator-ljkl0e-2ff4-unsplash.jpg

Cooperative principles include the following: voluntary and open membership; democratic member control; member economic participation; autonomy and independence; education, training and information; cooperation among cooperatives; and concern for the community.

Acting on their values and principles, cooperatives in all sectors deliver concrete services that contribute to sustainable development. Examples include:

- In agriculture and fisheries, cooperatives are a way for farmers and fishermen to organize, increase efficiency, strengthen their market position and move from a subsistence activity to a true economic endeavour;
- In industry and services, cooperatives deliver essential community services, such as energy, water and sanitation, health, housing, education, and many others.
- In financial services, cooperative banks, credit unions and mutual and cooperative insurers provide access to basic financial services and risk management to populations that otherwise would not have access to them;
- In retail, consumer cooperatives help consumers access quality and sustainable food at affordable prices while actively promoting education towards sustainable consumption.

***Effect on the Achievement of the SDG:*** The proven ways of empowering an entire society so that all of its people can live a meaningful life has a positive effect on the SDG's. In all sectors, cooperatives provide economic growth, and decent jobs while respecting the needs of the population, society, and the environment.

## Healthy economies through the development of telecommunications



@marc-wieland-Gkx5nBrXs0-unsplash

Through the Internet, civil society is rapidly developing a fast-growing partnership economy in which independent people offer their talents or resources that they have developed for free. It is a relatively inexpensive way of boosting the development of people individually, while closing the gap between the “haves” and the “have nots”. The Internet can be accessible to entire communities with a computer and broadband, no matter where in the world. Even countries like Rwanda, that are still recovering from the debilitation of civil war, have universal internet coverage.

Given the geographical distance between people, fears for communication across borders is greatly reduced. While the gap between those who have Internet access and proficiency increases the existing economic chasm, so too increases the realization that this problem must be addressed.

The economic advantages of Internet access are immense, if we look at the rapidly-growing sharing/partnership economy. People who have a passion to share can share their gifts with others for free, glad that others can benefit from what has given them so much delight to create.

Many remote areas provide Internet centres for general use. Internet connections through social media can create a unifying connection between people. The sharing/partnership economy is already responsible for one-tenth of France’s economy.

With the lockdown caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, it is conceivable that increasing numbers of people will develop their own inner potential using the Internet, and produce an escalation of this grassroots economy. In doing so, they will live, possibly even unconsciously, in greater harmony with Nature.

***Effect on the Achievement of the SDG:*** Access to the internet generates greater possibilities of growth within the economies. The coronavirus pandemic has resulted in a marked increase of income generating advertising revenue thus, this telecommunications medium is a vital and direct contact method between countries and government. Positively affecting all SDG's.

## **Inspiring Stories and Examples about Nature-inspired approaches to the Economy and business (ISE)**

### **The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD<sup>89</sup>)**

OECD is an international organisation that works to build better policies for better lives, with the goal to shape policies that foster prosperity, equality, opportunity and well-being for all. It has played an important part in the unification of Europe. Drawing on nearly 60 years of experience and insights to better prepare the world of tomorrow, OECD<sup>90</sup> works with governments, policymakers and citizens to establish evidence-based international standards and finding solutions to a range of social, economic and environmental challenges.

From providing a unique forum and knowledge hub for data and analysis, exchange of experiences, best-practice sharing, and advice on public policies and international standards, OECD has an open nature that allows countries to participate in its committees, working groups and forums. This participation is regulated into three categories: guests, participants and associates, from least to greatest involvement. The latter two categories pay fees.

### **Republic of Nigeria: Hetavad Skills Academy and Networks International (HETAVAD)**

Hetavad Skills Academy<sup>91</sup> and Networks International (HEVATAD) is an NGO based in Nigeria. Founded in 2015, it is a unique social enterprise that undertakes research in Training, Defense, Innovation and Development. HETAVAD promotes peace, sustainable development, entrepreneurship and human survival through the concept of “felt needs”. Since the publication of its first important work entitled “Innovative strategies for human survival”, also known as the "Hetavad Manual", it has been strategically positioned with a series of innovative approaches that have been implemented at different levels with good results.

HETAVAD also has active participation with the United Nations systems: the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) through the main United Nations NGO Groups and the Science, Technology and Innovation Forums of the UN.

Therefore, the SDG's for the realization of the 2030 Agenda, also called Global Goals, have led to the development of innovative approaches to address following areas:

- Leave no one behind.

<sup>89</sup> <https://www.oecd.org>

<sup>90</sup> At present, there are 37 OECD member countries, of which 20 are founders - including Spain - and the rest have been incorporated successively starting with Japan (1964), Finland (1969), Australia (1971), New Zealand ( 1973), Mexico (1994), Czech Republic (1995), Korea, Hungary and Poland (1996), Slovak Republic (2000), Chile, Estonia, Slovenia and Israel (2010), Latvia (2016), Lithuania and Colombia (2018 ). The EU has observer status in the Council with voice but no vote. In addition to the OECD member states, 11 non-member countries have signed the implementation of the OECD Guidelines: Argentina, Brazil, Costa Rica, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Peru, Romania and Tunisia. In addition, the OECD maintains a closer and more privileged relationship with the so-called Key Partners (Brazil, China, India, Indonesia and South Africa) that participate even in the Ministerial Meetings.

<sup>91</sup> <https://balancedlivingacademy.blogspot.com/search/label/About%20Us>,  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x0pz18r1cnc>



- Eradicate poverty, hunger, inequality, injustice, and underdevelopment
- Promote prosperity in a changing world.

### European Union Market: A Circular Economy



In December 2015, the Commission adopted an EU action plan for a Circular Economy. The Commission identified plastics as a key priority and promised to “prepare a strategy that addresses the challenges posed by plastics throughout the value chain and taking into account their entire life cycle”.

In 2017, the Commission confirmed that it would focus on the production and use of plastics, with the aim that by 2030, all existing plastic containers in the EU market must be reusable or can be recycled profitably.

Today, the EU is in a better position to achieve this objective. Their strategy lays the foundations for a new economy of plastic, where the design and production of plastic products fully respect the needs of reuse and recycling. The strategy also includes the development and promotion of more sustainable materials. This will provide greater added value and prosperity in Europe and will foster innovation.

In pursuing these objectives, the strategy helps achieve the Commission’s objective for a modern, efficient, low-carbon economy, and will make a tangible contribution to fulfilling the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement.

We must invest in transitioning to a fully sustainable economy. There is a great need for countries to accelerate their efforts to transition to sustainable consumption and production practices, creating a more circular economy. Great progress could be made if more countries would develop, implement and invest in action plans to transition to fully sustainable, regenerative, and circular consumption and production practices.

The profits from the business sector could then better be spent on transitioning to more sustainable practices, whether as individual business interests, in response to government or shareholder mandates and/or regulations, as set by market demand, or as enabled through the use of progressive taxes placed on the ownership and use of valuable and/or scarce natural or non-renewable resources. There are all projects that aim for zero waste, an approach in which everything is reused or recycled.

# **Means of Implementation about unleashing Financing and Other Resources for a World that Works for All People and Nature in Unity (MOI)**

## **Unleashing Financing and Other Resources for Development [including a self-financing World Marshall Plan]**

This manual was created by some 80 NGOs, members of the NGO Taskforce on Financing during the UN preparatory conferences to the 1982 Earth Summit (UNCED). It is an example of close collaboration between NGOs, who have never met before, and UN Member States, who were members of the governmental Committee on Financing in preparation for Agenda 21.

The completed manual was donated to the Governmental Committee on Financing and to all Ministers focusing on Financing. It has been added to in the following decades, and consulted by the UN Secretariat and the Special Commission on Financing Sustainable Development in preparation of the 2030 Agenda.

The manual mentions financing mechanisms being implemented by governments, the private sector and the grassroots.<sup>92</sup> It contains sections on funding by governments, financing by business, and by civil society. In the addendum were some approaches to create a basic income for all people. One is a self-financing world Marshall Plan, which creates a supplementary economy and a basic income for all people. It is financed by funds closely linked to available goods and services that will become available for sale once all people are connected to a global barter economy, via the Internet.

By empowering all people to become both producers and consumers in this new supplementary global economy, dedicated only to goods and services that contribute to a sustainable global economy, it has a wholesome effect both on the environment and on the development of all people, not just the privileged<sup>93</sup>. This system is worked out in painstaking detail and is geared to enable people to develop their own inner potential and thus become more sensitive to their inner connection to Nature.

The global economic downturn due to the COVID-19 lockdown has highlighted the limitations of the present debt-based global economy. In all likelihood, people are getting used to closer economic ties via the sharing partnership economy. It is likely that we will emerge to a changed economic scene, which could involve a basic income for all people. This would kickstart a new inclusive economy that enables people to develop their individual potential in harmony with Nature.

There are many different ways to approach this. Besides the above examples, there is one more that would be financed by plastic waste. The Basic Income Earth Network (BIEN) is an

<sup>92</sup><http://www.allwinnetwork.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/UNLEASHING-FINANCING-AND-OTHER-RESOURCES-2016-07.pdf>.

<sup>93</sup> To order a copy of the Ideal Self Image by the founder Pieter Koosistra and of *Crossroads 2000: A basic income for all people and a Marshall Plan for the Earth* from “UNO Inkomen voor Alle Mensen Waalbandijk 8, 4064 CB Varik, the Netherlands.

organization that collects and assesses diverse approaches. Founded in 1986, BIEN fosters evidenced-based research, plural debate, and critical engagement.

***Effect on the Achievement of the SDG:*** The Development of a more inclusive economy, which includes the protection and preservation of natural resource resources, the unfolding of the potential of society through its own internal capacities, while developing fair trade and sustainable quality, receiving economic income , contribute to the implementation of all SDG's.

## **Inspiring Stories and Examples about unleashing Financing and Other Resources for a World that Works for All People and Nature in Unity (ISE)**

### **The Local Exchange Trading System (LETSsystem)**

A LETSystem<sup>94</sup> is a new economic organization applicable to any community. It is a self-regulating economic network whose members generate and manage their own (completely legal)



currency system independent of and parallel to the federal money system. It offers communities the tools to stabilize and support their local economy without diminishing their participation in the whole. It allows members of the local community to exchange goods and services on a “green dollar” basis when federal dollars are scarce or unavailable.

How a LETSystem works is: each participant has a list of goods and services. Members are then paid by check in the local currency. At regular intervals, the checks are sent in to a central administrator who credits and debits participants accounts accordingly.

In some countries, this system is taxed. In others, governments use it to combat underemployment and movements of populations to more industrialized areas. Software is now available that makes administration very simple. It is likely that the LETSystem will become a useful tool as we emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic, and have to rebuild an economy where companies have had to lay off workers, production has suffered and the purchasing power of people is at an all-time low.

### **Banks which Invest Solely in Sustainable Development**

The Netherlands has been home to Triodos Bank and the ASN Bank, both cooperative banks that invest solely in sustainability<sup>95</sup>.

<sup>94</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Local\\_exchange\\_trading\\_system](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Local_exchange_trading_system)

<sup>95</sup> <https://www.asnbank.nl>

Since 1980, Triodos Bank<sup>96</sup> has maintained the vision and mission to make money work for positive, social, environmental and cultural change. Triodos Bank is in business to create a society that protects and promotes the quality of life of all its members, with human dignity at its core. They have enabled individuals, organisations and businesses to use their money in ways that benefit people and the environment as well as received an Impact Award to organizations that are practicing sustainability. Areas of focus include art and culture, energy and climate, care, and well-being.

ASN Bank invests in sustainable development in various ways: by using investor's money to finance sustainable development; by setting their own sustainable development goals and by encouraging others in the financial world to also invest in sustainable development.

### **Pigouvian Taxes**



A Pigouvian tax is a government tax on activities that create socially harmful externalities. An externality is an activity that has a negative effect on others in a society, but does not necessarily have a negative effect on the person who did that activity.

Pollution is an example of an externality<sup>97</sup>. The driver of a noncompliant vehicle does not necessarily suffer immediately from the exhaust it releases as they drive down the road, but everyone behind them may suffer. Their exhaust may also increase pollution for everyone in the community.

The government imposes a Pigouvian tax on noncompliant vehicles to make the driver take on more of the cost of the suffering they may cause. The revenue from the tax is often used to help ameliorate the external cost. By imposing a Pigouvian tax, a government can designate a cost for such activity. The cost is equal to what the price would be had a market for such activity existed; or a cost so high that it deters the activity all together.

An alternative form of a Pigouvian tax would add that those perpetrating the harm can be required to restore the damage they have caused as well as pay the tax. Revenue from such taxes can be used to restore damage done to the environment or society.

If the taxes are high enough, they could take the place of tax or income, at least until people are no longer tempted to do this harm. Income from Pigouvian taxes could go to the Global Fund for Sustainable Development.

<sup>96</sup> <https://www.triodos.com>

<sup>97</sup> <https://www.thebalance.com/pigouvian-tax-definition-and-examples-4157479>

### **Bangladesh The Grameen Fund<sup>98</sup>**

The Grameen Foundation empowers the poor, particularly women, to create a world without poverty with the tools created to address poverty, interconnected with root causes, in a scalable, sustainable way. While implementation often involves many moving parts, it uses digital technology and data to understand very poor people in order to empower communities. Capital market investments, a fancy term for moving money from the people who have it to those who need it in order to be productive, plays an increasingly crucial role in helping developing countries get on their feet.

It also invests in companies, funds and joint ventures to create capital for social enterprises whose products and services benefit the poor. Moving from a “funding” model to a sustainable “financing” model enables a win for investors and a permanent escape from poverty. Current investments include Grameen Capital India<sup>99</sup> and Grameen Impact Investment India.<sup>100</sup>

### **Global Lottery<sup>101</sup>**

The U.N. and an established Global Alliance of civil society delegates plan to launch a Global Lottery. This will raise funds in support of projects and programs which further the principles and goals of sustainable development. The design and management of the Global Lottery would be handled by a management team comprising government and civil society representatives, and lottery experts selected to assist them.

Although not used on a global scale, the Government of the Netherlands has developed a lottery based on citizens postal address codes. The huge funds raised by this lottery are given to Dutch NGOs involved in the development of developing countries.

<sup>98</sup> <https://grameenfoundation.org>

<sup>99</sup> <http://www.grameencapital.in>

<sup>100</sup> [http://www.grameencapital.in/grameen\\_impact\\_india.html](http://www.grameencapital.in/grameen_impact_india.html)

<sup>101</sup> <http://www.leadinggroup.org/article200.html>



## **Unity as it relates to Economy and the achievement of the SDG's OBSERVATIONS**

We have seen in this section on the economy where the gap between rich and poor is most glaring where there are steps taken by both governments and people that complement one another. We are close to the point where the social solidarity economy instituted by governments, some with the help of the UN's International Labour Organization (ILO), and the fast-growing grassroots sharing/partnership economy that connects across borders via the Internet are complementing each other. As more people realize the unsustainability of a debt-based economy, alternatives become available to deal with emerging problems. Both governments and civil society are experimenting with zero waste and circular economies. There is a wide range of local economies and financing mechanisms to help those most in need.

The lockdown from the COVID-19 pandemic has the potential to create contacts that link people from diverse cultural, religious and other backgrounds and to put people in touch with new and exciting aspects of their own potential. As we emerge from lockdown to a radically changed economic scene in which individual households have no income and firms have gone out of business, it is valuable that we can see a host of alternative financing mechanisms, especially those that empower individual people from all backgrounds. There are a multitude of ways of financing and providing a basic income for all people. Among the most exciting are those that provide a basic income for all people globally and thus empower people worldwide to build a new person-to-person economy in which no one is left behind.

It is possible that after the lockdown, people will have to resort to local economies as a means to earning their keep. It is conceivable that, if this trend continues, and if international cryptocurrencies such as bitcoins and blockchains are used and we had a universal basic income, that a global people-centred, interest-free and inflation-free economy can arise, connecting people across cultures and economic divisions.

## CONCLUSION

We live in times of great conflict: proxy wars between governments, conflicts between people and between people and their governments; and between human beings and Nature. Then, in 2020, SARS-CoV-2, a previously unknown virus, and its subsequent disease COVID-19, radically transformed life and business as we know it.

With the resulting lockdown and ceasing of human activity, the physical conflicts waged began to decrease. We saw air pollution decreased radically from the decrease in traffic and industrial activity, and many governments began to provide people with a one-time basic income where before that had seemed unthinkable.

We notice that when human conflict ceases, the yearning for connection increases. As we look at how unity manifests at all levels of our existence, we realize how powerful is its influence. Both unity and conflict are inherent in Nature, from the beginning of humanity. Conflict tends to accompany processes of change whereby one structure transforms itself into another, but unity tends to transform that conflict into a new transforming dawn.

This is happening today, as humanity restructures itself from many smaller units to become a global community. In addition, where we have lost touch with Nature, we find we often unwittingly destroy and deplete the very resources needed to survive.

Unity by contrast to conflict, in the form of cooperation, solidarity, community, sharing, caring and Nature's Ethic--*all for one and one for all*--tends to build by forming connections. The forces of unity are those that have driven evolution since the Universe first began.

Human beings grow, survive and thrive because they are in constant interaction with Nature through the air we breathe, the food and water we ingest, and the life force within us that drives our psychological and social development.

We share a hierarchy of needs with other mammals: our physical needs, our need for security and possibly others too. Humans have a need for esteem and love and as they develop each also feels the need to develop their individual potential through education. And as they evolve they often seek to relate to people from other societies and together throughout the ages people's combined creativity has led to the creation of the very communications and other structures (printing press and a plethora ways of communicating over distance) until our whole world has become a web of (tele)communications.

These have been the structures through which social and economic development has taken place that is now global in scope. As a result, human needs have taken an additional step: the need to serve this larger whole.

In the above, have seen myriad examples of the rich variety of forms this can take. But most important here are those that have allowed human beings to build an inherent unity in our relationships with Nature and one another, psychologically, socially and economically.

Of primary importance is the fact that we know how to communicate with Nature by being keenly attuned to the sense that things are falling into place, the sense of rightness that ensues and the heightened energy and interest that comes about when we are acting in harmony with Nature.

We have schools, health modalities, martial arts and spiritual tools that can help us in this respect. Unfortunately, these tend to be accessible mainly to those who have the leisure and the economic privilege to be able to benefit from such learning.

To remedy the growing gap between the “haves” and the “have nots”, the SDG's are priorities. Although great strides have been made in these areas, they are far from being fully implemented. Thus, international laws have been created to safeguard the environment on which we all depend, and to ensure that all people can develop their individual potential. But these legal structures are often ignored, as they are not fully enforceable at the global level.

And yet, there are well-functioning global regulations that are obeyed unquestioningly by almost all. These regulate global (tele)communications and travel. Life without these commodities is unthinkable and that it is in our direct self-interest to make sure that they function well and remain global in scope. Human rights and global laws to protect the environment have not yet been seen in this light by sufficient numbers of people.

As a result, there is untold suffering in our world, and grave inequities and inequalities that drive unsustainable activities.

At the same time, we see how governments are increasing their attempts to eradicate these and to create happier people by developing social solidarity economies, and, in some cases, allowing their people to participate in governance. The Swiss participate in national governance through referendums. In Norway, the people help to steward their nation's oil resources. To improve democratic governance worldwide, former heads of state and government now freed from the constraints of holding public office have made themselves available to consult with heads of state and government to build more democratic societies.

As we watch political and economic developments, we notice that, when the strides made by governments are insufficiently effective, people at the grassroots level take over. And so we see people's initiatives, wherever we look, taken in the spirit of global citizens. This is particularly clear when we look at the global economy that once seemed permanent as it wreaked havoc with the environment and people's lives. Myriad approaches are emerging to build alternative economies, locally, globally and on the internet.

It is important to note how many actions taken at local and national levels can be applied to the global level. When we look more closely at the dominant global economy, we realize how significant this is because it is at present functioning on a very shaky basis indeed: It is both destroying the economic power of both its workers and consumers, as well as its resource base in Nature.

We recognize once again that unity drives all aspects of our lives, including cooperation, community development and the ethics of nature: *one for all and all for one*. These are the same forces that have driven evolution and have created lasting forms of matter and life since the Universe began. Being in union and recognizing diversity, in the same spirit, until we all reach

unity and fulfillment, contributing to each other's needs, is the heart of sustainable development. Developing these capabilities, while operating within us in contact with Nature, within our societies and economies makes tremendous tools available to us that can help us achieve all of the SDG's at the same time.

*One for all and all for one...*