

Delivering the UN Global Goals: The Consciousness Perspective

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Introduction

THROUGHOUT HUMAN HISTORY, individuals and societies have always focused their energies on a central key idea that could, if sufficient energy and effort were devoted to it, help them move towards a more idealized future. The central key idea, at this point in our human history is to reduce the inequalities that our modern economic system has produced by helping the world's poorest people achieve minimum standards of income, health care, and education, and promote sustainable development.

This central key idea has become known as the “development agenda.” The vision and goals for the current development agenda are expressed in the UN Millennium Development Goalsⁱ (MDGs) which were agreed by the largest ever gathering of heads of state in 2000. The eight MDGs are:

- To eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
- To achieve universal primary education
- To promote gender equality and empower women
- To reduce child mortality
- To improve maternal health

ⁱ Website for MDGs: <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/bkgd.shtml>

- To combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
- To ensure environmental sustainability
- To develop a global partnership for development

The MDGs will expire at the end of 2015, and the debate over what should come next is now in full swing. A high level summit will be held in September 2015 to adopt a new set of Goals building on the achievements of the MDGs. A synthesis report on the Post-2015 Agenda, entitled *The Road to Dignity by 2030: Ending Poverty, Transforming All Lives and Protecting the Planet*, was published by the UN in December 2014. The opening paragraph in this report states:

*The year 2015 offers a unique opportunity for global leaders and people to end poverty, transform the world to better meet human needs and the necessities of economic transformation, while protecting our environment, ensuring peace and realizing human rights.*ⁱⁱ

In this the report, it is recommended that the MDG's be incorporated into a new development framework called the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The proposed SDGs, which will be the main focus of international actions for the next fifteen years, are:

1. To end poverty in all its forms everywhere.
2. To end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.
3. To ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.
4. To ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.
5. To achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.
6. To ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.
7. To ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.
8. To promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.
9. To build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation.
10. To reduce inequality within and among countries.
11. To make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.
12. To ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.
13. To take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.

ⁱⁱ *The Road to Dignity by 2030: Ending Poverty, Transforming All Lives and Protecting the Planet*, United Nations - New York, December 2014, p. 3

14. To conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.
15. To protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.
16. To promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.
17. To strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.

The Road to Dignity focuses on the “what”; it says very little about the “how.” Notably absent from this report is any mention of the following:

- An overarching framework for understanding and prioritizing human needs and the well-being of humanity.
- An explicit statement about the values that member states of the UN and the international agencies involved with the implementing the SDGs will need to embrace to make the SDGs a reality.

These are the issues that this Chapter sets out to address. I begin by outlining a framework for prioritizing human needs and then I will be discussing the implications of this framework on the development priorities outlined in *The Road to Dignity*.

The full spectrum of human needs

To understand the full spectrum of human needs we need to understand how people grow and develop; what needs they have at each stage of their development, and how best to provide these needs. The model I am going to use is called the Seven Levels Model. There are two aspects to the Seven Levels Model: the Stages of Psychological Development Model and the Levels of Consciousness Model. We grow in stages (of psychological development) and we operate at levels (of consciousness).

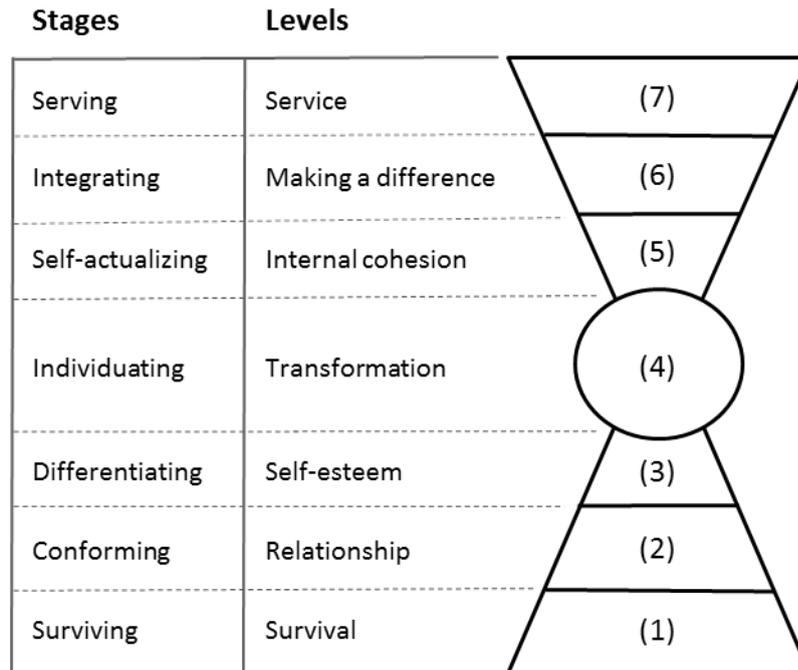
The Levels of Consciousness model was developed in 1996 as a tool for mapping the consciousness of individuals and human group structures, such as teams, organisations, communities and nations. Since that time, the model and associated assessment toolsⁱⁱⁱ have been used to map the values and consciousness of more than 5,000 organizations, 4,000 leaders and 24 nations.^{iv}

ⁱⁱⁱ Cultural Transformation Tools

^{iv} For more information go to www.valuescentre.com

The origins and construction of the model are explained in *The Metrics of Human Consciousness*^v and *The Values-driven Organisation: Unleashing Human Potential for Performance and Profit*.^{vi} In recent years, I recognized that the Seven Levels Model could also be used as a framework for mapping the stages of human psychological development. Figure 1 shows the correspondence between the Seven Stages of Psychological Development and the Seven Levels of Consciousness.

Figure 1: Stages of psychological development and levels of consciousness.



Under normal circumstances, the level of consciousness you operate from will be the same as the stage of psychological development you have reached. However, no matter what stage of psychological development you are at, when you are faced with a threat—what you consider to be a potentially negative change in your circumstances or situation—anything that disturbs your equilibrium by bringing up fears, you may temporarily shift to one of the three lower levels of consciousness. Alternatively, if you have a “peak” experience—an experience of euphoria, harmony or connectedness of a mystical or spiritual nature—you may temporarily shift to one of the higher levels of consciousness.

When the threat or peak experience has passed, you will return to the level of consciousness that corresponds to the stage of psychological development you were at before the experience occurred. In rare situations, a peak experience may have a lasting impact, causing you to shift to a higher stage of

^v Richard Barrett, *The Metrics of Human Consciousness* (London: Fulfilling Books), 2015.

^{vi} Richard Barrett, *The Values-driven Organisation: Unleashing Human Potential for Performance and Profit* (London: Fulfilling Books), 2013.

psychological development and operate from a higher level of consciousness. Similarly a “negative” experience, if it is traumatic enough, and particularly if it occurs in your childhood and teenage years, can impede your future psychological development by causing you to be anchored, through frequent subconscious triggering of the traumatic memory, into in one of the three lower levels of consciousness.

The early stages of development

Between the moment we are born and the time we reach physical maturity, around 20 years of age, we all pass through the same three stages of psychological development: surviving, conforming and differentiating. What you are learning during these stages of development is how to become a viable independent adult in your cultural framework of existence. These are the stages of development where you learn to satisfy your “deficiency” needs. When you are able to satisfy these needs, you feel a sense of happiness. If, for any reason, you are unable to satisfy these needs, you get anxious and fearful.

How well you master these first three stages of development will, to a large extent, depend on the degree and nature (positive and negative) of the parental programming and cultural conditioning you experienced during your infant, childhood and teenage years. If you grew up without too many negative experiences—without forming any significant fear-based beliefs about being able to meet your deficiency needs—you will naturally feel a pull towards the individuation stage of development when you reach your twenties or early thirties.

Individuating

The individuating stage of development begins when you are ready to let go of the aspects of your parental programming and cultural conditioning that do not reflect who you truly are—values and beliefs that no longer resonate with. At this stage of development you are seeking to find your authentic voice, to live with integrity, and become responsible and accountable for every aspect of your life.

If you are fortunate enough to have had self-actualized parents, to have lived in a community or culture where freedom and independence is celebrated, where higher education is easily available, where men and women are treated equally, and where you are encouraged from a young age to express and think for yourself, the transition from the differentiating stage to the individuating stage of development will be relatively easy.

However, if the contrary is true, transitioning to the higher stages of development can be full of challenges and difficulties. It requires great courage when you are living in an authoritarian parental, cultural or political environment to embrace your authentic voice and explore your potential.

The later stages of development

Unlike the first three stages of psychological development, the later stages of development—self-actualizing, integrating, and serving, are not thrust on you by the biological and societal exigencies of growing up and reaching physical maturity as the first three stages of development are, they emerge as a desire to want more from your life, to find meaning in your existence, and make a lasting contribution to society. These are the stages of development where we learn to satisfy our “growth” needs. The extent to which you are able to satisfy your growth needs will determine the level of fulfilment you find in your life.

As a general rule, we spend the first half of our lives searching for *happiness* by finding ways to satisfy our deficiency needs, and if all goes well, we spend the second half of our lives searching for *meaning* by finding ways to satisfy our growth needs. If, due to circumstances or a particular situation you find yourself in, you are unable to meet your deficiency needs, satisfying these will take precedence over satisfying your growth needs.

Stages of psychological development

The seven stages of psychological development are shown in Table 1. The first column identifies the stages of development. The second column indicates the approximate age range when each stage of development becomes important. The third column describes the developmental task. The fourth column identifies the motivations and needs associated with each stage of development, and the fifth column lists the internal and external value priorities at each stage of development.

The age ranges given in the second column are approximate but are generally applicable to well educated people of all races, religions and cultures. Those who are less well-educated, poor and/or live in authoritarian regimes may find it challenging to move beyond the differentiating stage of development.

If you were brought up by self-actualized parents living in a liberal democracy, you may be able to accelerate your psychological development by a few years. Although this is relatively rare, it could become more prevalent as more parents self-actualize at an earlier age and more countries embrace the values found in liberal democracies.

In recent years it has become increasingly noticeable that some young people find their sense of purpose and feel the impulse to make a difference in the world quite early in their lives. This does not mean they have jumped to the integrating stage of development. They will still need to pass through the individuating and self-actualizing stages of development before they are mature enough to fully embrace the integrating stage of psychological development.

Table 1: Motivations, needs and value priorities
at each stage of psychological development.

Stages of psychological development	Age range	Developmental task	Motivations and needs	Value priorities	
				Internal	External
Serving	60+ years	Alleviating suffering and caring for the well-being of humanity.	Satisfying your need for self-less service.	Compassion, humility, wisdom.	Future generations, social justice.
Integrating	50-59 years	Aligning with others who share the same values and purpose.	Satisfying your need to make a difference.	Collaboration, empathy cooperation.	Sustainability, shared purpose.
Self-actualizing	40-49 years	Becoming more fully yourself by leading a purpose-driven life.	Satisfying your need to find meaning and purpose.	Fairness, openness, trust, transparency.	Authenticity, shared values.
Individuating	20-39 years	Becoming more fully yourself by embracing your own values.	Satisfying your need for freedom and autonomy.	Accountability, continuous learning.	Independence, equality, autonomy.
Differentiating	8 to 19 years	Proving yourself by displaying your skills and talents.	Satisfying your need for respect and recognition.	Self-esteem continuous improvement.	Achievement, status, authority, power.
Conforming	2 to 8 years	Feeling safe and protected by staying close to kin and community.	Satisfying your need for love, and belonging.	Safety, protection, loyalty.	Harmony, friendship, traditions.
Surviving	Birth to 2 years	Staying alive and physically healthy in the best possible conditions.	Satisfying your security and physiological needs.	Security.	Survival.

Surviving

The quest for security and survival starts as soon as a human baby is born. The infant child instinctively knows, through its DNA programming, how to regulate its body's internal functioning, how to suckle, and how to signal to its parents that it has unmet physiological needs. At this stage, the infant is completely dependent on parents or care givers to meet its security and survival needs.

During this first stage of psychological development the infant has to learn how to exercise control over its environment so that it can get its survival needs met. If the infant finds this task challenging or difficult, because its parents are not vigilant enough to its needs or it is left alone or abandoned for long periods of time, the infant child will begin to form subconscious beliefs that it is living in an insecure environment and it cannot depend on others to meet its security or survival needs.

If on the other hand, the infant's parents are attentive to its needs, care for the infant and are watchful and responsive for signs of distress, then the infant child will grow up with a sense of physical security and a belief that others can be trusted. Surviving and feeling physically secure are our most important human needs.

Conforming

The task at this stage of development is to satisfy the child's need for love and belonging. The child wants to live in an environment where it feels safe and protected. The young child quickly learns that life is more pleasant and less threatening if it lives in harmony with its parents and family. Staying loyal to kin and community, adhering to rules, and participating in rituals and traditions are important at this stage of development because they contribute to the child's feeling of belonging and thereby enhance the child's sense of safety.

If for any reason (poor parenting, lack of attention, etc.) the child grows up feeling unloved, the child may develop subconscious beliefs that it lives in an uncaring world where it doesn't belong. When the child becomes an adult it will be subconsciously searching for the love, safety and protection it was denied when it was young.

If on the other hand, the child is raised in a caring, loving environment, where it feels safe and protected, then the child will grow up feeling comfortable with others, open to strangers and willing to form committed relationships. Feeling safe, loved and a sense of belonging are our second most important human needs.

Differentiating

During the differentiation stage of psychological development, the child/teenager seeks to satisfy his or her need for respect and recognition. We want to be noticed by parents, family, friends, peers, gang members or teachers for our achievements. The task at this stage of development is to hone your gifts and talents or make the most of your appearance so you feel accepted and recognized as a valid member of the group, family or community which you identify with. This may involve proving yourself through participating in rites of passage. You will be seeking validation from those around you that you are a valuable member of your community.

Your parents are instrumental at this stage of your development for giving you the positive feedback you need. If you fail to get this feedback, you will grow up with the subconscious belief that you are not good enough. You will feel driven to prove yourself. You will seek out groups where you feel accepted. You may become a seeker of perfection or a highly competitive employee, wanting status, power or authority so you can be acknowledged as someone important or someone to be feared. Feeling recognized and respected are our third most important human needs.

If you are able to successfully transition through these first three stages of psychological development without experiencing significant trauma and without developing too many subconscious fears about your ability to meet your deficiency needs, then you will find it relatively easy to establish yourself as a viable adult in the cultural framework of your existence as long as you can find opportunities to earn a living that meets your survival needs.

Individuating

During the individuating stage of psychological development, which usually begins after the age of twenty, you will begin to feel the need for freedom and autonomy. The task at this stage of development is to transcend the physical and emotional dependence on your family and the cultural or religious groups you are embedded in by aligning with your own deeply held values—discovering who you really are and what you stand for at the deepest level of your being. You begin to establish your independence when you set up your own home and embrace the values and beliefs *you* resonate with, rather than the values and beliefs that were subconsciously programmed into you by your parents and the community and culture you grew up in.

This is one of the most important and difficult stages of human development—the shift from dependence to independence. When you reach this stage of development you begin to seek answers to the question, Who am I?

Understanding who you are is absolutely essential for finding fulfilment. The progress you make at this stage of development will to a large extent influence how smoothly you are able to move through

the higher stages of psychological development. We only embark on the individuating stage of development after we have become reasonably proficient in meeting our deficiency needs.

Self-Actualizing

During the self-actualization stage of development you begin the search for meaning and purpose. You want to know: Why am I here? What do I need to do to find fulfilment in my life? What is my true vocation? What is my calling?

For most people, finding their vocation or calling usually begins with a feeling of unease or boredom with their job or chosen career; with the work they thought would bring them wealth, status or recognition in their lives. Uncovering your unique gifts and talents and making them available to the world will bring passion and vitality back into your life. You will become more intuitive and more creative. You will spend more time in a state of flow; being totally present to what you are doing, lost in your work.

This can be a challenging transition, especially if the activities that now interest you are less remunerative and offer less secure employment than your job, profession or chosen career. You may feel scared or uncomfortable embarking on something new which may bring meaning to your life but may not pay the rent or put food on the table.

Some people find the work they are born to do early in their lives; others discover it much later. Some spend their whole lives searching. Embracing your authentic self by living your values and finding meaning and purpose in your life is the next most important need to emerge after you have found freedom and independence.

Integrating

During the integrating stage of development you will begin to feel the need to actualize your sense of purpose by using your unique gifts and talents to make a difference in the world. As you make progress in this endeavour, you will realize that the contribution you can make and the impact you can have in the world could be significantly enhanced by cooperating with others who share your values and purpose—people you resonate with. By collaborating with others you are able to make a bigger difference than you could on your own.

This requires a high level of maturity. You must be able to recognize your limitations, assume a larger sense of identity and shift from being independent to being interdependent. Many people lack the flexibility or adaptability to make this shift. Others get lost in their own creativity.

In order to cooperate with others on joint projects, you must learn how to master your emotions (emotional intelligence) and read the emotions of others (social intelligence). Collaborating with others

to make a difference in the world is the next most important need to emerge after you have learned to embrace your authentic self.

Serving

During the serving stage of development you will feel drawn to a life of self-less service, especially if you have become financially independent or no longer depend on the income from you work for your survival. At this stage of development, you want to leave a legacy or give back to the world by alleviating suffering, caring for the disadvantaged or building a better society.

The shift to a life of self-less service will affect every aspect of your life; your attitudes, your behaviours, and your values. You will uncover new levels of compassion as you become focused on the needs of others. You will feel more humility as you recognize the added value that others bring to your endeavours and the role that synchronicity plays in your life. You will also find yourself re-examining your priorities as you search to live a more balanced life.

Deep down, you will begin to understand that we are all connected energetically, and that by serving others you are serving yourself. Selfless service for the benefit of humanity and future generations is next most important need to emerge after you have learned how to collaborate with others to make a difference in your world. You will find your deepest level of fulfilment at this stage of psychological development.

Progression

The seven stages of psychological development occur in consecutive order over the full period of our lives. If, for whatever reason, you fail to master the skills required to meet the needs of a particular stage of development, you will find yourself having to return to that stage of development until you have become proficient at satisfying those needs.

We begin the journey of psychological development by learning to survive, and we complete the journey by learning to serve.

For a detailed account of how to master the higher stages of psychological development, may I suggest you read *What My Soul Told Me: A Practical Guide to Soul Activation*.^{vii}

^{vii} Richard Barrett, *What My Soul Told Me: A Practical Guide to Soul Activation* (Bath: Fulfilling Books), 2013.

Implications for the UN's Sustainable Development Goals

The seven stages of psychological development model not only provides us with an overarching framework for evaluating the progress of human development, it also provides us with a method of analysing and prioritizing human development needs.

Using the seven levels model, we can divide human needs into two main categories—deficiency needs and growth needs. Within these two categories we can further prioritize which needs are most important in a particular situation or set of circumstances. Table 2 shows how the sixteen SDGs proposed in the UN's *The Road to Dignity* meet the needs of each stage of psychological development.

What I found both surprising, and remarkable, when I constructed Table 2, was how well aligned the proposed SDG's are with the full spectrum of human needs. Agenda items 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 11 support our human deficiency needs—agenda items 1, 2, 3, and 8 are focused on our survival needs; agenda items 11, 6 and 7 are focused on our safety and protection needs; and agenda item 9 is focused on our respect and recognition needs

Agenda items 4, 5, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15 and 16 support our human growth needs—agenda items 4, 5 and 10 are focused on our individuation needs; agenda item 16 is focused on our self-actualization needs,; agenda items 12, 14, and 15 are focused on our integration needs; and agenda item 13 is focused on our serving needs.

Table 2:

Stages of Psychological Development	Needs	UN Sustainable Development Goals	Value priorities	
			Internal	External
Serving	Satisfying your need to lead a life of self-less service.	13. To take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.	Compassion, humility, wisdom.	Future generations, social justice.
Integrating	Satisfying your need to make a difference.	12. To ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns. 14. To conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development. 15. To protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss. 17. To strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.	Collaboration, empathy cooperation.	Sustainability, shared purpose.
Self-actualizing	Satisfying your need to find meaning and purpose.	16. To promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.	Fairness, openness, trust, transparency.	Authenticity, shared values.
Individuating	Satisfying your need for freedom and autonomy.	4. To ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. 5. To achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. 10. To reduce inequality within and among countries.	Accountability, continuous learning.	Independence, equality, autonomy.
Differentiating	Satisfying your need for respect and recognition.	7. To ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all. 9. To build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation.	Self-esteem continuous improvement.	Achievement, status, authority, power.

Conforming	Satisfying your need for love, and belonging.	11. To make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.	Safety, protection, loyalty.	Harmony, friendship, traditions.
Surviving	Satisfying your security and physiological needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To end poverty in all its forms everywhere. 2. To end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture. 3. To ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages. 6. To ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all. 8. To promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all. 	Security.	Survival.

Psychological obstacles to implementing the SDGs

The key obstacle to implementing the UN's SDGs is the lack of higher order values in the leaders and senior officials of the nations and international agencies charged with implementing and supervising the SDGs. Just as individuals grow and develop in stages, so do the cultures of nations.⁸ This is because the cultures of nations are a reflection of the values of their leaders.

At the lower end of the spectrum, we find nation states which are classified by the Economic Intelligence Unit (EIU) as authoritarian regimes (51 nations), hybrid regimes (37 nations) and failed economies (54). For the most part, these are nation states that are still attempting to meet their deficiency needs. They are mostly led by politicians operating from the self-esteem, relationship and surviving levels of consciousness who are at the differentiating stage of psychological development.

At the upper end of the spectrum, we find nation states which are classified by the Economic Intelligence Unit as full democracies (25 nations). These are states that have just begun to focus on their psychological growth needs and are mostly led by politicians operating from the transformation, self-esteem, relationship and survival levels of consciousness who have reached the individuating stage of psychological development. We can also find amongst this group a small number of states led by politicians at the self-actualizing stage of psychological development.

What all this means is that agenda items 12, 13, 14 and 15 will be the most difficult SDG's to implement. There are practically no nations with political leaders operating from the integrating and serving stages of development. Consequently, there will be a lack of the higher order values required to implement these items; values such as, compassion, humility, wisdom, collaboration, empathy and cooperation. In the last century, there have been only two leaders who reached these stages of psychological development—Nelson Mandela and Mahatma Gandhi. In Gandhi's case, he was not a political leader; he was regarded by the politicians and people of India as a spiritual leader.

The international agencies charged with implementing the SDGs will also find it difficult to implement Item 17—To strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development—because of the lack of these same higher order values.

The next most difficult agenda items to implement will be items 4, 5, 10 and 16. These are the SDG's that require nation states to embrace the values of trust, fairness, openness, transparency, accountability, equality and autonomy. These values are only found in the leaders of the nation states which appear in the upper echelons of the full democracies listed by the EIU; they are not found in the

⁸ Richard Barrett, *Love, Fear and the Destiny of Nations: The Impact of the Evolution of Human Consciousness on World Affairs* (Bath: Fulfilling Books), 2012.

leaders of the middle and lower echelons of this category, and they are not embraced at all by the leaders of failed democracies, hybrid regimes and authoritarian regimes.

By far the easiest of the agenda items to implement will be those that tackle the world's deficiency needs—items 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 11. The reason these will be the easiest to implement is because it is in every leader's interest, including those in charge of failed democracies, hybrid regimes and authoritarian regimes to be seen to be supporting the implementation of the SDG's that focus on the deficiency needs of their populations. In my opinion, this is where the implementation of the SDG's should begin and where most of the initial effort should be focused. Next in order of priority should be items 4, 5, 10 and 16. These items will require longer to implement because they are dependent on the acceptance and observance of democratic values. Priority on these items should be given to nations with the highest democracy indices.

Conclusions

The largest impediment to improving the well-being of humanity is not finding the funding or the staff to implement the SDG programmes; the largest impediment is the unwillingness of the part of the heads of state, senior government politicians and business leaders to embrace the higher order human values. They have simply not reached the stages of psychological development where these values are important to them.

If, as a global society, we really do want to build a sustainable future for humanity, there needs to be a seismic shift in the psychological development of our political leaders: A shift from a focus on "I" to "we"; and a shift in attitude from what's in it for me, to what's best for the common good. It is very clear we will not solve the issues we face as a global society until we experience an evolution of human consciousness.⁹

What our world leaders are failing to understand is that there is an evolutionary advantage in being able to expand your consciousness (your sense of identity) to include others—in other words, *there is an evolutionary advantage in advancing your psychological development*. This idea is backed up by the latest scientific research. Using game theory, two evolutionary biologists found that:

*Evolution will punish you if you're selfish and mean. For a short time and against a specific set of opponents, some selfish organisms may come out ahead. But selfishness isn't evolutionary sustainable.*¹⁰

The world renowned biologist E. O. Wilson expresses a similar thought:

⁹ Richard Barrett, *The New Leadership Paradigm* (Bath: Fulfilling Books), 2010.

¹⁰ Article, Nature Communications, *Evolutionary instability in zero-determinant strategies demonstrates that winning is not everything*, by Christophe Adami and Arend Hintze, published August 1, 2013.

Selfish activity within the group provides competitive advantage but is commonly destructive to the group as a whole.¹¹ ... When an individual is cooperative and altruistic, this reduces his advantage in competition ... but increases the survival and reproduction rate of the group as a whole.¹²

Wilson goes on to state:

The origin of the human condition is best explained by the natural selection for social interaction—the inherited propensities to communicate, recognize, evaluate, bond, cooperate and from all these the deep warm pleasure of belonging to your own special group.¹³

The tragedy of cultural evolution, which became the successor of species evolution with the arrival of Homo sapiens, is that we have not yet learned to restrain our self-interest at the group level. Our group structures (nation states) are still trying to compete instead of cooperating.

We have made the mistake of believing that the benefits of intra-group competition, such as improving the group's fitness and performance, also apply to inter-group competition. Nothing could be further from the truth: From an evolutionary perspective inter-group cooperation is far more successful than inter-group competition.

Furthermore intra-group competition only works to a group's collective advantage if the competition takes place within an over-arching, rule-based, cooperative environment. For example, teams which are members of a football league cooperate with each other at the level of the organisation of the league, but compete with each other according to rules which are administered by referees from the football league organisation. The same is true of the Olympic Games: Athletes from nations compete with each other within a framework of rules managed by the International Olympic Committee, members of which come from every nation. We also see this form of regulated competition between countries in the European Union and between states in the United States. For intra-group competition to work successfully, it must always take place within a framework of cooperation.

These findings have significant implications for the future of our species. For cultural evolution to continue we must not only learn how to bond with each other as individuals to form group structures (nations), our group structures (nations) also have to learn how to cooperate with other group structures (nations) that have a different "tribal" identity. Without a set of overarching rules to regulate competition, we will not be able to solve the problems of humanity: the problems of humanity are global, but the entities that must solve these problems are national.

¹¹ E. O. Wilson, *The Meaning of Human Existence* (New York: Liveright Publishing), 2014, p. 178

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 179.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p.75

The only way we are going to learn how to cooperate is by transcending our “tribal and religious” identities. E. O. Wilson calls tribalism “the exquisitely human flaw.”¹⁴

*People deeply need membership in a group, whether religious or secular. They know that happiness and indeed survival itself require that they bond with others who share some amount of genetic kinship, language, moral beliefs, geographical location, dress code, etc. ... It is tribalism ... that makes good people do bad things.*¹⁵

Millions upon millions of people all over the planet have died in conflict because of this basic human dysfunction, the source of which is our instinctive need to belong for the purpose of survival. We have to learn to transcend our ethnic and religious origins if we want to survive as a species.

Wilson states:

*In a nutshell, individual selection [self-interest] favours what we call sin, and group selection [common good] favours virtue. The result is the internal conflict of conscience.*¹⁶

Wilson concludes:

*We need to understand ourselves in both evolutionary and psychological terms in order to plan a more rational, catastrophe-proof future.*¹⁷

Understanding ourselves in “both evolutionary and psychological terms” is what this chapter has been about. Based on what we have discussed so far, we can conclude that as far as human beings are concerned the solution to Wilson’s *internal conflict of conscience* is found in the individuation and self-actualization stages of psychological development. Only when our world leaders reach these stages of psychological development and create the conditions where others can also reach these stages of psychological development will we be able to make significant progress in improving the well-being of humanity.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 150.

¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 150-151

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 179.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 180.