



## The Millennium Project

World Federation of UN Associations

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### MILLENNIUM PROJECT MEETING IDENTIFIES ACTIONS FOR GLOBAL CHALLENGES

The Millennium Project of the World Federation of United Nations Associations met in Minneapolis July 27-29 to discuss progress made in 2006 on 15 major global challenges, discuss the findings of the forthcoming *2007 State of the Future*, and develop the 2008 work program. Seventeen of the 30 Node Chairs were present, representing all of the continents of the world, with the exception of Antarctica. They presented and responded to questions related to their country's individual progress. The Millennium Project was established in 1996 as a global participatory think tank in response to the increasingly transnational, trans-institutional, and trans-disciplinary nature of the enormous challenges facing the future of the world.

The *2007 State of the Future* assemblage represents the 11th year of the think tank deliberations. Some of the 2006 accomplishments included international assessments of future education and learning possibilities, environmental security issues and options, and the State of the Future Index for countries and the world. People have always wanted to know if the future is getting better or worse, where we are winning and losing, and where resources should be focused to ensure a better future.

Prior to the creation of the Millennium Project State of the Future Index, major world indexes provided individual measures for economics, health, and energy, for example. However, no one organization attempted to bring it all together to see the prospects for humanity as a whole. The Millennium Project's State of the Future Index measures the 10-year outlook for the global future in general. It is constructed with key variables and forecasts related to the global opportunities and challenges that have emerged from the largest on-going global participatory futures process in history.

The "where we are winning" findings of this year's survey are that people around the world are becoming healthier, wealthier, better educated, more peaceful, increasingly connected, and they are living longer. But, at the same time, "where we are losing" findings are that the world is more corrupt, congested, warmer, and increasingly dangerous. On balance, however, world futures are improving.

The think tank assessed issues that ranged from life expectancy and infant mortality, to sex slavery, the global economy, energy and environmental issues, and the imminent changes in education and learning. Slavery, long declared as "no longer part of the human condition," continues in greater numbers today, with the growth of

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youth sex slavery, than it was at its highest point of the African slave trade.

The group also explored the opportunity for the United States and China to develop a joint energy-environment strategy that might be announced before the 2008 Olympics, and the likely impact of the 800 to 1,000 coal-fired plants currently in planning or under construction around the world. If these go into operations with a 40 year production life, the reduction of GHG emissions is unlikely. The group anticipates that an environmental movement similar to the 1970 movement against nuclear energy will likely occur.

The Millennium Project tracks some of the most challenging conditions while also identifying opportunities that would mitigate these threats. The group's conclusion is that answers have been identified for each of the 15 global challenges. The group's position is that the real challenge is connecting the answers with the decision makers. For example, solar-powered satellites could supply enough electrical energy to run all of the cars on the earth forever, and sea water agriculture could provide a viable alternative to address ever-growing water shortages, new sources for food, biofuels, and carbon sequestration. More than 1 billion people do not have access to safe drinking water, and water tables are falling on every continent. Forty percent of the water consumed is controlled by 2 or more countries, providing the new opportunities for conflicts. However, because agriculture accounts for 70% of human usage of fresh water, seawater agriculture on desert coastlines could significantly reduce freshwater agriculture demand. Research shows that there are 100,000 plants that can adapt to salt water. One hundred are currently in commercial trials in the U.S., China, and other countries. If we planted otherwise uninhabitable beaches with algae and other vegetation, we would have more food for humans and animals.

Glenn explained the group's strong conviction that all of the challenges facing the world have identified solutions. According to Millennium Project Director Jerome Glenn, "The Global Millennium Project has proven that Global Futures research is possible, and is enhanced by the international, inter-institutional, multi-ideological nature of the coalition. The emerging global threats are bigger than the political, religious, and cultural differences among the individuals involved. These are people who would never ordinarily work together, but have demonstrated an extraordinary commitment to the joint resolution of the global challenges facing us all." Blaz Golob, Node Chair for Ljubljana, Slovenia, expressed his conviction that "The future is what we as individuals chose to make of it."

The above information is among the findings of the group's research which are distilled in its forthcoming 99-page book, *2007 State of the Future*. For those who want greater detail, a 6,000-page CD is part of the global report card on the future. According to Michael Marien, Editor, Future Survey, "The 15 Global Challenges updated annually continues to be the best introduction by far to the key issues of the early 21st century."