Our unique challenge

We are the guardians of all future generations of life on earth. The consequences of our decisions today will have greater and longer-term consequences than ever before.

The interlinked crises now facing us threaten all our achievements, plans and hopes. Healthy ecosystems provide us with life support systems such as food, water, oxygen, medicinal plants, renewable resources, livelihoods and spiritual comfort, but biodiversity is declining precipitously. Our topsoil - the foundation of civilisation - is being eroded at an unprecedented rate. Our forests that provide livelihoods for 1.6 billion of the poorest are being rapidly decimated. The fine-tuned eco-systems of oceans, rivers and lakes are being dismembered by overfishing and pollution. Billions of our fellow-humans are still without basic life support systems. Nuclear weapons remain an existential danger, with about 2,000 still on high-alert launch-ready status. Monocultures have converted whole landscapes into deserts. Climate chaos is making growing areas of our planet increasingly insecure and uninhabitable. There are many signs that the damage to our planet is approaching irreversible tipping-points, overwhelming the resilience of our natural environment.

Accounting for the full costs of current policies

Trillions of dollars of costs externalised at the expense of nature and of future generations now have to be accounted for. Many of our “assets” and much of our “wealth” will disappear once these costs are internalised. But if they are not, economic “growth” will become uneconomic growth, increasingly spent on damage repair and prevention. Our present value creation is dwarfed by our creation of future debt. But instead of maximizing creativity and good work, we are crippling our societies with self-imposed “austerity”. Our ancestors made human sacrifices to placate their gods. We sacrifice the hopes of youth to placate the gods of finance.

Human societies have always lived by unifying stories, providing them with meaning and values. Yet our modern story describes a world without deeper meaning, evolved by chance, ruled by money, where morals are only emotions. The status quo triumphs because no moral argument against it is accepted as valid.
There is now an ever-widening gap between the modern story of never-ending progress and growth, and our own experiences and perceptions of a fragile world. We have elevated increased consumer ‘choice’ to our highest goal. Yet this goal is increasingly in conflict with maintaining a liveable planet.

**Engaged democracy**

In times of crisis, big changes can be easier than small steps, as only they are seen as adequate and thus able to inspire and mobilize. There are many historical examples of such changes growing rapidly from small beginnings.

Across the world we share key values. We want and expect respect and trust. We want to hand over a healthy planet to our children. We want to feel valued. We want to be co-creators of our future. We want to lead meaningful lives. We are not powerless victims of unstoppable forces. We can still create a different human story of earth citizenship, empowering us to deliver sustainable well-being for all without exceeding planetary limits.

The global community is now debating Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), to follow the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) after 2015. The transformative human development called for by these goals requires coherent, wide-ranging policy reforms which tackle root causes. The WFC Global Policy Action Plan aims to identify the policy changes required to ensure that our regulations, laws and institutions reflect our aspirations.

**A shared global future**

The World Future Council works to highlight, adapt and spread the best and most effective laws and policies from around the world, which can overcome and reverse the planetary challenges we face.

Laws are both the harbingers and fruits of the change of heart, mind and conduct we need. As Aristotle said, ‘Law is order and good law is good order’. With the best laws and right policy incentives we can mobilise human inventiveness and entrepreneurship for human development and a healthy planet. Building public support for coherent policy action – and assisting policy-makers in implementing it – is the indispensable meta-initiative to ensure that our efforts to promote human development, human rights and peace and security are not squandered.

New hierarchies of risk and danger force us to re-think our decisions, actions and institutions. Therefore, we in the World Future Council have joined together – from different continents, walks of life, backgrounds and generations – to build an alliance around this emergency policy agenda which constitutes the integrated minimum set of ‘best policies’ that can provide the positive tipping-points to secure our shared future. In a crisis, “it is not enough to do your best. You have to do what is necessary,” as Winston Churchill reminded us. To do less would mean consciously bequeathing to our children a world of radically diminished options and resources.
The Global Policy Action Plan

The following breakthrough policies represent a combination of tried and tested laws and policies that have been successful in one or more countries, and optimal policy solutions identified through our extensive research. Their purpose is not to promote any specific agenda but to identify inter-linked reforms which progressively enable us to change direction, preserve a habitable planet and build a shared human future.

**Learning and Responsible Governance**

- Primary and secondary schools and universities must include environmental literacy, human rights and responsibilities and peace education in their curricula to foster environmental awareness, cross-cultural understanding and mediation skills.

- Environmental literacy testing, as well as an understanding of how to invest in the care of people and nature, to be mandatory for economics and business school graduates as well as candidates for public office.

- Candidates for public office to be given public funding and equal media access, once they can demonstrate sufficient public support.

- Valuing and accounting for natural and social capital to be given at least equal weight to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in government decision-making.\(^1\)

**Equity and Dignity**

- Nations to develop binding social contracts that safeguard and promote our rights as citizens, including protection from discrimination and violence, equal opportunities, access to resources and justice, as well as our responsibilities as trustees of future generations.

- Universal access to sexual and reproductive health rights to be ensured to achieve a future just world where every pregnancy is wanted and every birth is safe.

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\(^1\) The WFC is a participant of the EU BRAINPOol Project (Bringing Alternative Indicators into Policy) to develop Beyond GDP indicators.
✓ Ombudspersons or Guardians for Future Generations\(^2\) to be established at all governance levels in order to ensure that the interests of future generations are taken into account when political decisions affecting them are made.

✓ Actions to be outlawed which could cause widespread, long-term and irreversible damage to the natural or human environment, including the conditions for the survival of an entire species, sub-species or ecosystem, or those which could gravely or irreparably imperil the health, means of survival or safety of a given human population.

**Peace and Security**

**Future Policy Award 2013**


✓ Military expenditure to be re-directed to advancing environmental, food and water security through treaties and agreements which promote a culture of peace.

✓ Nuclear weapons to be outlawed in national and regional legislation. The nuclear weapons possessing States to fulfil their obligation to negotiate a treaty, or framework of agreements, to ban and eliminate all nuclear weapons.

**Climate Stability**

✓ Initiating an Inclusive Global Transition to Renewable Energies, assisted by the following best policies:

  • Feed-In Tariffs,\(^3\) full energy cost accounting, solar building codes, the re-direction of fossil fuel and nuclear subsidies and energy audits.

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\(^2\) For further information on this topic, see our website [www.futurejustice.org](http://www.futurejustice.org).

\(^3\) For further information, see the ‘African Renewable Energy Alliance’ on our website.
Healthy Ecosystems

✓ Future Policy Award 2009: Ensure access to safe food and water by adopting legislation based on:

**Winner:** Belo Horizonte Food Security Programme 1993, Brazil.
**Highly Commended:** Tuscan Regional Law 2004 on the Protection and Promotion of Heritage of Local Breeds and Varieties of Interest to Farming, Animal Husbandry and Forestry, Italy.
**Highly Commended:** Urban Agriculture, Cuba.

In addition should be considered the right to water policies of e.g. Ecuador and Bolivia and the Water Users Associations rules of Tunisia and China.

✓ Future Policy Award 2010: Protect biodiversity and reverse soil erosion by adopting legislation based on:

**Gold:** Biodiversity Law 1998, Costa Rica.

In addition should be considered the UN Strategic Biodiversity Action Plan 2011-2020 and US 1985 Conservation Reserve Programme.

✓ Future Policy Award 2011: Reverse deforestation and forest degradation by adopting legislation based on:

**Gold:** National Forest Policy 2004, Rwanda.
**Silver:** Community Forest Policy 1995, Gambia.
**Silver:** Lacey Act 1900 with amendment of 2008, United States.

✓ Future Policy Award 2012: Restore the health of our oceans by adopting legislation based on:

**Gold:** Protected Areas Network Act 2003 and Shark Haven Act 2009, Palau.
**Silver:** Tubbataha Reefs Natural Park Act 2010, The Philippines.
**Silver:** Marine Resources Act 2000, Namibia.
Common Wealth

- Debt-Free Money Creation by central banks to be introduced to fund environmentally sustainable development, job creation, research and infrastructure investment. Adapted, interest-free IMF Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) can provide further funding for a rapid shift to renewable energies in less industrialised countries.

- Taxes on labour to be gradually reduced and replaced by the taxation of CO2 emissions, non-renewable resources and financial speculation. Government budgets to prioritise a social-environmental transformation of our societies and economies.

- New financial instruments to be tested according to the precautionary principle before they are allowed to be sold as legally enforceable contracts.

- Divestment Laws banning investments of public money in corporations involved in unethical practices, which harm present and future generations, to become the basis of a global investment treaty, in order to ensure that our invested savings do not threaten us.

Enterprise and Design

- The “Cradle to Cradle”® principle of ecologically intelligent design and production to become the legal norm, in order to incentivise a transition to circular economies. Externalizing production costs to be treated as unfair competition.

- The “Top Runner” policy, mandating ongoing resource-saving product improvements in the manufacturing process, to become legally binding, banning the least efficient products.

- Benefit Corporations with broader business mandates must be given legal status in order to promote social and environmental entrepreneurship.

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5 For further information please see WFC Proposal “Breaking the Climate Finance Funding Deadlock”: [http://www.worldfuturecouncil.org/fileadmin/user_upload/PDF/Breaking_the_funding_deadlock.pdf](http://www.worldfuturecouncil.org/fileadmin/user_upload/PDF/Breaking_the_funding_deadlock.pdf)


7 For further information on the “Cradle to Cradle” principle please see: [http://c2ccertified.org/about/what_is_cradle_to_cradle](http://c2ccertified.org/about/what_is_cradle_to_cradle)

8 See e.g. Japan’s Top Runner Program (1999): [http://www.futurepolicy.org/2719.html](http://www.futurepolicy.org/2719.html)
We Can Regenerate our World – Together

We are often told that we cannot change our world – or human nature. Yet both are changed all the time. New norms, technologies and lifestyles spread across continents. Public attitudes shift. Culture is not static, but adapts and evolves continually, as does human consciousness.

It is claimed that the reforms required are too costly. But, whatever a society can do, it can also finance! Only political and public will is needed. New money can be created without causing inflation if it is used to fund new production, and to reduce the unaffordable waste of unemployment in a world where there is so much to do.

The current global (dis)order, with its rules and regulations, training and qualification systems, and its foreign, security, development, transport, economic and innovation policies, is based on premises that are rapidly disappearing.

It is essential, possible and affordable to change course now. We propose a global media information campaign to raise awareness about the realities and choices we face, and to mobilise support for the key policy changes required.

Since its establishment in 2007 the World Future Council has worked closely with national and international policymakers, as well as scholars and civic groups to successfully identify, debate, introduce and implement breakthrough policies. There is now an urgent need to amplify and accelerate this effort globally. We welcome partnerships with governments, inter-governmental and religious organisations, civil society, academia, media, and youth groups, for implementing this Action Plan to secure our shared future.

“In the course of history, there comes a time when humanity is called to shift to a new level of consciousness, to reach a higher moral ground. A time when we have to shed our fear and give hope to each other. That time is now.”

Wangari Maathai, 1940 - 2011, WFC Honorary Councillor, Nobel Peace Prize Lecture 2004

“We probably have a decade to ensure that the world is liveable.”

Ex-President Mary Robinson of Ireland, Wangari Maathai Memorial Lecture, 2013
**Find out more**

The World Future Council brings the interests of future generations to the centre of policy-making. Its 50 eminent members from around the globe have already successfully promoted change. The Council addresses challenges to our common future and provides decision-makers with effective policy solutions. The World Future Council is registered as a charitable foundation in Hamburg, Germany.

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**FuturePolicy.org** presents all the policy solutions and essential tools for decision makers to promote sustainable living and protect the rights of future generations to inhabit a healthy and intact world.

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