

BUILDING UNITY AS A PREREQUISITE TO ACHIEVING THE SDGs

Proposal for UN Member States and the Civil Society
in Preparation for the SDGs Summit 2023



Commons Cluster
of the UN NGO Major Group





We are each other's harvest,
we are each other's business,
we are each other's
magnitude and bond

-Gwendolyn Brooks

Despite the hardening of fear between groups of people; peoples and their governments; and Member States within the United Nations, there has been large-scale experimentation with **Nature** aligned forms of **Economy** and **Society**-building approaches among people and businesses at local, state, national and now increasingly global levels. This document is a step toward showing ways forward to build Unity in the implementation of these three dimensions of sustainable development.



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INTRODUCTION

Building Unity as a Prerequisite to achieving the SDGs

The three dimensions of sustainable development–Nature, Society, and the Economy– focus on the Well-being of all life on Earth. Although we are all indivisible and intrinsic parts of the Systems of the Earth, we have come to see ourselves as separate and in competition with one another for scarce resources. The resulting conflict is feeding on itself, making it almost impossible to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

For this reason, in preparation for the 2023 SDG Summit, in an August 24, 2023 Press Release, Secretary-General António Guterres stated, “In a fracturing world overwhelmed by crises, there is simply no alternative to cooperation ... It requires greater solidarity – redesigning today’s outdated, dysfunctional, and unfair financial architecture, climate action and climate justice. Together we can advance reforms to make global frameworks truly universal and representative of today’s world.’

He points out that Unity is needed if the SDGs are to be achieved: “The SDGs Summit in September must be a moment of Unity to provide a renewed impetus and accelerated actions for reaching the SDGs.”

With a population of 8 billion and growing, it may seem daunting to achieve Unity, however, human history reveals that critical pathways have evolved within our systems and institutions to respond to emerging challenges against Life and Well-being to enable us to function in ever growing units.

The UN High Level Political Forums (HLPFs) and the UN SDG Summit are therefore opportunities to take together a vast step to rethink and adopt practices necessary for the continuation of humanity and its ecosystems in wholeness, in a united and integrated manner.

For the purposes of this paper, we have defined Unity as ‘connecting the Well-being of each individual with that of Member States and that of the Global community’.

In what follows, we explore ways to foster and enhance the experience of Unity and to create a unified system which interweaves the three dimensions of sustainable development, builds on the myriad initiatives that exist today, and can lead to a sustainable global economy that unites people worldwide and advances the implementation of the SDGs.

This document was created under auspices of the Commons Cluster of the UN NGO Major Group which creates a channel for civil society at the grassroots to share their best practices with UN Member States. This document builds on one sent to UN Member States in the context of the recent HLPF with the title: Integrating the Laws and Qualities of Nature to Implement the 2030 Agenda. ¹



THE GLOBAL GOALS

[1. UN HLPF : Integrating Laws and Qualities of Nature to Implement the 2030 Agenda - English, Arabic, Chinese, French, Spanish & Russian](#)

Part A

NATURE AT THE HEART OF UNITY

Building Unity as a Prerequisite to achieving the SDGs



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1.

**INSIGHTS ON NATURE AND EVOLUTION:
UNITY IN GROWING DIVERSITY**

Unity has existed since the dawn of the Universe in the form of energy and as an integral part of the evolutionary process, which has resulted in the formation of complex units of matter as electrons, atoms, molecules, living cells, and a plethora of plant and animal species. Our birth from a single celled organism and evolution as multicellular beings, interacting with various forms of matter and energy as subsystems, is a significant part of the Earth System and the larger universal system creating patterns of interconnectedness.

Somewhere in our journey in the Anthropocene era, our conscious connection to Nature has been lost, distancing modern populations from Nature as the source of all nurturing and thriving. This breach in our connection with Nature ultimately lies at the root of all the challenges and harm that must be mitigated by achieving the SDGs.



2.

REESTABLISHING UNITY BY CONSCIOUSLY RESTORING THE ENERGETIC CONNECTION BETWEEN PEOPLE AND NATURE

The Global Coherence Initiative (GCI) investigates the multidirectional interconnectivity of the energy and magnetic field of the Earth and all living systems, including humans, as well as the impact of collective human emotions on the physical world.² GCI research translates into skills training and group applications, empowering large populations to positively impact local and global environments. It provides a scientific understanding of our interconnectedness to motivate equitable social collaboration and environmental responsibility, leading to behaviour changes that reverse our deepening unawareness and disconnect from Nature and unsustainable unchecked consumption and production patterns. This positions humanity as a positive player for the success of the SDGs and the Well-being of our unique biosphere, the Earth, and all life.^{3&4}

Empirical evidence shows that the Earth's magnetic field carries biologically relevant information that measurably influences living organisms and their behavior, including humans. When in physiological coherence, the human heart rhythm oscillates at a frequency of 0.1 hz matching the primary resonant frequency of the Earth's magnetic field and bringing an individual into harmony with Nature. The capacity to enter that inner coherence is a trainable skill that can be activated on the spot, anywhere, anytime. When groups of people gain this capacity, it facilitates synchronization and social coherence with each other, the Earth, and the natural world. When applied by individual human beings, it can promote healing, transform conflicted relationships into collaborative ones; and build the quality of heart-based connection with all life.⁵

2. Alabdulgader, A; McCraty, R; Atkinson, M; York, D; Vainoras, A; Ragulskis, M; Stolk, V. Long-Term Study of Heart Rate Variability Responses to Changes in the Solar and Geomagnetic Environment. [Nature.com/ScientificReports](https://www.nature.com/scientificreports). 2018; 8 (2663): 1-14

3. McCraty, R. New Frontiers in Heart Rate Variability and Social Coherence Research: Techniques, Technologies, and Implications for Improving Group Dynamics and Outcomes. *Frontiers in Public Health*. 2017; 5 (267): 1-13

4. McCraty, R. New Frontiers in Heart Rate Variability and Social Coherence Research: Techniques, Technologies, and Implications for Improving Group Dynamics and Outcomes. *Frontiers in Public Health*. 2017; 5 (267): 1-13

5. This simple process called the Heart Lock Technique is a focus of the HeartMath Institute. It can be applied at any time, in any place.

Step 1. Focus your attention in the area of the heart. Imagine your breath is flowing in and out of your heart or chest area, breathing a little slower and deeper than usual.

Step 2. Activate and sustain a regenerative feeling such as appreciation, care or compassion.

Step 3: Radiate that renewing feeling to yourself and others.

The above recommendation must be viewed only as a model of Unity Building



In contrast, in chronic states of stress or survival mode, more than 1400 biochemical changes impact our physiology, including the part of the brain that perceives life events and reacts to them in a sub-optimal and biased way, regardless of whether there is a real threat to survival. The result is a cascade of neurological and social effects leading to power struggles, domination, aggression, violence, competition, self-over-other, and the consciousness perpetuating inequalities and exploitation of Nature. Hence, shifting large populations from a stressed survival mindset to a thriving and interdependent state is essential to overcoming pervasive challenges such as conflict, fear, denial and more tangibly, access to opportunities and community and leadership provisions such as necessary resources of food, water and healthcare, further inspiring sustainable communities and global Well-being.

GCI's multidisciplinary approach and techniques, when adopted, can help Member States, at low or no cost, dissolve biases, promote collaboration and mutual respect, and foster and accelerate innovative solution-seeking that result in social harmony and improve human and environmental health, shifting communities from conflict and competition to attunement to Nature, collaboration, and Unity.

The above recommendation must be viewed only as a model of Unity Building



3.

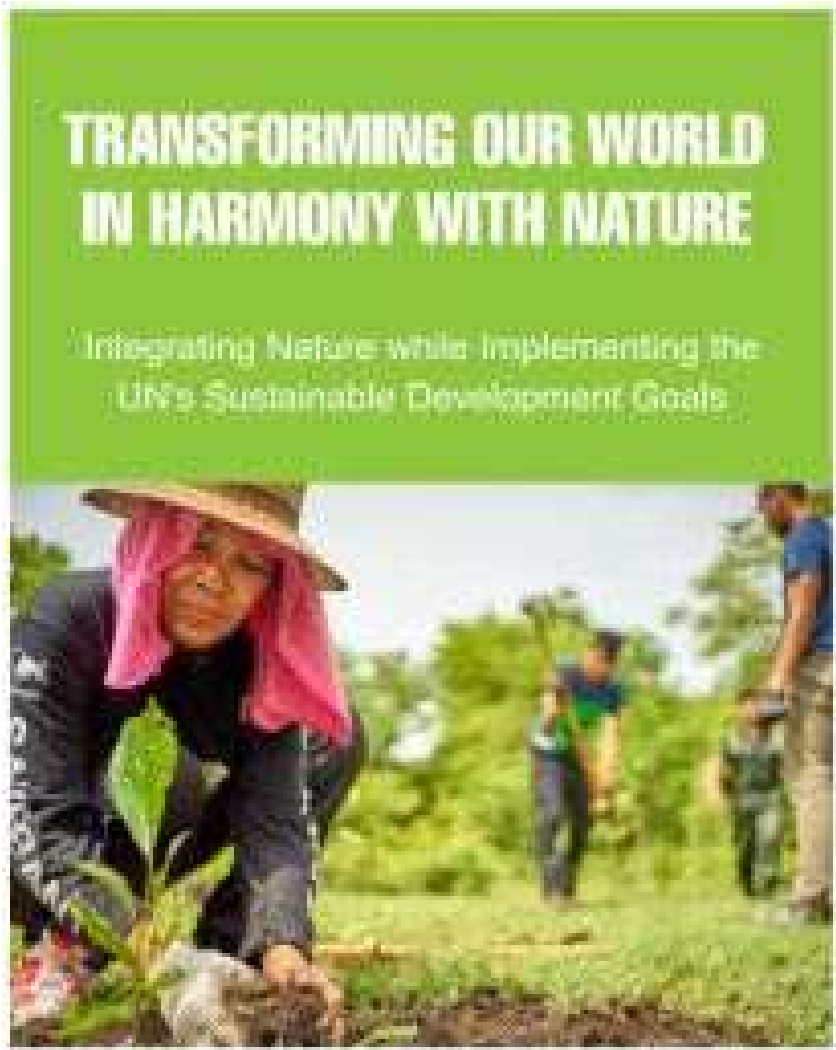
ACTIONS WE CAN TAKE TO INTEGRATE NATURE INTO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ALL SDGs AND MOST OF THE TARGETS

Concrete steps key to achieve Unity by living in harmony with Nature globally, are offered in the trilogy Rights of Nature. Integrating Nature into the Implementation of All of the SDGs. This provides suggested actions that all age groups and many parts of society can take to implement all SDGs and most of the targets in harmony with Nature.⁶This is just one of many such tools being made readily available worldwide.

[6. Integrating a Nature-inspired Approach to SDGs 1, 2, 3, 5, 9, 14 and 17](#)

[Integrating a Nature-inspired Approach to SDGs 6, 7, 11, 12, 15 and 17](#)

[Integrating a Nature-inspired Approach to SDGs 4, 8, 10, 13, 16, and 17](#)



The above recommendation must be viewed only as a model of Unity Building



4.

EXAMPLES OF GRASSROOTS INITIATIVES TO BUILD UNITY BY REESTABLISHING OUR CONNECTION WITH NATURE THROUGH DIRECT EXPERIENCE AND ACTION

Becoming aware of our otherwise unconscious connection to Nature enables us to grow and develop our potential. Many educational approaches address this, some in communities that live close to the land, and some developed by educators like Maria Montessori, J Krishnamurti, Vivekananda and many others who adopt a student-centered educational approach.

Civil society is now becoming increasingly concerned about our loss of connection with Nature. Here are a few examples of initiatives to remedy this:

4a. NATURE AWARENESS ACTION COURSES



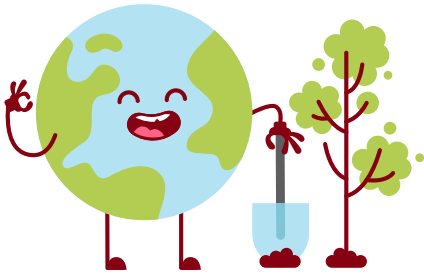
Content and media that can be used by schools, local communities worldwide, civil society organizations, and governments to help children as well as adults to understand Nature better and to bring them on a path of Care for Nature. These involve building awareness of aspects in children's surroundings where Nature has been violated, ways of raising funds towards restoration or raising awareness of how restoration can be achieved, and attracting scientific minds and administrative decision makers to converge as the 'whole' community.

Direct Nature Communication classes are readily available world wide.⁷

7. This website provides information about the books, experiences, films and classes by Dr. Maia Kincaid <https://www.animalcommunicationworld.com/animal-communication-classes>

The above recommendation must be viewed only as a model of Unity Building





4b. UNESCO's Greening Education Partnership

The aim of this initiative is to deliver strong, coordinated, and comprehensive action that will prepare every learner to acquire knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes to tackle climate change and to promote sustainable development.⁸



4c. The BE WELL Village

BE WELL is a Behavior and Well-being framework for Students and their Ecosystem. It is a multi-stakeholder initiative from India that engages parents, teachers, students, schools administration, local administration, and local industry to build regionally cognisant 'villages' of well-being and individual focus. BE WELL reporting invites informed decision making based on behavioural insights by all stakeholders of the immediate social system.⁹

8. <https://www.unesco.org/en/education-sustainable-development/greening-future>

9. [The BE WELL Village & Page 38 of the HLPF Proposal](#)

The above recommendation must be viewed only as a model of Unity Building



4d. AHAM Education (Academy of the Heart and Mind)

Multi-stakeholder projects, engaging traditionally marginalized groups, particularly Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC), women and youth in restoring their relationship to Nature, demonstrate how to target SDGs related to individual well-being, societal and gender equity, and planetary resiliency.

For instance, AHAM Education¹⁰ offers culturally responsive, evidence-based Nature immersion mindfulness and mind-body training and community eco-actions. Through Nature retreats, Mindful community of Practice groups, and Mindful Beach Clean Ups on historically black beaches and tribal lands, professionals, parents, youth, women, volunteers, and leaders are taught to build greater self- and "eco-awareness" and "eco-affinity", resulting in increased engagement in transformative 'eco-action' and legislation around Rights to Nature, soil, waste, PFAS and clean water at the city and state levels in the southeast United States. Several members have joined advocacy efforts at the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) and Water Conference in 2023.



4e. THE community GARDEN MODEL

Local communities are contributing to building Unity worldwide through community gardens where people plant different forms of vegetation ranging from fruits, vegetables, flowers, herbs and more to nurture a garden together, care for it as a community and benefit from each other's plantation as well. The garden symbolizes that space where everyone converges and collaborates.¹¹



10. [AHAM Education & the suggested film trailer - https://youtu.be/HwoZRak0vmw](https://youtu.be/HwoZRak0vmw)

11. www.greenbronxmachine.org

The above recommendation must be viewed only as a model of Unity Building





Section A SUMMARY

Nature is fundamental to everything we do, and to life itself. And therefore, strengthening our connection to Nature supports all the SDGs.

The approaches to connecting with Nature offered here fall into two categories:

1.
Direct inner connection to Nature, which, from infancy to maturity, constitutes the driving force for the development of each individual's potential and global citizenship
2.
Learning best practices in dealing with Nature

The above examples are offered as further support for the well-known legal and other contracts forged within the UN, between groups of Nations, within individual Nations and civil society. For example, the UN General Assembly designated 22 April as International Mother Earth Day; in July 2022, it welcomed a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment as a human right. The Ecuadorian Constitution recognizes the inalienable rights of ecosystems to exist and flourish. The Law of the Rights of Mother Earth is a Bolivian law that was passed by Bolivia's Plurinational Legislative Assembly in December 2010. Finally, the Earth Charter is a well-known civil society initiative.

All these initiatives share the same basic principle that human beings and Nature are a part of one whole which can nurture humankind when Nature is fully respected and protected.



Part B

SOCIETY

Building Unity as a Prerequisite to achieving the SDGs



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1.

INSIGHTS ON SOCIETY: UNITY IN GROWING DIVERSITY

Since people originally wandered the Earth in groups, they have depended on some form of social Unity. As our civilization evolved to cities, governments, and nations, an organization like the UN has become increasingly important, offering information and assistance to the whole global community. Areas of global governance already exist, for instance, in the area of world travel where generally we comply with protocols and pay our “fares” without question. Agencies such as the Universal Postal Union, The International Telecommunications Union, The International Civil Aviation Union, The International Maritime Consultative Organizations, the World Meteorological Organization, the UN’s Commission on Statistics, all oversee elements of global governance and global agreements that we all benefit from.

The next step in our collective evolution is toward a global community which supports everyone. National governments are unable to cope with and resolve threats that are global in nature and are the collective result of our long-standing war on Nature. These threats undermine social structures at individual, local and national levels, and are an obstacle to achieving the SDGs. We propose that, in order to create greater stability, we need to look at smaller, community projects that can be duplicated and upscaled, as a way of building social Unity globally.

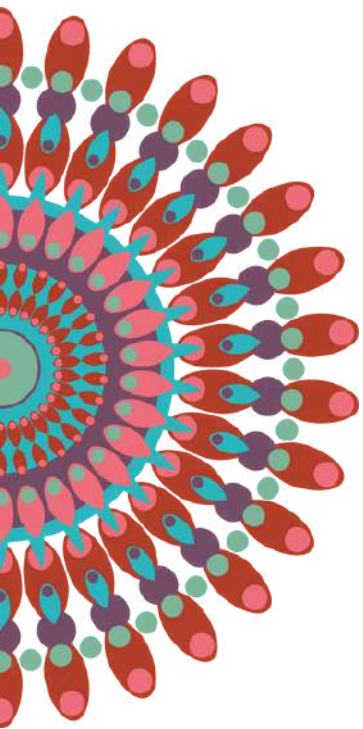


2.

ART BUILDS UNITY BY CONNECTING AND TRANSCENDING CULTURES

One constant has captured how populations in different time periods have lived and responded. This constant, which has risen above all our humanly created institutions, is Art. Art unifies people(s). It speaks 'human' encompassing many forms.

Music comforts people. Paintings and poems present new perspectives. Photography captures the moment. Dance is a celebration of our life. Art gives us opportunities to connect as humans first. Art tends to connect people globally and transcends borders of all kinds. When we are connected as humans first, we can start a dialogue and turn that into an action, which leads to a cultural shift. Unity, Well-being, Partnerships– these are very complex matters. They require us to understand technical jargon of policy and science. Art is multidimensional and nonlinear. We speak multiple languages and have various perspectives rooted in our heritage. Art helps us translate these complexities in developing our message for the masses; and storytelling helps us to stay grounded in universal human experiences to build the aligned action.



3.

CUSTOMARY INTERNATIONAL LAW– BUILDING UNITY BY SETTING COMMON STANDARDS

Many countries across the globe have democratic governments that play a vital role in ensuring the realization of human rights. These rights are the foundation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and of international laws drafted to protect persons, particularly those in vulnerable situations, and to lessen the negative impact of inequalities. The common principles, political perspectives, and traditions that each society represents have made significant contributions to the establishment of standards, which have been uniformly embraced as universal norms, and are considered a source of common law and recognized as principles of International Law.¹²

An example of the above is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which is accepted as common international law and can thus be seen as the basis for universal rights. This was later also developed into the Covenants on Economic and Social Rights that have since been ratified by 171 Governments. The Human Rights Council is a body that is considered by some as one of the more effective bodies in promoting the implementations of international human rights. The Declaration upholds equality of opportunities essential to all sustainable development goals. It addresses access to public information and expression of ideas, public political participation, cultural participation, the quality of life and standards of proper living for an individual and a family. The right to information and participation is crucial for the underprivileged, as stated in Article 19 of the UDHR, Article 19 of the ICCPR, and the Aarhus Convention 1998, also known as The Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making, and Access to Justice in Environmental Rights.

These international laws need to be taught in schools, community centers, and other public places of convergence to help individuals realize the many aspects of their lives to be developed. Such knowledge will mobilize and motivate people at the grassroots to encourage and support their governments to provide institutions that both promote the all-sided development of individuals and also the implementation of SDGs.

12.

https://legal.un.org/ilc/texts/instruments/english/commentaries/1_13_2018.pdf

The above recommendation must be viewed only as a model of Unity Building



4.

LEARNING PROGRAMS ON COMPASSION AND EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE TO FOSTER UNITY

a. Leadership Learning Programs

Ideally, compassion flows from leadership to human communities. Institutions and leaders serve as examples and hence their narrative and aligned action must demonstrate compassion and respect for all life. Such largeness of character requires deep reflection. This suggests new criteria for leadership and communication. Leadership can and must create virtual and live community spaces where civil society groups and individuals, who stand enthusiastically for compassion as the guiding force, can speak and inform leadership.

Leadership can launch national level learning programs on emotional intelligence as core content in all sectors, governmental, military, private business, healthcare, all private sectors, primary to higher education. That would encourage transcendence of positionality, replacing it with authentic dialogue, mediation, listening, and engagement with stakeholders and members of groups, communities, and nations in conflict. Such an approach would minimize the sense of separation which manifests in narrow segregationist thinking and communication, while preserving unique national identities colored by a much larger global community perspective.

b. Seeds of Peace (SOP)¹³

An organization invested in direct and constant engagement with people in conflict zones with an explicit goal of reconciliation. With a core purpose of foundationally humanizing the 'other', SOP brings together adolescents from both sides of a conflict, engages them in deep dialogue, and facilitates the formation of respectful and joyful relationships as a deeply transformative experience, especially at an age where opinions are still being formed. After the three-week long experience at a neutral camp site (in the US), most participants find it impossible to see others as the 'enemy' and leave as friends. When they grow into positions of leadership as adults, the hope is that hatred stops with them.

Seeds of Peace is a significant social contributor to the resolution of long-standing conflict between communities and nations. Its agenda of mainstreaming peace education for sustainable peace and Unity building processes sets a system in motion which curates peaceable, equitable, and just societies and nations concerned with the welfare of human and other sentient beings.

13.

www.seedsofpeace.org

The above recommendation must be viewed only as a model of Unity Building



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5.

TAKING PERSONAL GROWTH FROM INWARD TO OUTWARD: BUILDING UNITY THROUGH GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP & SOLIDARITY

Transcending geo-political positionality, moving from an ego-centric or narrowly nationalistic identity toward world global citizenship and solidarity, are key conditions for achieving SDGs. While many faith-based (Unitarian Universalists, the Amish, the Bahá'í, the Emissaries, etc.) and non-faith-based organizations AHAM Education are focusing their efforts on this goal, a clear example for Member States is the International Environment Forum community Conversations.¹⁴

Another example is the Nautilus 2022 silver award-winning publication, *Global Unitive Healing*, by Dr. Elena Mustakova, which describes the processes - individual, community, national, and global - of moving toward a united world.

14.
www.iefworld.org



6.

ECOCIVILIZATION

This initiative, started in 2022, aims to bring about worldwide convergence on every agenda that affects our Well-being and our interaction with the Earth System. It rests on 5 pillars - Beings, Land, Society, Consciousness and Relationships.¹⁵

In 2023, which is the Year of Water, Ecocivilization continues to invite scientists, artists, social workers and more to deliberate on the agenda of water and what is needed to understand its science, its sacredness, and its future in our hands.

All Country Chairs, some with national level State, District or Province Chairs, work on the agenda of building Unity and Coherence in their regions and address gaps of coexistence across Nature, Society and Economy, and related challenges such as Energy; Power, Poverty, Education, Human Rights, Industry Practices, Mental Well-Being, Biodiversity and a plethora of other themes, through personal effort and collaborative advocacy.

Ecocivilisation also conducts Connectathon, an online event held twice a year on both equinoxes to 'gather humanity for 24 hours' and deliberate on themes such as Ancient Future Wisdom, the Being Rituals, Transformative Technologies, Human Algorithm, Extending Nature, and Nature Aligned Economies in the context of SDGs, Agenda 2030 and beyond.

Ecocivilisation hosts a podcast, a TV show, and has published books such as Coaching for Politicians, Circular Economy, and Magic of Contribution, all aimed at maximizing a mindshift, a heartshift, and a global behavior shift on subjects which have long stood on the sidelines and have therefore contributed to our present day predicament.



15.

www.ecocivilisation.eu

The above recommendation must be viewed only as a model of Unity Building

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7.

THE SMALL ENRICHMENT MODEL— CREATING UNITY THROUGH COMMUNITY DECISION MAKING

The Small community Enrichment Model engages small neighbourhood groups through common garden care, farms care, coffee shop meetings, meal evenings or afternoon, children engagement opportunities, elderly conversations, health to maximise the discussion and exploration of Unity and Well-being and to bring together the present and immediate stakeholders to make well-discussed and cognisant decisions. ¹⁶

The Chocolate House Series (CHS) is an independent project prototype in India which powerfully promotes Unity within community settings, and which can be upscaled. Under CHS, everyone in a small neighborhood is invited twice a month to a local loved-by-all Coffee Shop to engage in an open house discussion. The series was designed and developed to recover from the void created during Covid and has been successful since 2021. It is based on two concepts: one, the Chocolate Houses of the 17th century where people gathered to enjoy and discuss important and impactful ideas of the day; and second, the less reliable but still somewhat relevant idea of the Dunbar Number. Coined by the British anthropologist Robin Dunbar it states that ‘...150 would be the mean group size for communities with a very high incentive to remain together’. Dunbar speculated that as much as 42% of the group’s time would have to be devoted to social grooming.



The Chocolate House Series is managed by rotating teams always comprising all age groups. The youngest member to have designed the communication for one of the evenings has been four years of age, while the oldest speaker has been 98 years of age. All promotional communication is made creatively by neighborhood artists or creative people to keep the engagement ‘pretty and exciting’. The themes are pre-decided and are circulated by way of neighborhood market pin up boards, specifically, not digitally. These themes range from daily after school education, elderly experience sharing on modern social order, horticulture, and neighborhood beautification practices, hot national news and it's emotional impact, caregiver exchange programs, water and energy saving tips, homemade products showcase, health matters, animal care, improving civic provisions and a lot more that can mutually benefit the neighbors, nurtures camaraderie among people of all backgrounds in that neighborhood and solve challenges that normally people learn to live with because of social distancing.

16. [Systems and Models-
ReisRenzulli](#)

The above recommendation must be viewed only as a model of Unity Building

23.



8.

CIRCLES: UNITING THE WORLD USING NETWORKING TOOLS

The Circles project is currently run by a small team of designers and developers by the Social Systems Foundation, a Stockholm-based non-profit. The Circles initiative provides the world with social networking tools that have none of the drawbacks of current social media platforms, while deepening connections between people and focusing on supporting activities in the physical rather than the virtual realm, using the digital to serve the actual.¹⁷

As an open-source networking tool built on a novel global interface that allows users to connect based on both proximity of location and proximity of interests, skills, and values, it is a matching tool for volunteers and local social and environmental projects as well as a project funding platform. Circles also aims to provide tools for video communication, project management, deliberation and voting, and other forms of governance. It is designed to build trust through accountability and reputation while encouraging cooperation and ultimately Unity and Well-being of all involved.

The goal of Circles is to create a tool that does for communities, networks and organizations what WordPress does for the building of websites. Creating your own network should be as simple as creating your own webpage. Beyond this, Circles aims to connect these different networks, allowing the members of one to freely connect and co-create with the members of another. The platform attempts to adopt the most beneficial parts of the dominant social media platforms, but as an open source and not-for-profit, it avoids many of the built-in pitfalls of such models. Circles is on the verge of being upscaled by its independent co-creators actively building and refining its user interface and experience.

17.

SocialSystemsLab

The above recommendation must be viewed only as a model of Unity Building

24.





Section B SUMMARY

In our present climate and other crises, we find that Unity, Well-being, and community building are under threat through the calamities caused by our war on Nature. Attunement to the environment is a prerequisite for communities to flourish; and for people to feel at home and attuned to their societies at the community level.

community groups can be formed around any aspect of human interest: personal growth and development, learning new skills, hobbies, professions, community well-fare. Such groups create good fellowship, inclusiveness, and mutual support. They can be duplicated and upscaled to national and global levels. They help people to feel happier and more content and this in turn builds cooperation when a community or indeed a part of the world is hit by disaster.

Commons indicate how community groups have functioned over long periods of time and can still function sustainably and gain cohesion: A commons consists of:

1. A Commons – a resource, a village green, a business, or a community, a park, Planet Earth
2. Commoners – a group of people who are stewarding or taking charge of this resource
3. Commoning – a way of making decisions, that embraces all those commoners who are stewarding the resource, so that all share in the outcome

This structure is found back in social solidarity societies where the community/society, the Nation or the UN take charge of the Well-being of all those under their jurisdiction in such a way that all benefit and all contribute to the degree and within the scope of their individual capacities. The more such an approach can be implemented in people's lives, the more they feel in control of their own Well-being and open and well-disposed to other members of their communities. Strengthening social interconnections supports the achievement of all SDGs.

Part C

ECONOMY AS A PATH TO BUILDING GLOBAL UNITY NECESSARY TO ACHIEVE THE SDGS

Building Unity as a Prerequisite to achieving the SDGs



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1.

INSIGHTS ON ECONOMY: UNITY IN GROWING DIVERSITY

Global economy has both exponentially increased interconnectedness, and it has also caused disUnity on many levels through the two flaws inherent in our debt-based economy.

One flaw is how money is created in major economies which are currently dominating the world. While Central Banks are responsible for bringing money into circulation, the larger amount of currency in circulation comes about because banks create currency in the form of IOUs. For a debt-based economy to function, people have to keep borrowing to buy things they cannot afford. This is the engine that drives unsustainable consumption and production patterns (SDG 12), fuels our war on Nature, and breeds conflict among those who are competing for natural resources that are becoming increasingly scarce.

The second flaw is that money is lent mainly by banks and by those who have become rich under the banks' umbrella and can therefore afford to make loans. These are paid back with interest so that money goes from the poor to the rich. The rich become richer while the poor become poorer. This is an unbroken cycle of capitalism only permitting a private ownership of capital instead of equitably distributed ownership. This disparity in wealth, and with it, disparity in status and power, becomes an acute problem leading to conflict between groups of people and between people and their governments. In this way disUnity is built into our dominant Western debt-based system.

To overcome these two flaws inherent in a debt-based economy, it is necessary to adjust the flow of currency exactly to the goods and services being traded, ensure that the trade is sustainable and provide all with the means to meet their needs.

Below are some ways in which people are uniting to deal with unsustainable and economically adverse conditions.



2.

BARTER, PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND CURRENCY CREATION

The socio-economic structure of indigenous communities has been characterised by balance between the Well-being (energy) of the part and that of the whole, between the individual, the economic system, and Nature. That economy was a carefully honed system, in which each member was important to the survival of a tribe and to the Well-being of the whole. Such local barter systems tended to build Unity and close attunement to Nature. While this structure may seem idyllic today, we do find economies that still retain many of the above characteristics.



The above recommendation must be viewed only as a model of Unity Building

3.

LOCAL ECONOMIC TRADING SYSTEMS THAT BUILD ECONOMIC UNITY WHERE NATIONAL CURRENCY IS SCARCE

Today barter has mostly evolved into full-fledged monetary or exchange systems. The best known is the LETSystem. Unlike direct barter, LETS members can earn credits from any member and spend them with anyone else on the scheme. Local economies spring up in areas where national currency is in short supply. They are extremely useful to recover from the ravages of the Covid pandemic and jumps in the cost of living, allowing creative abilities to be used for economic gain.¹⁸

The town Woerl in Austria has made a name for itself because for decades local businesses traded in a local currency.

Such informal trading systems provide the opportunity for individuals, companies, and their communities to meld in mutually reinforcing and fulfilling ways. These systems are now even being used nationally, for instance in Australia. The Internet is making further expansion possible. Sarafu Network by Grassroots Economics in Kenya spread across 45 different locations is one such example which is making use of Blockchain & mesh Networks to build and sustain this distributed system.¹⁹

Such local economies not only align the benefits of the individual and of the local trading system, and provide a means for nations to recover in times of economic downturn, but they also ensure increasing alignment and work in harmony with Nature.

18. [LETsystem](#)

19. [Sarafu Network](#)



The above recommendation must be viewed only as a model of Unity Building



4.

THE GLOBAL ECOVILLAGE NETWORK (GEN)

While many informal economies favor sustainability and foster personal development, Ecovillages consciously build Unity and sustainability, and empower people at individual, social, and economic levels. They encourage members to develop their personal potential; decisions are made by the consensus of all members of the community; and they ensure sustainability in all their activities. Their reach is expanding worldwide under the supervision of the Global Ecovillage Network.²⁰

According to WEF Davos 2020, we generate economic value of 44 trillion USD worth annually from natural resources, making the existence of Ecovillages an essential part of our thriving and sustainability.

20. <http://ecovillage.org>



30.

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5.

COOPERATIVES AS ECONOMIC ECOSYSTEMS

The International Cooperative Association, with one billion members worldwide, describes a cooperative as: An autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprise.²¹

Cooperatives share many of the Unity building characteristics of Ecovillages. Examples of a cooperative identity can be any form of business - a bank, an insurance company, a healthcare facility, a village green. The Cooperative identity includes the following characteristics: all members share in the decision-making process, all are directly affected by the performance of the business, and all know that their efforts and contributions benefit them personally, as well as the business. Cooperatives are required to give back to their local communities and to sponsor international development projects. In this way, they foster Unity and Goodwill among their members and their communities at both local and global levels.

21. [What is a Cooperative?](#)

22. [Norway Fund](#)

Cooperative approaches are also employed at the governmental level. For instance, Norway has a fund, called the Government Pension Fund Global. The aim of the Fund is to ensure responsible and long-term management of revenue from Norway's oil and gas resources, so that this wealth benefits both current and future generations.²²

Such government-administered funds provide examples of a basic income for those under their jurisdiction, which empowers people to make a transition to a new global economy. While people increasingly lose faith in the dominant economy, more and more are experimenting with sustainable lifestyles and building effective degrowth practices. One billion people out of 8 billion alone belong to cooperatives. Although these are not necessarily focusing on sustainable living in harmony with Nature, they offer models to mobilize civil society members and governments to explore methods of embodying Unity in achieving the SDGs.



31.

The above recommendation must be viewed only as a model of Unity Building





Section C SUMMARY

In conclusion, unequal access to and benefit from local, national and/or global economies leads to a weakening of the global economy that connects us all. In each country, people are seeking solutions to the growing insecurity, conflict, and scrambling for natural resources.

There are many diverse economic approaches applied by communities worldwide that have become necessary to reinstate given the imbalances created by economies that are currently dominating our world. These adhere to basic principles. they are in harmony with Nature, they benefit all participants equally, they use socio-economic principles that are up-scalable at a global level and they use currencies that accurately reflect the actual trade in goods and services.



A pair of hands is shown against a green background. The left hand holds a clump of dark brown soil, with a small green tree growing from it. The right hand holds a realistic globe of the Earth, showing continents and oceans. The hands are positioned as if presenting or supporting these elements.

Part D

UNITING THE THREE DIMENSIONS OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Building Unity as a Prerequisite to achieving the SDGs



Commons Cluster
of the UN NGO Major Group



Above we defined Unity as connecting the Well-being of each individual with that of Member States and that of the Global community, and a first step in the implementation of the SDGs.

When we have a direct inner connection to Nature, we see that Nature constitutes a powerful driving force for the development of each individual's potential and maturity as global citizens. We have also seen that people from socio-economically diverse backgrounds form local to global levels communities in such a way that all within these communities feel cared for, are able to contribute to the whole, gradually building stable societies. Finally, we have seen that where economies are in harmony with Nature, they benefit all stakeholders equitably by using currency systems that accurately reflect the actual trade in goods and services. These economies are small, however, are able to build pathways that avoid the pitfalls currently undermined by our present global economic systems.

Let us, as an example, look at a space in which a more well-rounded global community can emerge by weaving the following three approaches together in one unifying system:

1. personal development of the individual
2. building action groups that can inspire all people to establish which goods and services can be considered sustainable and which harm them or the planet
3. a digital economy that connects all people and is dedicated to the sale of goods and service each year that are considered sustainable by all

This final section of the paper draws on the insights gathered above to build on the myriad initiatives already in progress around the world. It holds great promise as a path to transition from the less sustainable activities going on today to a sustainable global community which forms one integral whole without merely conflicting with the old. It is known as a Supplementary Income for All and Sustainable Economy for the Earth or the SIFA Plan.



1.

THE SIFA PLAN Supplementary Income For All

The SIFA Plan is an economy that combines characteristics found among those living close to the Earth in spirit and connection, into ways of building sustainable relationships globally between human beings, using all three dimensions of sustainable development. ²³

The comprehensive global system for sustainable development, involving basic income for every woman, man, and child, was conceived by Dutchman Pieter Kooistra as a Marshall Plan for the Earth. It was described in three books, one co-sponsored by the Dutch government. Its economic aspects and currency creation were endorsed by Jan Tinbergen who won the first Nobel Prize in Economics in 1969: "for having developed and applied dynamic models for the analysis of economic processes". As participants in the Commons Cluster of the UN Major Group we have since updated this system.

[23. The SIFA Plan](#)



35.

The above recommendation must be viewed only as a model of Unity Building





ONE

Annual supplementary income for all people to be spent specifically on sustainable goods and services of their individual choosing, half of which can be spent on community development. This helps catapult people out of extreme poverty and supports the poorest to gradually build a more stable future, while coming to grips with the pandemic and other endemic challenges.

TWO

Phased annual global consultations in which all are urged to participate to determine which goods and services can be considered sustainable in any given year and thus available for purchase with people's supplementary income. These small group global consultations will align the individual self-interest of all members, the business, and the industry who stand to benefit significantly from this new global marketplace. Since all members consider specifically which goods and services nurture their individual Well-being and which are a threat, these consultations can help to dissolve the hardening positions and conflict between and within governments worldwide and between governments and their peoples, which are currently impeding progress in dealing with common threats. They will also encourage those to whom a small supplementary income is negligible, to consider vast new opportunities for finding sustainable and more profound personal Well-being. These consultations can take place in local communities, schools, within professional or hobby groups, and can build on the many initiatives currently promoting sustainable development.

THREE

A global electronic marketplace where all people can spend their supplementary income on the goods and services decided by the global consultations ideally involving all people each year. This can exist next to currently less sustainable economies and will gradually encourage the movement toward sustainability in all economies. As people become increasingly conscious of the imperative of living sustainably, new markets open up for what nurtures, as opposed to what harms and destroys. This marketplace will increasingly cater to non-material goods and services as people's physical needs are met and most redundant jobs are automated.

ONE

SIFA encourages its members to consciously learn to distinguish and respond to those inner pathways that help to develop our personal potential and recognize how they differ from the directives given to us by other people that help us to conform to social norms. It is a delicately managed journey to individual improvement, achieved by providing every woman, man and child with what would start out as a small supplementary income which they receive once a year and spend on sustainable goods and services and on their personal development.

TWO

Currency creation for a basic income for all people that fuels the parallel sustainable economy. The currency to finance the supplementary income for all is created for the reason currency was first introduced: to facilitate the bartering of diverse items that are traded. Kooistra called the currency the UNO Dollar. The amount of trade that can take place via a global electronic marketplace is estimated at the outset of each year, money is created and after paying for the costs of running the system, it is divided equally among all people as a basic income. In this way, fundamental principles of money creation are employed to finance a small basic income for all people. Goods and services can be purchased in bulk for this global network at low prices thus making it possible to pay for the extra expenses of running the system. Each year any income not used would be annulled to counter inflation and deflation.

THREE

The value of money has changed since the system was first developed in the early 1980's, it is now estimated that it would amount to the equivalent of USD 500 per person a year. If each family member lives below the poverty line where people earn the equivalent of USD 400 a year, this is a fortune that can help them rise above the poverty line and contribute to social mobility. Inhabitants of a village can pool half their income to get a water pump, build waste and renewable energy systems safeguarding people's health and saving, especially women and children, many hours seeking fuel and hauling water that can then be spent on education, for food production or building a cottage industry.



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FOUR

While the equivalent USD 500 p.a. is negligible for many people, this new global marketplace can be attractive to many businesses which are already under pressure to produce more sustainably. They are likely to advertise producing sustainable goods and services for this new market with the benefits for health and Well-being. The advertising campaign praising the benefits of products and services for wellness, fulfillment of personal potential and well-being are more than likely to affect people's desirability thus making way for healthier and more sustainable lifestyles.

FIVE

All infrastructure required for this plan is already available to be upscaled and so the implementation will require steps with which our world is already well-acquainted. These include a resolution by UN Member States to request the Secretary General to make a study and a concurrent study by UNMS in an Open Working Group along with inputs from the Civil Society. Both of these bodies would reflect and plan on how existing infrastructure in the UNO System can be applied to facilitate this next step.



NO
NATURE

Part E

CONCLUSION MOVING FORWARD TO BUILD ON THE ABOVE TOWARD VISION 2030

Building Unity as a Prerequisite to Achieving the SDGs



Commons Cluster
of the UN NGO Major Group

What emerges as a key conclusion of this document is the need for much closer collaboration between UN Member States and civil society. Member States can form a group of Friends of Unity to Implement the SDGs and collaborate with civil society on creating a comprehensive list of available governmental and civil society initiatives already taking place. Global outreach can be undertaken via UNMS and CSOs, including huge networks of the service organizations to build greater understanding and expanded thinking about Agenda 2030. The SIFA Plan can be integrated as a step toward the implementation of all Sustainable Development Goals.

Further, it may be helpful to:

- Identify action campaigns likely to get a large share of the world population to participate that would move the global needle on various SDGs (e.g. using World Bank Statistics)
- Design and deploy a campaign to get the mass media talking about the initiative, calling for widespread participation to achieve Agenda 2030
- Engage national leaders to call for maximum participation by their networks
- Reinforce media publicity at the national and local level calling for participation towards the implementation of SDGs
- Ensure every local official is briefed and is thus ready to support efforts which maximize local participation
- Collaborate with NGOs, Foundations, Associations and Corporations at global and national levels to maximize participation on Agenda 2030 being the immediate unitary goal worldwide

This wide-scale vision requires a sequence of simple actions in which the bulk of the world population can participate, as well as much wider publicity by the global, national, and local media on the merit of SDGs and of initiatives aligned to implement them.

It is important to leverage the principle of 'economies of scale'; to maximize local participation and success in bringing about the achievement of the SDGs at a global level. This would ensure participation by almost every community in the world so that the sum of all the local actions will bring about the needed global results.

There are millions of initiatives worldwide that can help us strengthen the three dimensions of sustainable development outlined here. This document could be followed by meetings between representatives of Civil Society and those within Member States UN Missions. Those who can then look at ways to radically increase our abilities and accelerate present attempts to ensure we enjoy and leave a world worthy of being inherited by our next generations in its true to Nature form, that which stands on the fundament of Unity and nurtures Well-being.



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BUILDING UNITY AS A PREREQUISITE TO ACHIEVING THE SDGs

Proposal for UN Member States
and the Civil Society
in Preparation for
the SDGs Summit 2023

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