

Effective Governance For A Sustainable Future

By Dato' (Dr.) Anwar Fazal*, Director, Citizens International

Assalamalaikum! Peace be on you!

I start with the word “salam” or “peace” as it is the root of our work which is what I call the “Triple Wisdom”:

1. Peace with oneself (i.e. inner peace)
2. Peace with other people (i.e. social peace)
3. Peace with the environment (i.e. “eco-peace”)

Unfortunately, the greatest “inconvenient truth” is that we are not at peace in any of its triple dimensions.

One person commits suicide every 40 seconds;
More people have died in wars since 1946 than all that died during World War II;
and,
The environmental stress on “mother earth” is leading surely to what has been called “ecocide”!

If an Intergalactic Commission was asked to investigate and assess our performance of “planethood”, they would probably rate us earth beings as probably between “poor” and “dismal”!

History has given us all the lessons. A Japanese Government study indicated all the major civilisations declined primarily because they did not take care of the environment!

How do we move from what James Robertson called the HE (Hyper Expansionist) to the SHE (Sane, Humanistic and Ecological) society? Is there hope? Is there a future?

WHAT'S WRONG?

This nation's future is being vocally driven by “Vision 2020” and, in several aspects spectacularly “successfully”, but NONE of the “Nine Challenges” which are the performance specifics talk at all about safeguarding and promoting the environment. “Vision 2020” sadly has what ophthalmologists would call a “blind spot”.

And it is a serious blind spot. (Interestingly “Islam Hadari”, introduced by the current Prime Minister lists “safeguarding the environment” as No. 9 of the 10 attributes.)

We are paying, as the world is paying, a heavy price for this “oversight”!

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At the Macro Level, the Intergalactic Commission will be shocked at three major “inconvenient truths”:

1. Weapons of Mass Destruction (including our colossus collections of nuclear, chemical and other abominable terrors),
2. Weapons of Mass Manipulation (where lying and misinformation have become a frightening character of powerful politicians and business enterprises),
3. Weapons of Mass Consumption (where often useless and damaging consumer products “capture” and imprison people from young, in such matters as indiscriminate use of cars and pesticides or cola drinks and junk foods, and throw away products generally).

Is there a way out of this military, and money madness?

We must find the way. It is no longer the cost of living! It is the cost of survival!

GOOD GOVERNANCE

Firstly we must support, protect and promote 10 principles of good governance:

1. **Strategic Vision** – Leaders and the public should have a broad and long term perspective on good governance and human development, along with a sense of what is needed for such development. There is also an understanding of the historical, cultural and social complexities in which that perspective is grounded.
2. **Rule of Law** – Legal frameworks should be fair and enforced impartially, particularly the laws on human rights.
3. **Transparency** – Transparency is built on the free flow of information. Processes, institutions and information are directly accessible to those concerned with them, and enough information is provided to understand and monitor them.
4. **Responsiveness** – Institutions and processes try to serve all stakeholders.
5. **Consensus Orientation** – Good governance mediates differing interests to reach a broad consensus on what is in the best interest of the group and where possible, on policies and procedures.
6. **Equity** – All men and women have opportunities to improve or maintain their well-being.
7. **Effectiveness and Efficiency** – Processes and institutions produce results that meet needs while making the best use of resources.
8. **Accountability** – Decision-makers in government, private sector and civil society organisations are accountable to the public, as well as to institutional stakeholders. This accountability differs depending on the organisation and whether the decision is internal or external to an organisation.
9. **Participation** – All men and women should have a voice in decision making, either directly or through legitimate intermediate institutions that represent their

interests. Such broad participation is built on freedom of association and speech, as well as capabilities to participate constructively.

10. **Respect and Tolerance** – To proactively respect diversity and difference, to seek out common values and building on them and where there are differences that can lead to conflict to have mechanisms for addressing them.

THE SEVEN “CHAKRAS”

To secure the 10 principles of good governance, I like to share with you seven “chakras” (These are “life forces”, as those of you who do yoga will know). These seven chakras can help to develop our strength to make the transformation needed:

1. **Think power and politics** – understanding the nature of power and politics in our society, both local and global; know how decisions are reached and fully utilise the pressures that make politics work for you.
2. **Think multiplying leadership** – we have to create not just more followers but more leaders, especially among women and youth.
3. **Think lateral** – link with other groups – mass media, women, ecology, youth and religious groups. Such alliances make powerful synergy.
4. **Think everywhere** – encourage the proliferation of autonomous self-reliant groups at all levels and all places. Little victories have a way of creeping up to become national and global revolutions.
5. **Think action** – there must be a constant stream of simple, high profile, do-able activities that must be specific and have visible targets.
6. **Think structural** – look at the root cause of the problems, not just at the symptoms.
There is a story I would like to share that helps us to remember this:
A man sees a baby drowning in the river, he jumps in and saves the baby. As he is bringing the baby ashore, he sees another baby floating down the river and rushes in to save the second baby. And then he sees a third, a fourth, and a fifth. He is busy saving drowning babies that he has no time to look up the river to see the person throwing the babies into the water!
7. **Think long term** – social problems are not going to disappear quickly or easily. We have built frameworks, institutions, resources and people who will ensure the stamina for a long struggle. When you are laying bricks, think of the school you are building!

You have to be assertive and proactive in addressing the 3 problem “I”s:

1. **Ignorance** – Address it with information and the power of truth. (Remember that “confusion” is a higher level of achievement than ignorance!)
2. **Incompetence** – You must demonstrate that efficiency and effectiveness is out there for those with an attitude of learning, caring and commitment.
3. **Indifference** – With such attitudes you need a whole range of “wake up” methods from “kindness” to “political knockout” to make transformational change. I will be happy to share with you the classic “198 non-violent methods for

making social change” by Grene Sharp; which I have made into a poster called “Weapons of Mass Transformation”! It is published by Citizens International.

FIVE ACTION IDEAS

I like to suggest five ideas for action by civil society:

1. Let there be a systematic annual ***State of the Environment Report*** which also refers to our compliance with international instruments (Conventions, Codes, etc.) and best practices including “ecological footprints”.
2. Develop a nation wide “GREENPAGES” where every city, town, village can have template of good environmental practices, sources and local people and places that are eco-friendly. We are involved at the new University Sains Malaysia and United Nations University Centre for Expertise in Education for Sustainable Development (RCE/ESD) to develop a project by the Pesticide Action Network Asia Pacific, a grassroots group Save Our Selves (SOS) and an internet company Surforever.Com doing the template and a pilot project for Penang (see www.greenpages.net.my). We hope eventually to see such sites in all major towns from Baling to Batu Pahat, from Sungai Petani to Sandakan.
3. I believe that the government managed volunteer vigilant force known as RELA could be transformed into a “Green Corps” to become the champion of greening the environment, fighting, pollution and promoting sustainability. It will be beneficial to RELA and to our country and our future, and certainly better use of their time, talent and authority!
4. Start a “Green Ethics Charter” and get every politician, party, candidate, business leader to sign. “The Earth Charter” can form the basis and background for a simple and punchy Vision 2020, Islam Hadhari or Rukunegara type document.
5. Start a movement like the “Random Acts of Kindness” called “Every Little Counts”. We should know that all the little things we do and don’t do (like littering, wasting water, drinking , cycling and walking) have an impact on mother earth.

If you are interested in any of these ideas, I will always be happy to share more thoughts or actions.

CONCLUSION

Let me conclude by sharing with you two streams of consciousness:

Firstly, when you think of the “ecological footprints” remember breastfeeding, a natural God-given way of infant feeding – it gives medicine, nutrition, is ecologically super-friendly, economically free and provides bonding and love! Just calculate the cost of infant formula, the environmental and economic cost globally (including expensive “food miles”) and the fact that they can never deliver the same immunities and nutrients that breastmilk provides. Getting our first food and the first right - the right to breastfeeding, is a great start and a deep lesson for the ecological footprints movement and its advocates.

Secondly, I want to remind you of the kind of world we don't want. The Great Mahatma Ghandi put it well when he reminded us of the "Seven Social Sins" of human kind:

1. Politics without principle.
2. Wealth without work.
3. Enjoyment without conscience.
4. Knowledge without character.
5. Business without morality.
6. Science without humanity.
7. Religion without sacrifice.

I have added 3 more to his list of "social sins":

8. Rights without responsibilities.
9. Development without sustainability.
10. Power without accountability.

Let us together overcome these ten social sins locally, nationally, globally, universally, spiritually.

Let us show the next Intergalactic Commission that we can change and have changed into a universal humanity of caring, sharing and integrity.

History has shown that little people doing little things in little places can change the world. So remember you can! Together we can!
