NUCLEAR AGE PEACE FOUNDATION

6th Annual Frank K. Kelly Lecture on Humanity's Future

Globalization:

VALUES, RESPONSIBILITY AND GLOBAL JUSTICE

By Jakob von Uexküll

Frank K. Kelly Lecture on Humanity's Future

The Frank K. Kelly Lecture on Humanity's Future was established by the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation in 2002. The lecture series honors Frank Kelly, a founder and senior vice president of the Foundation, whose vision and compassion are perpetuated through this ongoing lecture series. Each annual lecture is presented by a distinguished individual to explore the contours of humanity's present circumstances and ways by which we can today shape a more promising future for our planet and all its inhabitants.

Mr. Kelly, for whom the lecture series is named, gave the inaugural lecture in 2002 on "Glorious Beings: What We Are and What We May Become." The lecture presented in this booklet is the sixth Frank K. Kelly Lecture on Humanity's Future. It was presented by Jakob von Uexküll at the University of California at Santa Barbara on February 21, 2007.

The 2006 lecture was presented by Nobel Peace Laureate Mairead Corrigan Maguire on "A Right to Live without Violence, Nuclear Weapons and War." The 2005 lecture was delivered by Dr. Robert Jay Lifton on "America and the Human Future: Surviving Vietnam, 9/11, and Iraq." The 2004 lecture in this series was presented by Dame Anita Roddick on "Kindness as a Key to Humanity's Future." Professor Richard Falk gave the 2003 lecture on "American Civil Liberties and Human Rights Under Siege."

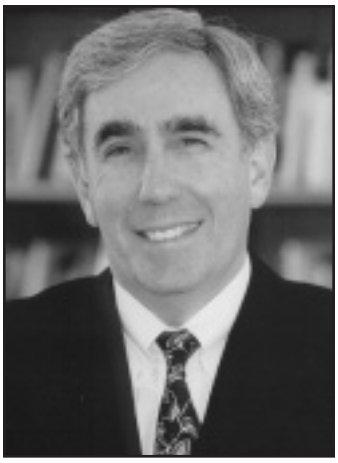
Frank Kelly has had a remarkable life. He has been a science-fiction writer (later inducted into the Science Fiction Hall of Fame), a journalist, a soldier in World War II, a Nieman Fellow at Harvard University, a speechwriter for Harry Truman, the assistant to the US Senate Majority Leader, vice president of the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions and a leader in the campaign to create the US Institute for Peace. He co-founded the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation in 1982. He is the author of nine books and countless articles.

Beyond all of his achievements, Frank has a remarkable faith in humanity and its future. He has lived with a spirit of optimism and hope. He has been a visionary advocate for humanity and has inspired many people through his writing and teaching to take action on behalf of humanity.

The lecture series is endowed to carry forward Frank's vision. If you would like to help support the lecture by adding to the endowment, please let us know. We also invite you to learn more about the Frank K. Kelly Lecture series and about the work of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation by visiting our website: www.wagingpeace.org. Prior lectures in this series are available from the Foundation.

Introduction

By David Krieger



The Sixth Annual Frank K. Kelly Lecture on Humanity's Future was delivered by Jakob von Uexküll, one of the world's leading visionaries. The lecture, which is presented in this booklet, is on "Globalization: Values, Responsibility and Global Justice."

The Kelly Lecture series, which honors Nuclear Age Peace Foundation senior vice president Frank Kelly, was created in the belief that humanity's future demands our best thinking. Our future is imperiled by the power of human-created technologies that threaten civilization and human survival on the planet. Those who will inhabit the future deserve our advocacy and our stewardship of the planet. Those alive today have no right to threaten the future of humanity by depleting or seriously diminishing the resources of the planet or by destroying the environment of those who will follow. We have a moral responsibility to preserve the planet and to pass it on intact to future generations.

Jakob von Uexküll was born in Sweden and currently resides in London. He is a man who has envisioned a more decent future for humanity and acted upon his vision to create institutions for a better world. Understanding the power of the Nobel Prizes, he approached the Nobel Foundation over 25 years ago with a proposal to add two new categories to their prizes: one for protecting the environment and one for alleviating poverty, and offered to raise the funds to support these awards.

After consideration, the Nobel Foundation, which had added only one new award – a prize for economics – to the initial awards, rejected his request. Von Uexküll then decided to move forward on his own with these new awards, which he named the Right Livelihood Awards (www.rightlivelihood.org). He funded the first awards with the sale of his stamp collection. The first awards were presented in Stockholm on December 9, 1980, the day before the presentation of the Nobel Prizes.

At first, the Swedish press questioned whether von Uexküll was working for the CIA or the KGB in seeking to undermine the Nobel Prizes. The next year the press ridiculed the awards. But within five years, the awards were being presented in the Swedish Parliament and became known as the "Alternative Nobel Prizes."

The Right Livelihood Awards have now been presented for more than 25 years, and each year three or four recipients of the Award split a prize of approximately $250,000. Awards have been made to more than 100 leaders throughout the world who are working in the areas of environmental protection and sustainability, development and poverty alleviation, peace and human rights.

The overwhelming majority of Nobel Prizes go to American and European men, with individuals from countries in the southern hemisphere having received only 11 percent of the Nobel Prizes. By contrast, 44 percent of the Right Livelihood Awards have been made to groups and individuals in the Global South. Women have received only five percent of the Nobel Prizes, whereas women, including women-led organizations, have received 34 percent of the Right Livelihood Awards.

Von Uexküll's latest innovative project is the World Future Council (www.worldfuturecouncil.org). The purpose of the Council is to bring together wise elders, pioneers and youth leaders to be a voice for shared human values and for fulfilling our present responsibilities to future generations. The Council will recommend best practices to ensure a positive future for humanity. The inaugural meeting of the World Future Council was held in May 2007 in Hamburg, Germany. The meeting produced the Hamburg Call to Action.

It is our hope at the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation that the lectures in this series will lead to a greater consideration of how present actions are affecting the future, and to a new ethic of responsibility for the lives of those who will inhabit the future. We welcome your comments on this lecture and others in the series.

Globalization:

Values, Responsibility and Global Justice

By Jakob von Uexküll

"The era of procrastination of half-measures, of soothing and baffling expedients is coming to a close. We are entering an era of consequences."

—Sir Winston Churchill, 1938

We live in historically unique times. Never before have the consequences of our decisions and actions – and of our inaction! – been so far-reaching, both in time and space. Globalization, says Ulrich Beck, author of *The Risk Society*, means "the end of the other." Today we have unprecedented power to build a fair and sustainable global civilization. But what are we doing? The late John Kenneth Galbraith described globalization as just another term for pursuing US foreign policy interests. Joseph Stiglitz, who chaired President Clinton's Council of Economic Advisors, describes US global strategy as "based on putting aside principles of social justice, equity and fairness…in order to get the best bargain for US special interests." The *Financial Times* concluded recently that globalization has been imposed by economic elites on a mostly unwilling public.

David Korten is another US "insider" – ex-Harvard Business School and the Ford Foundation – who has become a strong critic of the current globalization model. It has not been easy, he writes in *When Corporations Rule the World*, to create a global order where a small number of billionaires own as much as the poorest half of the world's population. It has taken long and dedicated efforts by a greedy minority and their paid helpers in politics, the media, the legal profession, etc. – and, Korten concludes, it will take a long and dedicated effort by global civil society to build a just and sustainable global order.

As Joseph Stiglitz says, different rules – e.g., globalizing labor more and capital less – would lead to a very different form of globalization. The term suggests that we are talking about a "distillation of the interests of everyone on the globe. But the reality is the imposition of the interests of a small minority on everyone else," says the Indian environmentalist Vandana Shiva. From the other end of the spectrum, Stephan Roach, chief economist at Morgan Stanley, recently concluded that "we have drastically underestimated the consequences of globalization – it is not a win-win situation."

Fundamental Flaws in the Current Globalization Model

Despite benefits, like easier communications, there are three fundamental – possibly fatal – flaws in the current globalization model. First, any benefits are too unevenly shared. As the rule of money and market economics spreads globally, many in the Global South are moving "out of poverty but into debt" – facing increasing insecurity as old structures of social solidarity disappear. Many others see the new global rules take away their livelihoods. In Kerala (India) last year, the fishermen no longer went to sea every morning – as they have done for thousands of years – as their fishing grounds have been decimated by foreign trawlers. The old saying, that it is better to give a hungry man a fishing-net rather than a fish, presupposes that there are fish left for him to net!

As income and wealth gaps grow to unprecedented levels, both nationally and globally, these inequalities threaten the moral capital and social cohesion of an increasing number of countries. We may have Thai restaurants here, but our schools do not teach Thai Buddhist values of sufficiency, sharing and spiritual growth. Indeed, these values are no longer taught in Thailand after primary school. The children of the elite go to local branches of British boarding schools, often losing both their values and language. Speaking at such

a school a few years ago, I was struck by the students' uncritical enthusiasm for genetic engineering.

The second flaw in the current global model is both a cause and consequence of the first, namely its lack of democratic legitimacy. Tony Blair's claim that globalization is "the result of choices of individuals" is just not true. Even in a country as export-dependent as Germany, majorities in most opinion polls now reject economic globalization. It is no good responding that there is no alternative. On the contrary, such statements are highly dangerous, for if people find no alternative offered within the democratic system, then they will turn away from it and look for scapegoats and fundamentalist alternatives. If we refuse to consider rational alternatives, we open the door to irrational ones.

In most parts of the world, globalization has failed even on its own terms: economic growth was higher in the pre-globalization decades of the 60s and 70s than during the last 25 years. Also, the growth it brings no longer improves the quality of life for most people in the industrialized world, causing the *Financial Times* to headline a report on "Happiness Indicators": "The Hippies were right all along!"

Climate chaos is – next to nuclear war – the greatest imaginable threat to the health, security and freedom of our children and all future generations!

In the US, consumption grew by 45% between the 1970s and the 1990s, but the proportion of the population describing themselves as "very happy" actually fell, while depression, obesity, eating disorders, crime, family breakdowns and inequality all increased. In the UK, people grew "richer" under Thatcherism, but key quality of life indicators fell. Elsewhere, those who are supposed to long to adopt this model respond very differently when actually asked. Thus, a survey of UAE (United Arab Emirates) women, presented at the Globalization For The Common Good conference in Dubai, found that 85% responded with "angry, sad, scared and/or frustrated" when asked how they felt "when you think about Western influence in the future," while only 15% felt "happy" or "optimistic." Asked about "Western influence in general," 52% saw it as negative and only 6% as positive. Looking at the declarations of large international youth conferences over the past decade, you will find the same deep skepticism and rejection of the current US-inspired global model.

Why? Because, despite its superficial attractions, it is increasingly felt to be a declaration of war on all other cultures, commodifying all relationships, dreams and desires. The citizen is disconnected and shrunk into the consumer, expected to find fulfillment through shopping. The culture of consumerism fosters permanent dissatisfaction, envy and discontent, beginning with pre-school children, thus shortening their childhoods. At the same time, the older generation is no longer honored as holders of wisdom but pressured to stay young by consuming. All generations are compressed into immature, easily impressionable, developmentally delayed young adults. In this culture the answer to ANY crisis is "shop more." After 9/11 President Bush's mother asked her son what she could to "support America." He replied (I am not making this up!): "Mom, if you really want to help, buy, buy, buy!"

The third and most fundamental flaw in the current globalization model is its lack of sustainability. The continuation of its economic growth fantasies even a few decades into the future will literally cost us the earth. Sir Nicholas Stern describes climate chaos as the greatest market failure ever. Looking at the world in which he made his billions, the British financier Sir James Goldsmith remarked: "I feel as if I have won a game of poker on the Titanic!" "What is the use of all my business and philanthropic activities," an Indian entrepreneur said to me recently, "if the monsoon fails?" Climate chaos is – next to nuclear war – the greatest imaginable threat to the health, security and freedom of our children and all future generations! It is the greatest crisis humanity has ever encountered, an awesome and unprecedented responsibility. Causing climate change is intergenerational terrorism and genocide! Many of its most frightening aspects, like the melting of large glaciers providing drinking water for hundreds of million of people, are accelerating much faster than predicted even a few years ago. While there are alternatives if oil runs out, there are no alternatives to water. What happens when there is not enough, we saw in the New Orleans Superdome after Katrina: young men fighting for the remaining supplies, while children, pregnant women and the elderly looked on with nothing.

What Can We Do?

So, why are we in this situation? One answer is that there is a small powerful group intent to preserve their privileges, brainwashing us through their control of large parts of the media. While this is not the whole answer, neither is it wrong. It has been repeatedly documented how a small group of right-wing US billionaires set up

the think-tanks and funded the media careers and outlets – and politicians – that have changed the way we see ourselves and the world, by turning citizens into consumers.

In the UK, a parallel process, which brought Thatcherism to power, was funded through three institutes, one of which was set up by a wealthy chicken farmer. Thus, one third of Thatcherism was due to one chicken farmer!

We have become prisoners of an ideology, which tells us that the global goal for humanity is to ensure the greatest possible choice of consumer goods. "Competition for the cheapest" has replaced "co-operation for the best" as the idealized form of human interaction. We must, whatever the cost, remain "competitive." Remaining problems are "market failures," i.e., the results of incomplete globalization. But, as Joseph Stiglitz has pointed out, if we had perfect global competition, then wages for many jobs in the West would already have fallen to Chinese levels.

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So what can we do? Most people are not dissidents and find it hard to live and bring up their children in conflict with the ruling values of society. We are all potentially both angels and devils. The crucial issue is whether the world we live in honors our more angelic or our more diabolic traits.

But what world do we live in? It makes a big difference whether we live in the world of Lawrence Summers or of Hermann Daly, the US pioneer of ethical, ecological "steady-state" economics. When they both worked at the World Bank, Summers gave Daly a book draft of his in which an illustration showed the natural environment as a subsystem (box within a box) of the human economy. Daly pointed out that it is, of course, the other way round: our economy is a dependent subsystem of our natural environment, which provides its inputs and tries its best to absorb its wastes.

Summers disagreed and refused to change the illustration! So here you have a man who has held key positions of power (World Bank Chief Economist, Treasury Secretary under President Clinton – not Bush! – and President of Harvard University), who actually believes that our environment is dependent on, and thus can be controlled by, our human economy. Is this less mad than the belief in a flat earth? One implication of such a belief, which Summers shares with most of our ruling market fundamentalists, is a failure to understand hierarchies of danger and risk.

If you believe that economics is in control, then the greatest dangers you can see are economic threats. The greatest imaginable economic danger is bankruptcy. But many countries have gone bankrupt in the past and the consequences were always overcome in a generation or less, while the consequences of bankrupting our environment will last for thousands of generations, if not forever.

Of course, economic depressions and state bankruptcies should be avoided, especially in an interdependent globalized economy, but you can negotiate with creditors and you can reschedule debts. You can also negotiate with your enemies. But you cannot negotiate with melting glaciers! You cannot reschedule or refuse to pay environmental debts – and, of course, an environmental collapse will also entail an economic collapse.

Money is not the problem. As the great British economist John Maynard Keynes said, "Whatever a society can do, it can also finance." The rules of global money creation can be changed tomorrow, e.g., by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (as proposed by George Soros) or by a new institution (as proposed by Joseph Stiglitz) to create the financing needed to meet our responsibilities to the poor and future generations. No country under attack ever said: "Sorry, we can't afford to defend ourselves, because it would conflict with our monetary policy and threaten our inflationary targets." To claim that doing our utmost to reduce climate chaos is too expensive is tantamount to the richest generations ever declaring that they cannot afford to live on this planet!

In a world ruled by money, those who make the rules of money creation, rule. So the first – perhaps rather boring – task for anyone wanting to build a better world is to understand these rules, and learn about monetary reform. You may be dismissed as a crank – and there <u>are</u> cranks in this area – but this is a price worth paying to understand where power lies and how it can be shifted. (As you know, a crank is a very useful investment for shifting heavy weights!)

To meet our global responsibilities we need to move from money-based to science- and ethics-based policies. We can no longer afford to focus on what is politically "realistic" today. That route has been tried and failed, as the climate chaos news reminds us. We need to understand and highlight what is *necessary* – and then work to make this "realistic." We need to reunite our politics and economics with the real world.

After I questioned the priorities of Nobel Laureates in Economics at a debate in Stockholm a few years ago, the director of the Nobel Foundation told me, "When we had zero growth in Sweden, we had 15% unemployment." That is indeed the problem as the current global economic model has only two alternatives: stop "growth" and face mass unemployment and social collapse, or continue "growing" and face environmental breakdown – followed of course by social collapse.

But surely we have the knowledge and resources to do better than that, matching unmet global needs (e.g., the rapid expansion of renewable energies) with the hundreds of millions of unemployed and underemployed in the world looking for work! This requires systematic thinking. There are books with titles like *Factor 4* and *Factor 10* describing how we can keep our quality of life with a fraction of the energy we now consume. When I asked one of the authors why this is not yet happening, he replied that it would need a thorough ecological tax reform and other regulatory changes that were outside the scope of his expertise.

We need new rules which enables – indeed, mandate! – the financial sector to stop funding problems and start funding solutions.

The insurance industry finds itself with a similar problem. It knows very well that many of its profitable investments, which enable it to pay out for the increasing costs of environmental disasters, are made in the very industries co-responsible for these disasters. What to do? It cannot very well invest all its funds in solar energy companies like SOLARWORLD, whose shares have already gone up 12,000% in recent years. We need new rules which enables – indeed, mandate! – the financial sector to stop funding problems and start funding solutions.

Funding solutions, which no longer externalize environmental costs, will of course for that very reason be less profitable in the short-term. But "business as usual" is a recipe for disaster as 70-80% of the value of financial investments depend on the expectations of future capital flows, which require environmental and social stability.

For the true entrepreneur, the challenges we now face – the reconstruction of our entire production and consumption systems within ecological limits – is the greatest opportunity ever: a new industrial revolution. The coming years will soon separate these true entrepreneurs from the lobbying defenders of privilege, who will be swept away by history, like the buggy producers after the introduction of the motor car.

To summarize so far: "Globalization" is a world order based on one dollar one vote. It undermines political democracy and the legitimacy of governments. But markets cannot function without regulation accepted as legitimate by all participants. Therefore, this form of globalization ultimately undermines itself. It self-destructs environmentally by ruining its natural base, and socially by destroying the sense of community and justice, on which functioning markets depend. From a security aspect, it is creating a world of increasing conflicts over ever-scarcer resources.

After the end of the Cold War, one of Margaret Thatcher's closest advisors described his horror when reflecting on what would have happened if an armed conflict had developed in the 1980s with the (already disintegrating) USSR. He was convinced that Thatcher – with his support – would have urged President Reagan to initiate a nuclear attack. If this had happened, would not future generations have looked back on them as worse criminals than Hitler, Stalin and Mao combined? "How could we ever," he asks, "have believed anything so preposterous?"

We Must Act Quickly

If we do not change course quickly, we will be in the same situation – the only question being whether our grandchildren will look on us as criminal or mad! But can we act quickly? Of course! Once we base our global policies on our common human "birth instinct" – our responsibility to hand over a better world to our children – then big steps become possible. Indeed, in times of crisis they are often easier than small steps, as they are seen as "problem-realistic" and therefore can more easily inspire and mobilize. So one reason for our failures so far may be that we have not thought big enough.

Al Gore compares climate chaos to the threat from fascism, when thousands of US and UK factories were converted to serve the war economy within months. Today we need a political policy, economic, legal and institutional framework for the reconstruction of our energy systems and industrial base in order to move from climate chaos to climate security as soon as humanly possible. This requires eminently doable reforms, the costs which pale into insignificance compared to the consequences of further delays, including:

- progressively tightening product energy efficiency standards and banning the least efficient every year to encourage innovation;
- reconditioning existing buildings with the help of energy-saving technologies (as is being done in Germany) and insisting on maximizing the uses of renewable energy in new buildings (as in Barcelona);
- a global construction program of mass transport systems and fast rail services; and
- an ecological tax reform, shifting the tax burden from work to resource consumption.

These measures would also provide millions of jobs.

What is Stopping Us?

So what is stopping us? It is not a question of markets *or* regulations. You cannot have one without the other, for markets respond to the ethical, political and legal framework within which they operate.

The price of human freedom is – to quote the philosopher Ernst Bloch – the risk that the great historical moment may encounter too small a human race – one not up to the challenge. The outcome this time will depend on each one of us. We cannot rely on "those up there" to act on our behalf, for rarely have the powerful been so confused and divided. This also applies to US conservatives. In his book, *Crunchy Cons*, Rod Dreher of the Dallas Morning News quotes E. F. Schumacher ("the essence of civilization is not in a multiplication of wants but in the purification of the human character") and concludes: "A society built on consumerism will break down eventually for the same reason socialism did: because…it also treats human beings as mere materialists." Strangely, civil society seems afraid to take the lead. At the recent UN-sponsored tripartite (governments, parliamentarians, civil society) conference on democracy, Third World governments complained about the timidity of civil society demands.

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The CO_2 reduction demands of major environmental organizations are considerably below what the scientific consensus now sees as necessary to prevent catastrophic runaway climate change. There are several reasons for this failure of civil society to capitalize on the fact that they have been largely right (and governments and business largely wrong) for the past 30 years about the need for an economic order that respects natural limits.

The first reason is civil society's mistrust of politics – not just of individual politicians, but of the whole political sphere. In ancient Greece, the citizen engaged in public affairs was a "polites." The one who did not get involved was an "idiots." Today most people feel it is the other way round: you have to be an idiot (or power-hungry) to want to get involved in politics. But without trusted leaders, societies perish in times of crisis – as analysts of power from Confucius to Machiavelli have noted. We need to make the relationship between civil society and the political world more open. Setting up a political party, especially on the local or regional level, is sometimes the most effective way to achieve change. There is nothing wrong with one-issue parties! To understand what political power is and how politics works, you need to engage in it. I served one term as a member of the European Parliament and once set up a one-issue party in my native Sweden. The experiences were invaluable!

Another challenge is the reactive, problem-fixated thinking and value relativism so dear to many progressives. Those now in power may talk of competition, but they are very good at cooperating, funding for the long-term, creating institutions, supporting careers and forming alliances.

Progressives, on the other hand, prefer to support victims, often jump from one issue to another and have an aversion to creating institutions. There is much competition, and mergers between NGOs are very rare. Many are afraid to affirm their values, because values are supposed to be relative and personal – and all equally valid. Thus, I was told on a previous US visit that the name of the Right Livelihood Award is "too judgmental" because it implies that there are wrong livelihoods. Well, of course, there are – otherwise we would not be in this mess! Fortunately, our ancestors saw things differently; otherwise, they would never have started campaigning against slavery. For who mandated the campaigners? Only their consciences!

I set up the Right Livelihood Awards in 1980 and they have been presented in the Swedish parliament – with support from all parties – since 1985. They were recently called "the world's premier award for personal courage and social transformation." I wanted to honor and support "projects of hope," exemplary solutions to the most

urgent challenges we face. Many recipients are controversial in their countries and such an award can protect them. It opens doors, including prison doors, but also doors to further recognition and support. By selecting award recipients, we make a value statement. Have we been accused of not understanding African or Asian values? Yes, we did receive such complaints from the ambassadors of the dictators in Nigeria and Indonesia when we honored human-rights campaigners in their countries.

It is said that the West puts greater emphasis on individual and the East on communal rights, and that is no doubt so. But governments who suppress individual rights are unlikely to let community rights flourish!

Common Human Values

We have many common human values. We all want to be respected and be able to trust. We all want to hand over a better – or at least not a deteriorated – world to our children. If that had not been a common human value for a very long time, we would be extinct by now!

All great political victories – the abolition of slavery, the vote for women, civil rights – were won because they became moral/ethical issues, so that the status quo increasingly conflicted with society's sense of right and wrong. Today we need to turn climate chaos, growing wealth and income gaps and the continuing nuclear threat into moral and ethical issues, asserting our values of human and environmental health – and flourishing!

Another obstacle is the widespread aversion to new institutions. Many prefer to believe that existing ones can somehow be made to do the job. But, as Thomas Jefferson said, the most important task of every generation is to create appropriate institutions. And, to quote Hannah Arendt, "the spirit of renewal needs its own institutions." Thus, in 1945, we did not revive the League of Nations. Our rulers know this, which is why they spent so much time in the 1990s creating the World Trade Organization (WTO), although there already existed a UN body for trade (UNCTAD). But they wanted one which served their interests.

Today we are embarking on the most difficult journey humanity has ever undertaken. We need to ensure that the interests of future generations are heard and respected when decisions affecting them are taken. This requires an ongoing forum dedicated to implementing the required policies and not just another short-term commission, passing resolutions for others to deal with. It requires an institution of moral power, which can look at the whole, many-faceted challenge facing us. His Holiness The Dalai Lama (and others) have long called for such a body – a global conscience, whose influence will grow as it begins to fill this gap among global institutions. Our ancestors, although much less able to influence the future, had such bodies, sometimes called Councils of Seers into the Future, which had to approve major decisions. Such councils are needed on all levels, with formal mandates to ensure that decision-makers have to take them seriously. In Switzerland, there is now an initiative to create such Future Councils on the cantonal (regional) level.

The World Future Council – which will be launched in Hamburg (Germany) in May – will link moral authority with political power.

A World Future Council

But in this globalized interdependent world, we also need a World Future Council (WFC). For existing global institutions are failing in their most basic duty – to offer the leadership required to sustain life on earth. The World Future Council – which will be launched in Hamburg (Germany) in May – will link moral authority with political power. It will work closely with policymakers worldwide to implement national legislation and to create binding international agreements based on best-practice solutions. It will expand the boundaries of what is regarded as politically realistic, building on previous initiatives, which have been too narrowly focused or lacked the necessary follow-up.

The World Future Council is a uniquely broad institution with members from governments, parliaments, civil society, business, science and the arts. Councillors – "planetary elders", global pioneers and visionaries – are world citizens, serving in a personal capacity. I am very happy that David Krieger, President of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, has accepted the invitation to join the WFC, as has Frances Moore-Lappé, author of *Diet for a Small Planet*.

The WFC has received very broad international support, as can be seen from the variety and quality of endorsements (see www.worldfuturecouncil.org). The media response has been very positive, with one US publication even writing that WFC could become

the "most influential global political entity in history" (*What Is Enlightenment*? magazine, Sept.-Nov. 2005). German TV has offered to transmit WFC Hearings internationally. The World Future Council does not claim to represent anyone else. But it will have an important normative function at a time when the loud voice of "commercial speech" threatens to drown out all others.

Today we do not need to invent a "new ethics" – as is sometimes claimed. Where would it suddenly come from? But we need to give a stronger voice to our values. Of course, we have always traded and consumed. But never before was "competition for the cheapest" the overriding human goal.

According to Abraham Maslow, the founder of Transpersonal Psychology, it is difficult to practice values like generosity, love and solidarity in a society where the rules, institutions and information streams are all geared to supporting lesser human qualities. So we need to change these rules, institutions and information streams! The World Future Council is part of this global power shift. It will aim to provide:

- a trusted voice speaking up for the interests of our children and future generations;
- an ongoing forum developing policy responses to the key challenges facing us; and
- the moral authority to overcome current reform implementation gaps.

The Council will consist of 50 respected individuals from all over the world, chosen after a global consultation process. Its legitimacy and influence will grow with the quality of its work.

We know what needs to be done to create a world worthy of our highest aspirations. It is time to think and act "outside the box."

A Time to Dare

It is hard to see how we can change course in time without such a voice. That is why the (conservative) Hamburg city government decided – together with a prominent local entrepreneur – to provide the core funding for the WFC's start-up phase. Considerable additional funding is still needed to secure the WFC's future and for it to be able to work to its full potential. In Nairobi, after the UN Climate Conference last November, the WFC held a joint hearing with the e-Parliament for African parliamentarians on legislation to promote the uses of renewable energy. This has already led to the improvement of such legislation in several African countries.

The historian of civilizations, Prof. Arnold Toynbee, noted that most past civilizations collapsed from within when the rulers lost credibility. Moral restraint was lost, fundamentalist fanatics took over and long periods of obscurantism, intolerance and chaos followed. We are facing a similar threat today, only for the first time it is global. But there is no reason why we should succumb to it. We know what needs to be done to create a world worthy of our highest aspirations. It is time to think and act "outside the box." To quote the US anti-slavery campaigner, Rev. William Channing: "There are times in history when to dare is the highest wisdom!"

Jakob von Uexküll

Jakob von Uexküll is the founder of the Right Livelihood Awards, also known as the Alternative Nobel Prizes. These awards have been presented for more than 25 years to individuals meeting the challenges of environmental pollution, the danger of nuclear war, the abuse of human rights and the plight of the impoverished. Von Uexküll is also a founder of the World Future Council, a body of 50 globally recognized wise elders, pioneers and youth leaders, which was formed to give voice to the interests of future generations on issues related to the environment, peace, justice, human development and human rights. The World Future Council seeks to provide an ethical dimension to the most important issues of our time. Von Uexküll is a former member of the European Parliament and the UNESCO Commission on Human Duties and Responsibilities. He has dedicated his life to protecting the welfare of the planet and its citizens, particularly those who are most vulnerable.

Nuclear Age Peace Foundation

The Nuclear Age Peace Foundation initiates and supports worldwide efforts to abolish nuclear weapons, to strengthen international law and institutions, and to inspire and empower a new generation of peace leaders. Founded in 1982, the Foundation is comprised of individuals and organizations worldwide who realize the imperative for peace in the Nuclear Age.

The Nuclear Age Peace Foundation is a non-profit, non-partisan, international education and advocacy organization. It has consultative status to the United Nations Economic and Social Council and is recognized by the UN as a Peace Messenger Organization.

Vision

Our vision is a world at peace, free of the threat of war and free of weapons of mass destruction.

Mission

To advance initiatives to eliminate the nuclear weapons threat to all life, to foster the global rule of law, and to build an enduring legacy of peace through education and advocacy.

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