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## **THE GLOBO SAPIENS CHALLENGE**

Most people are probably unaware that the world community is in the third year of the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005-14). Many of us vaguely understand the concept of self-sustainability, but struggle to see how we might do something tangible, “to save the planet”.

Sustainable development was first enunciated in 1987 by the World Commission on Environment and Development from which the concept evolved. It is defined as, “development satisfying the needs of future generations, as well as the current one.” Subsequently, a series of United Nations Summits and Conferences has led the world to become involved in the Decade of Sustainable Development in a bid to raise international awareness of the issue.

Describing the 6.5 billion individuals on the planet as ‘globo sapiens’ is an attempt to entice each of us into recognizing that what affects one of us, affects all of us, as the human population inexorably grows to 10 billion souls by mid century.

In order to create a global set of relationships that meet the needs of the world’s nations without impairing the ability of future generations to meet their needs, policies and programmes have to be created and implemented that enable individuals and communities to lead healthy, yet cultured, lifestyles.

While we work to overcome poverty, secure adequate sanitation and provide quality education, consideration has to be given to the finite nature of the earth’s resources, environmental limits, nature’s recuperative powers, along with the power of science to address many of the issues we are facing. Sustainable development has a lot to do with promoting harmony in terms of environmental preservation and socio-economic development. Sustainability acknowledges that there are many intergenerational and regional issues within nations and between nations. It focuses on a quicker emergence of fairer and more peaceful societies.

The revered King of Thailand, His Majesty, King Bhumibol Adulydej, has recently been promoting the concepts of a “sufficiency economy”, as a way of practically implementing the “sustainable” concept. This is

predicated on the concept of moderation, rationality, and protection. The King talks about a “Happiness Index”, which is linked to these principles, believing a society built on sustainability is one where civil society is strengthened by collaboration, where individuals respect and look out for one another, since one of us is not as strong as all of us.

The goals of the United Nations Decade, in essence are moral and holistic. When the peoples of the world become less suspicious of one another and see each other as fellow global citizens, we will have more chance of living together harmoniously, rather than ring fencing ourselves in isolationism and fear. Alliances and trade agreements, if well set up, will have a role in creating sustainability.

Kofi Annan, the former United Nations Secretary General said, just prior to his departure from his job, “Our biggest challenge in this new century is to take an idea that seems abstract - “sustainable development” - and turn it into reality for all the world’s peoples.”

Sustainable development is not just environmental protection. It includes ecological, social and economic issues. It encourages people to adopt transformational attitudes to ensure that our grandchildren will be able to enjoy lives where the good and positive aspects of them, which we enjoy, are able to last.

At rock bottom, much of what is encompassed in the concept of sustainability involves spiritual values as much as anything else. It is predicated on a peaceful world.

In order to implement Kofi Annan’s challenge, New Zealanders need to better appreciate and implement all that is contained in the ideal the United Nations has put before all of its member states during this designated Decade.

Ultimately, we have to convince one another, that, yes, it is possible to live together on our planet which is our home.

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