

Sustainability in the 21st Century:

An Earth Council Alliance Perspective

June 1, 2005

Whitepaper

"I am convinced that the future direction of our civilization will be set in the first two or three decades of this new millennium. Surely there could be no more exciting challenge to our generation or a more awesome responsibility."

Maurice Strong

Introduction

On the occasion of the 30th anniversary of World Environment Day and the 60th anniversary of the United Nations, it is important to reflect, as a community of leaders, on our progress in meeting sustainability goals.

Today, five years into the new millennium, we are at a pivotal moment in history – a true “tipping point” as we meet the necessity for action to sustain our world as a home for life. This juncture offers profound possibilities to respond with change that is broad and effective.

The presence of the necessary environmental awareness, political frameworks, the evolution of corporate responsibility, and global community development - all enabled by modern technology and communication - create an unprecedented opportunity for sustainable change on a truly global basis.

We believe that the major pieces are in place to make bold, lasting strides toward real sustainability after so many decades of hard work by governments, tens of thousands of individuals, citizen groups, and other organizations.

There is a rising consciousness of the importance of sustaining resources to safeguard the lives of people today and all future generations. We benefit from the ability to communicate globally in a matter of seconds via our digital technologies, greatly enhancing the potential for people to share resources and work together around the world. We have extraordinary access to knowledge in a wide spectrum of disciplines. These disciplines range from biodiversity studies and new technologies to conserve energy, all the way to sustainable transportation and urban development. These many contributions create a foundation to move forward with confidence and conviction.



Earth Council
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To seize this moment and gain momentum with the surge ahead, leaders need to forge a more effective and energized connection and synthesis among all the important constituencies contributing to the future — non-governmental organizations (NGOs), businesses, governments, community groups, indigenous cultures, families, and individuals of all backgrounds. There is an urgent need to connect, to work together in coherent ways that inspire the authentic participation of people in their own communities and organizations worldwide as we work to identify problems and implement solutions.

While there may be resistance from some quarters, those who support the need for true sustainability far outnumber those who will resist it at this moment in history. Everyone in this generation – and all those that follow - has a stake in the outcome.

Earth Council Alliance (ECA) - a global network of Earth Councils and affiliated organizations - is being formed to play a role as a new “umbrella” non-profit group to facilitate and support the work ahead.

Where We've Been

We owe a great debt to the prophets, visionaries, and scientists of ecological thought in earlier decades and centuries, many of whom wrote compellingly about the relationship and responsibility of humankind to the natural world. Today, we stand on the shoulders of these individuals, as well as upon the progress made

among people working at the truly remarkable world gatherings in the last three decades.

The United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in 1972 was a bellwether for action by governments and citizens, launching a new era of international awareness and environmental cooperation, and giving rise to important national environmental movements. It provided a stage to begin to grapple with the issues of the developed and the developing world. Of the 140 multilateral environmental treaties signed since the 1920s, more than half were concluded since Stockholm.

The Brundtland Report in 1987 called for the positive integration of environmental, social, and economic dimensions of development through sustainability. By 1992, the Rio Earth Summit and the creation of the Earth Charter signed by more than 150 countries firmly launched the sustainable development movement, focusing on economic, social, and environmental factors as essential to any solution. Agenda 21 became a blueprint for action. The United Nations Millennium Development Goals created a milestone in articulating a pragmatic vision for change.

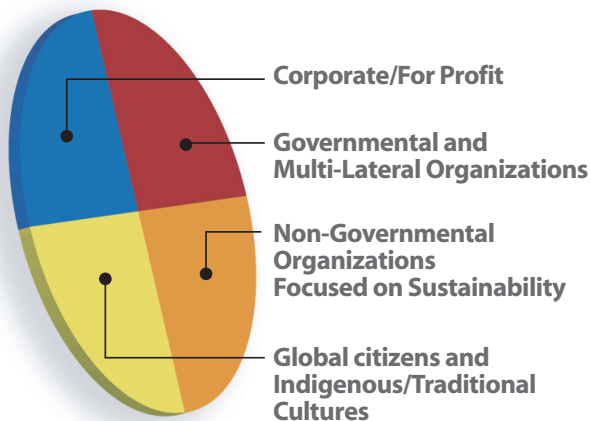
With the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, Maurice Strong established the Earth Council to mobilize and support a network of citizen groups, NGOs and other organizations committed to achieving these goals. Since its founding, the Earth Council Foundation has benefited greatly from the leadership and efforts of extraordinary executive directors. They have included Maximo Kalaw, Jr., of the Philippines, Frans van Haren of the Netherlands, and Alicia Barcena Ibarra of Chile.

Sustainable development has been defined as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Brundtland Report – 1987

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4 Primary Sectors in Global Sustainability



After the Earth Summit at Johannesburg in 2002, there was a sense that we needed to widen the lens to include fully integrated solutions, which alone can hope to address the interlocking global problems that confront humanity. In the process of developing these documents, a framework has been built for global results. But these documents have not and will not get the job done by themselves. Now in the 21st Century, we need to achieve lasting global results. People, working together in new ways, must implement these plans now in our new century.

Where We Are

ECA conducted extensive research with sustainability experts in North America who provided insight into where we stand today. While we anticipate expanding that research to other parts of the globe during the next year, key themes emerged. Our interviews confirmed that the work of individuals and organizations in sustainability is severely fragmented and that there is a need for a unifying leadership and vision, coupled with the desire for new kinds of partnerships.

The emphasis has been shifting away from “big proclamations” to local, on-the-ground efforts.

These experts all recognized the need for new multi-sectoral partnerships, and new ways to communicate and collaborate. There is an opportunity to link efforts, gain the advantages of synergy, and highlight best practices. Educational efforts in particular are required to counter attitudes related to consumption and to inspire political will. As to areas of greatest concern in sustainability issues, they included energy use – and geographically – China and India.

Earth Council has a distinct approach to promoting change on behalf of the sustainability movement. Identify problems and solutions. Gather multi-sector players from diverse places and perspectives. Create institutions and networks to focus the effort. Forge collaborations that bring together the many interdependent organizations, communities, and individuals who will set the course for conducting human affairs in the spirit of sustainability. Then allow the broad and newly energized community to own the process.

This approach has produced a large, diverse network that is committed to sustainability. The question we ask now – what is needed today to implement the changes required?

While the work of the past three decades creates a strong foundation for our work going forward, it is clear that the many actors in this world effort have been largely uncoordinated in their actions and the overall effort has been fragmented. We have yet to develop a coherent, overall strategy and communications system, both crucial to leverage the leadership, hard work, and energy that has come to date.

When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything in the universe.

John Muir

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Efforts to make progress primarily via the work of elected officials and multilateral organizations have been necessary, but not sufficient. We need to move on with more confidence and intensity and with an unprecedented depth of support from multiple sectors.

The Way Forward

We start by identifying key priorities, which are required for the global sustainability community to maximize and accelerate its progress:

- Execute a major push forward to realize the principles articulated in the Earth Charter, implement solutions to issues framed in Agenda 21, and achieve benchmarks contained in the United Nations Millennium Development Goals.
- Recognize that the business sector has emerged as a core platform for accelerating progress and should be viewed as a natural ally, not a foe in sustainability.
- Build more efficient linkages and provide high impact communication systems among sectors, organizations, and individuals so that we can “connect the dots” to multiply the benefits of our collective efforts.
- Promote integration of the environmental dimension into the entire economic and planning process to achieve sustainability through industrial efficiency.
- Increase worldwide focus on renewable energy strategies.
- Focus worldwide attention and support for sustainability initiatives underway in China and in India.
- Increase awareness and involvement of citizens from around the world. People need to lead governments, not the other way around.
- Listen more closely to the wisdom of indigenous people whose understanding about environmental stewardship must be honored.

Meeting these priorities requires positive collaboration among sectors, organizations, and communities of all types. We must insist on pragmatic, on-the-ground results at grass roots levels that inspire those long involved with sustainability issues and others new to these concerns. One thing will be essential. We must be willing to transcend the negative rhetoric on both sides

A key set of questions stand out – how can we catalyze, galvanize, and show the way to achieve real, sustainability change? How can this change be measured and communicated to the larger global community? What types of activities and organizations are required to promote collaboration that yields on-the-ground results and communication that inspires the diverse voices in this dialogue? How can we cooperate, rather than compete, to achieve the goals of sustainability?

Defining the pathway to a sustainable future will ensure that the earth will remain a secure and habitable home for those who follow us.

Maurice Strong

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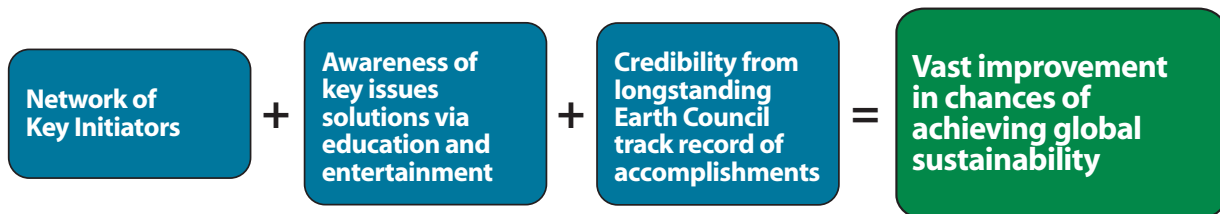
Introducing Earth Council Alliance

Since the Earth Council was first formed in the last decade by Mr. Strong, Earth Councils and affiliated organizations have been established in Canada, Italy, Switzerland, China, and the United States.

Now it is time to take the next step with the ECA, which has been reoriented and revitalized to play an expanded role in this process with a new generation of leadership. After extensive consultations, a consensus has been reached on a successor to Mr. Strong. Tommy E. Short will serve as chairman of ECA, bringing new perspectives, resources, and creativity to the already-wide range of talented sustainability experts who have

written by Maurice Strong. ECA has funded a Pro-Natura International project for developing the scope and feasibility for a future global institute of sustainability in Rio de Janeiro. And it supports the University for Peace, which is affiliated with the United Nations, and the Praxis Peace Institute, which holds peace conferences in Croatia. ECA projects also include support for wildlife projects in Latin America through IDEA WILD, as well as projects involving indigenous peoples as the natural custodians of rainforests through support for the Pachamama Alliance, and is initiating work in the Galapagos Islands.

The ECA Value Proposition



been assembled. Maurice Strong serves as co-founder and chairman emeritus. Recognizing its international character and scope, ECA is being incorporated as a Swiss foundation.

ECA is affiliated with numerous organizations as it supports and resources projects in many parts of the world. ECA works closely with the Oriental Environmental Institute, which is based in Beijing. ECA supports the Harmony Foundation of Canada and the organization's new publication - *Green Cities: a Guide for Sustainable Community Development* - contains a forword

Going forward, ECA seeks to provide a coherent, focused way for leaders in sustainability at the grassroots and national levels to work together to solve problems and seize opportunities outside the confines of traditional bureaucracies. Our goal is to foster increased awareness of sustainability achievements, problems and pragmatic solutions around the world. And our programs are designed to optimize access and cooperation across sectors, issues, and regions to deploy best practices.

ECA, as a result, will be made up of sustainability leaders and visionaries from all sectors – NGOs,

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corporations, academics, activists, community leaders, citizens, and indigenous people. These experts will be joined by communicators and cultural “creatives” from the worlds of music, art, poetry, literature, popular culture, and journalism. And we will invite individuals to participate, allowing them to contribute from their own personal convictions to our shared mission. Together, this vibrant community can contribute collectively - individually and organizationally - to a “tipping point” that allows us to realize the goals of sustainability, preserving our planet as a home today and for those born in future generations.

Our duty as people is to proceed as if limits to our ability did not exist.

We are collaborators in creation.

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

ECA Programs

ECA begins by creating the leadership to apply the highest level of problem solving to take advantage of opportunities and to communicate sustainability in new ways. An initial business plan has been developed and is being discussed informally with partners around the globe. The emphasis is on supporting pragmatic, results-oriented programs worldwide, and matching people, partners, and resources to support local, regional, and national initiatives. ECA will use the Earth Charter and Agenda 21 as historical baselines to measure and celebrate progress.

Our programs span three important areas:

Networks Program

These programs will embrace Earth Councils and related organizations and partners. The ECA will establish a network of experts and visionaries in many disciplines to collaborate and contribute to solutions as part of its Alliance Circle and affiliates.

Development Program

These programs will generate funding from a combination of foundations, corporations, individual donors, and revenue-generating projects to support collaborative programs and projects among the ECA Alliance Circle and affiliates.

Communications Program

These programs will support collaboration with like-minded people and organizations, help to overcome fragmentation in the disciplines contributing to sustainability efforts, and drive initiatives, partnerships, and joint projects.

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A Call to Action

With a clear understanding of the pervasive environmental challenges faced by present and future generations, the ECA is fostering a culture of active communication and collaboration among multiple sectors. Together we honor the legacy of past decades and accelerate our progress to true sustainability for people everywhere in the world. Protecting the Earth. Creating a culture of peace and justice. There can be no higher calling.

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Maurice Strong, ECA chairman emeritus, has been dedicated to environmental and humanitarian concerns for more than four decades. He was Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm in 1972; the first Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme; and Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development - the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro.

Tommy E. Short, is an international business man and philanthropist who has long provided leadership and financial support to sustainability projects around the world in the past 20 years. As co-founder and chairman of ECA, Mr. Short has taken further strides in identifying opportunities and communicating sustainability to the world with co-founder, Maurice Strong. In addition, Mr. Short is the founder and chairman of the Tommy E. Short Charitable Foundation.

Earth Council Alliance will facilitate, coordinate, and resource the work of sustainability ahead.

*Tommy E. Short
Chairman
Earth Council Alliance*



Earth Council
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Join ECA

To join in the formation of Earth Council Alliance or for more information, please call +1(619) 595- 0760 or visit: www.earthcouncilalliance.org

¹ See The Tipping Point – How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference, by Malcolm Gladwell, Little Brown and Company, 2000.