

## **VISION STATEMENT 2050**

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Simron Jit Singh, Vienna, Austria

The global environmental change research framework emerged in response to the growing concern over the degradation of the environment on a global scale due to socio-economic activities. By now it is widely recognised that much of the environmental pressures are a consequence of how humans interact with their environment in terms of material and energy throughput with lifestyle and technology as important determining factors. In effect, there is sufficient evidence to argue that a transition towards sustainability would require a fundamental shift in the consumption patterns from those typical in industrialised nations to one with less impact, together with a new understanding of 'development and human well-being'. While such a paradigm shift has yet to occur, we find much of the developing world at close heels to their industrial forerunners. The model of Third-World development promoted by global neo-liberal policies remains a powerful force in reinforcing the growth of capitalism and expanding its frontiers based on high consumption, a logic counter to sustainable development. Non-reversal of this trend will not only lead to unprecedented environmental catastrophes but the world is increasingly at risk in terms of new diseases, deprivation and conflicts making the world a highly insecure world to live in.

A shift from the industrial mode of production and consumption would require major efforts to allow for a fundamental transition towards sustainability as opposed to the incremental growth and development model. A deeper understanding of society-nature interactions has to be achieved in favour of local, small scale decentralized development models of production and consumption that balance (local) human and natural capital with respect to the social and cultural context. At the same time a reduction on the dependency on fossil fuels is imperative given the threat to climate change and a search and shift to alternate sources. The world trade network and terms of trade would need to be adjusted to allow for an equal and fair distribution of wealth as opposed to the present trend of supporting accumulation of world capital in the hands of a few giant corporate conglomerates mostly based in industrial nations. Last but not least, development and humanitarian aid needs to be de-contextualised from the capitalist world economy it presently seeks to promote in the remote corners of the earth. In short, I envision a healthy, just and peaceful world with low levels of stress and a quality of life that the world can support within its ecological limits for all its inhabitants.