

Sustainable Development and the Human Spirit

by Bahá'í International Community

Over and above technical and political issues such as the limits to be fixed to the gases that produce the greenhouse effect, the way to promote sustainable development and who has to pay for it, the fundamental issue facing the world community is this: Can humanity, with its deep-rooted schemes of conflict, selfish interests and lack of foresight, commit to well-targeted cooperation and long-range planning on a global scale?

The decisions of the Earth Summit highlighted both the complexity and the interdependence of the problems facing humanity. None of these problems - the debilitating inequalities in development, the apocalyptic threats of warming of the atmosphere and the reduction of the ozone layer, the oppression of women, the abandonment of children and marginalized peoples, to name a few - can be addressed. Realistically without considering all the others. No one can be fully addressed without a measure of cooperation and coordination at all levels that far exceeds all that humanity has collectively experienced.

However, the possibility of such cooperation is ruined by the widespread degradation of human character. Although they are not commonly discussed in relation to the challenges of the environment and development, there are currently certain trends in the world - among which are the widespread lack of moral discipline, the glorification of greed and the accumulation of wealth, growing collapse of the family and the community, the increase in crime and disorder, the domination of racism and intolerance and the priority given to national interests over the welfare of humanity - all of which destroy trust and credibility, which are the basis of collaboration.

The reversal of these destructive tendencies is essential for the establishment of unity and cooperation. This investment will require a deep understanding of human nature. Well, while economics, politics, sociology and science offer important tools to address the interdependent crises facing humanity, a true resolution of the dangerous state of things in the world can only be achieved when the dimension is taken into consideration. spiritual nature of human nature and the human heart be transformed.

Although there are mystical aspects that are not easily explained, the spiritual dimension of human nature can be understood, in practical terms, as the source of qualities that transcend narrow personal interest. Such qualities include love, compassion, tolerance, trustworthiness, courage, humility, cooperation and willingness to sacrifice for the common good: qualities of an enlightened citizenship capable of building a unified world civilization.

The profound and far-reaching changes, the unprecedented unity and cooperation, required to reorient the world towards a just and sustainable future with respect to the environment, will only be possible by touching the human spirit, appealing to the universal values that are the only ones that can to make people and peoples act in accordance with the long-term interests of the planet and humanity as a whole. Once it is used, this powerful and dynamic source of individual and collective motivation will liberate such a profound and beneficent spirit among the peoples of the earth, that there will be no power to resist its unifying force.

The fundamental spiritual truth of our time is the oneness of humanity. The universal acceptance of this principle - with its effects on economic and social justice, universal participation in decision-making without antagonism, collective peace and security, equality of the sexes and universal education - will

make possible the reorganization and administration of the world as one country, the home of the human race.

More than a hundred years ago, Bahá'u'lláh challenged the rulers and peoples of the earth to make his vision encompass the world: "You should not be proud who loves his own country, but rather who loves the whole world." response to this challenge is pending.