

## GLOBAL CHARTER - MAKING SUSTAINABILITY A LEGAL REQUIREMENT

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The world is at a threshold of new and major opportunities and problems. Many are understanding that these opportunities and problems are global and will result in major social changes. A growing number of people sense that something is very wrong. The earth is crying; life is crying, if we could only hear it. What started out dull is getting louder. Just stop for a moment and listen, sense the pain. People are hungry, but there is enough food; people are looking for work, but there is a lot of work to do. We live in a very strange world. Forty thousand children die every day of malnutrition related diseases. Their mothers and families react as you or I would to our children dying; just because they are poor or have other children at home, does not mean their emotions are less. I do not know how to make this more real to civilisation than just as a statistic. How can we be civilised and let this happen? People have a growing willingness to set things right, to do "something" but have no direction regarding what needs to be done.

Several years ago, I began to think about these problems and attempted to formulate some long-lasting (sustainable), global, and just solutions.

First, justice is going through a paradigm transition. Historically, justice has been defined as impartiality. These concepts are incorporated in the great doctrines of humankind. However, as we advance socially and technically, it is clear that we must go beyond impartiality to achieve justice. We need to implement a justice that provides equal opportunity as well which, because of our advanced communications and computing technology, we can now achieve for everyone through education. The time has come not just to bring equal rights, but equal opportunity to everyone. The consequence of impartiality is guaranteed justice in the process but not the result. In a court room, this means that criminals have gone free if there was an error committed by the police in the process of bringing them to justice. In society, this means that large discrepancies in income is acceptable as long as there was no interference in the system, usually as defined by those that have the most to gain by the system. The consequence of equal opportunity is guaranteed justice in the result but not the process. In a court room, this means that the criminal is punished appropriately if they are guilty. In society this means that we all have access to opportunity equally. Justice is both, impartiality and equal opportunity.

My concept of utopia is that it is both a challenge and an opportunity. We now have the ability to provide a computer with communications to everyone in the world. The United States debt alone would have been enough money to provide a computer with a communications system to every man, women and child alive on earth. This can be used to educate as well as provide the challenge and opportunity that will make everyone productive and potentially happy. As part of a global charter, electronic access to education and information needs to be provided to everyone.

Current computers are designed for the literate and capable. We now need to develop a computer from the ground up, for the illiterate, to educate them and provide media access. A program to develop such a new system should be started immediately with the co-operation of the private sector. It needs to be an appliance for people, not exposed to technology, where learning becomes transparent. People, in general, like to know, not learn.

Developing nations need a wide distribution of information and information technology so they can become part of the global community. Geography is being replaced with communities of interest. Knowledge is the best and ultimate substitute for other resources that may be lacking in developing nations. Knowledge is also a universal source of power since it is available and in the grasp of the poor and rich equally. Wireless two-way voice, data, video communications is required to provide and receive useful data anywhere in the world. Information, instead of energy, is becoming the world transformation mechanism. Communications is substituting for transportation. We need smarter devices that people, who have never used a phone, can use; communication appliances with more benefits than features. Fifty percent of the world's population has never used a telephone but, where they are being installed in developing countries, the calling revenue is quickly paying for the development of the network. The elements required for new and expanded public telecommunication systems are for the government to play absolutely no role in determining the content and the need to provide sufficient funds to do the job right.

Other world issues such as pollution, debt - Is the world bankrupt? - over-consumption, income inequality, poverty, population growth, status of women, biodiversity, environmental issues, economics, war and peace, ethics/corruption, and global corporations also need to be addressed. These can only be addressed in the context of a world organisation that promotes equal opportunity within nature's constraints. Violating nature's constraints has endangered civilisation. The world and humankind will survive but the condition of that survival, the potentialities, have a wide range of possibilities and we now are determining which of these potentialities will be realised.

To inaugurate discussions and, as a call to action, a "Constitution of the World" was formulated. It is not a substitute, nor is it inconsistent with the United States Constitution or other democratic constitutions that I am aware of. This Constitution sets the goals, not the rules. Execution, i.e., action and implementation are, for the most part, left to the individual Nation-States, cultures, or sub-cultures, the smallest organisation or the lowest level that can implement them. Some of the main points of the document are:

- All policies must be consistent with a sustainable environment.
- The individual is sovereign. The form of government is a democratic/republic. Each person has a right to vote directly on each issue or through their representative as a proxy.
- The central Federation and each Region (continent) has one House of Congress. These Houses of Congress act as check and balance on each other. This provides efficiency which will be needed in the fast-paced environment we are living in but does not compromise security.
- There is a Business Committee made up of officials elected by businesses which have an integral role in government. Many transnational corporations are economically larger than countries and have greater influence on the daily lives of people. We need to accept this reality and welcome participation by business in government. Give and take (buying and selling) and responsibility for one's actions (Karma) is a basic spiritual law that business follows. Business needs to be part of the solution.
- Supreme Court decisions are required to be made in the context of both law and society. A mechanism is established for the citizens to overturn a Supreme Court decision.
- Economic growth is tied to environmental sustainability and attempts to provide for a more equitable distribution of opportunities and challenges in the world. The defence budget shall never exceed the medical or educational budget, except under unusual circumstances. The percentage of wealth held by the top five percent of the population is also limited.
- Free trade, free flow of capital, and competitive access to raw material are established.
- Corporations receiving funds through public offerings are required to return at least ten percent back to the government.
- Money from the Federation will be put aside in an interest bearing account for each person born to provide increased opportunity in their future.
- Education for humanity, as well as traditional subject matter, are stressed with electronic access to education and information provided to everyone.
- Ethics is provided a prominent and formal position.
- Human Rights, including securing the rights to the substantive base for indigenous people, are enumerated and guaranteed. There are provisions for a religious/ethnic forum to discuss issues and to provide recommendations.
- Provision is made for government and industry to co-operate, to support technology, to establish long and short term goals, and to establish world-wide standards of communications. These decisions are made considering the social and environmental impact they have.
- Weapons are limited to single action devices. All mass destruction weapons need to be eliminated when there is no threat from other sources with mass destruction weapons. Defence personnel can be deployed to support social causes.
- Nation-States have the right to experiment with different forms of government. Their boundaries will be guaranteed. To change boundaries peacefully requires a two-thirds vote by the people in the area immediately affected and a majority vote of the region. All debt between members is forgiven.

These may sound idealistic at times but, it is better that we establish idealistic goals for the future than goals that are strictly practical from our current view and experiences. The great doctrines of humanity were all considered impractical at one time, including democracy. Idealism is not only realistic for the future but is necessary. Coexistence should be replaced with inter-existence. We need to provide the framework for a positive sum game where societies complement and compete.

Given this introduction, I would like to concentrate on the environmental aspect of this global charter. The document states that the world has "...the responsibility to protect nature. All policies, including economic, shall provide for a sustainable environment. Environmental crimes are crimes against humanity. The responsible person or head of the responsible organisation or corporation shall be accountable for environmental crimes." It goes on to discuss how the artificial low cost of products resulting from the failure to consider environmental impact, the use of depressed labour standards, and the use of artificially low cost energy sources are eliminated. Product costs will go up to reflect the additional social costs that have been disregarded for so long. This would decrease demand and increase the money available. Al Gore, Vice President of the United States, has said that "What we tax, we get less of and what we subsidise, we get more of." Currently we are taxing work and subsidising resource depletion so we get unemployment and waste. The market should be the first method used to determine the price on environmental choices. Markets are voting machines and function by taking referenda. If the people are sovereign, then in a market economy, the market is sovereign.

Sustainability "is a form of development that satisfies current human needs without jeopardising the resource base on which future generations depend." Sustainability that centres on quality of human life is what is worth struggling for. Divorcing the ecologic from the social and human environment cannot lead to effective solutions. We are presently trying to solve all our economic, social and political problems by increasing production. Supply side economics has developed an attitude that one wants what the other has, and one wants it now. Immediate gratification

has cost us a lot. It has prevented us from differentiating what is urgent from what is important. We are continually pursuing the urgent, or rather our perception of the urgent, rather than the important which is frequently much longer term. The more one increases production, the more one needs to increase production. This creates an unstable situation. Consumerism and over-consumption are a symptom; not the disease.

Possibly the greatest and most immediate threat to global society is the growing wealth inequality. This led to the downfall of the first democracy in Athens. Democracy is not guaranteed. It also was a major factor that led to the Great Depression and will lead to .... When the power of the people are in the hands of the rich, the people have very little else to lose.

We are all seeking. Consumerism is a way station on the path, a hope that what we are seeking is as easy as getting something more, but it is not. When we find "it," we don't need consumerism. We need to get control of differentiating what we need from what we want and, maybe even, why we want it. There is something going on; we just don't know what. When we find "it," we'll also find we have enough to go around. Whatever "it" is, it is not more things. In the end, it is not what you have, but what you have done that counts; yet most compete on what they have; who is the richest? We know who the richest person in our country or in the world is but, we do not know who has done the most good or given the most. We get what we measure; we need to measure doing good/giving and make it a standard of success, even in business. We need to measure what one gives, rather than gets.

There is an emphasis throughout this document on co-operation between business and government. There is also a desire to influence business to consider the environmental impact of their products. This should become a competitive advantage since it promotes development of more efficient processes, increases productivity, decreases cost of compliance, and opens new strategic markets. In fact, the larger the corporation, the more that corporation has to gain by rigid environmental rules since the larger corporation can amortise the costs of meeting those rules over a much larger number of units. Stakeholders and especially stockholders should be involved in decisions. Production should reflect the full environmental cost during the life of the product including final disposal. The value of companies in the market should be partly based on the companies ability to produce with sustainable and clean development and production.

Defence personnel can be used for civil and social service support; including, rapid deployment of goods and services necessary to maintain life. There is no differentiation between soldiers and green soldiers. They would be a well-equipped, well-financed, rapid action strike force trained and prepared to address ecological issues.

In this document, a new and simple model for economic organisation has been developed that should provide for more equitable distribution of funds and opportunity in the world. This, in itself, will go a long way to solve deep world problems like overpopulation or food supply. Economic growth is based on population change, the needs of the citizens, and the desired improvement in the standard of living that is attainable within a sustainable environment. This economic structure provides enough money to do, but not necessarily to have. Full employment and supplementary benefits are provided for. However, people receiving these benefits must be on a program that will lead to independence from them. The percentage of wealth held by the top five percent of the population is limited. Defence spending is limited and cannot exceed the medical or education budget. The budgeting is also forced to provide funds for long term programs. Free trade, free flow of capital, and competitive access to raw material are established. Corporations receiving funds through public offerings such as stocks or bonds, are required to return at least ten percent back to the government. This return represents a dilution for the corporation but increases the importance of co-operation between business and government as well as decreasing the government's need for outside money. More minor additions are that campaign funds are limited and only provided by the government; the expectation that retirement age will change with longevity to decrease the need for social service funding, and a provision that some government money will be put aside in an interest bearing account for each person born to provide increased opportunity in their future.

Multiple factors are active in making the international economy very unstable. These include:

- the dislocation of international capital movement from trade
- countries living beyond their means. The real cause is overvalued currency, artificial low prices and virtual rationing through shortages and/or black market.
- the large world-wide debt. All world financial crises involved debt that has become dangerously out of scale in relation to underlying means of payment.
- tension between defence, consumption, and investment

There is not enough money in the reserves of the world's banks to significantly affect the exchange. An improved monetary system that follows policies consistent with the gold system (although not on gold system) and/or a tax on currency exchanges will result in more revenue for the nation-states and temper the misalignment between capital flow and trade. Currency is still based on trade flows but capital transfers are 40-50 times the trade flow. We need to move capital where it is wanted and needed and we could use exchange rate taxes to affect where the flow goes. Action is important to avoid economic as well as political totalitarianism. There are four ways in which pressure on the balance of payments produced by a change in circumstances that is affecting international transactions can be met:

- counterbalancing changes in the currency reserves (but not practical now because reserves are so low)

- change general level of internal prices and income
- change in exchange rates
- greater control over transactions involving foreign exchange

Poverty has become big business. Only a small percentage of the money provided to the poor ends up for the poor. Poverty must not be profitable for businesses. Entrepreneur grants directly to individuals would decrease corruption and increase motivation of the people in developing countries. It provides a mechanism to redistribute wealth with dignity and a way of redistributing power to be more symmetrical. Increase the rewards for success and decrease the punishment for failure.

Education is a key to implementing any world-wide policy. Educating for understanding, tolerance, and co-operation is stressed. Knowledge is not a limited resource and should act as our great equaliser. Children should be involved with personal environment impact experiments and there should be environmental instruction in school. There should be personal environmental impact feedback to the rest of the population as well. This would provide an assessment of our personal impact on the environment and how to change to decrease that impact.

Ethics is provided a prominent and formal position in the world government. An ethics review board will be established to provide ethics guidelines, and aid implementation and monitoring of ethics programs. Any organisation or program receiving public funding is required to have a formal ethics policy. Government secrecy can only be applied to areas that are vital.

I would just like to make a few comments about the structure envisioned for global co-operation. The basic organisation is a central government that operates in conjunction with five regions (continents). The central government and regions each have a legislative body: a Senate for the central government which consists of 20 members from each region, and a House of Representatives for each region which consists of members from Nation-States in that region, the number depending on the population. Each legislative body of the central government and regions also has a Business Committee which is equal in size to five percent of the respective House of Congress. The central government and each region have an Executive branch (President) and a Judicial branch, which consists of a Supreme Court, lesser courts and mediators. The mediators play a significant role in local intervention to avert and resolve problems.

Meetings are held electronically. An annual confidence/no confidence vote by the people is established. A "no confidence" vote requires a general election within three months for all offices except those just filled.

To establish a law requires a majority vote by all citizens directly or by proxy through their representatives in their respective House of Congress (Senate for the Federation and House of Representatives for the Regions). Transnational corporation's representatives are provided a formal advisory role and a significant role in establishing policies.

There is an emphasis placed on the social responsibility of Supreme Court decisions and the need to have these decisions made in the context of both law and society. There is a mechanism to overturn Supreme Court decisions. The respective House of Congress through a two-thirds vote can call for a general citizen vote on Supreme Court decisions. Lesser courts and mediators are also established.

In all this, there is an attempt to emphasise the dignity of humankind and to emphasise that this document only sets minima; humanity must strive for higher ends to achieve a society when no minimum standards are necessary.

The implementation of this document must be based on the principles of the document. Therefore, the way to implement this is through referenda in each Nation-State. First, a mechanism needs to be established in each Nation-State to provide for legally binding initiatives established through a referendum; then the global charter needs to be presented to the people and let them decide.

Finally, I would like to share the preamble of this document with you. The rest of the document, which appears in the following chapter is an attempt to implement those principles. Unless you disagree with anything in the preamble, then the rest provides a means for its implementation and I would welcome any comments or criticisms related to the goals, as stated in the preamble or in its implementation.

We, the people of planet Earth, in order to form a more perfect world based on a sustainable environment for the benefit of all generations of all nature and for the defence of civilisation; establish and provide justice; insure tranquillity; provide for peace; promote and enhance the dignity and mutual respect among humankind, government, and the environment; accept responsibility for our own free will actions; accept mutual responsibility for each other with all relationships being governed supremely by truth; and secure the blessings of life, liberty, opportunity, and the pursuit of happiness to ourselves and our posterity, establish and accept this Constitution for the World.

Dr. **Martin Alpert** is a trained physician that has turned inventor and entrepreneur. He and his wife founded a company that became the fastest growing high-tech company in the United States, per Business Week magazine. His passion is a "Constitution of the World" which he has written to promote discussion of collective ideas regarding how we as a world want to live.