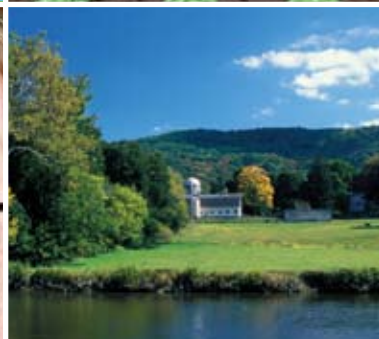


# **A COMMON AGENDA FOR HEALTH & ENVIRONMENT**



**GOALS FOR THE NEXT GENERATION  
AND STEPS TO GET THERE**



### **A Common Agenda for Health and Environment**

is a statement of commitment to six Generational Goals to be achieved within one generation that will leave our children a healthy world full of hope and possibility.

The Common Agenda for Health and Environment is a project of the Toward Tomorrow initiative, led by faculty and staff at the Lowell Center for Sustainable Production, University of Massachusetts Lowell. The

purpose of Toward Tomorrow is to stimulate discussion and action towards a future in which human activity enhances the health and well-being of people and ecosystems.

The Lowell Center for Sustainable Production is grateful to the funders of this work: the V. Kann Rasmussen Foundation and the Howard Gilman Foundation.



# **A COMMON AGENDA FOR HEALTH & ENVIRONMENT**

**IN 2007, NEARLY 100 LEADERS OF HEALTHCARE, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, ENVIRONMENTAL, LABOR AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATIONS BEGAN A CONVERSATION ABOUT THE WORLD WE WANT TO LEAVE OUR CHILDREN, AND WHAT IT WILL TAKE TO GET THERE WITHIN A GENERATION.**

Our starting point was an understanding of the connections between the health of the environment and the health of human beings, and a conviction that by working together, people can realize their capacity for living sustainably and in harmony. Over the course of a year, we developed a vision of the future one generation from now, set Generational Goals to be accomplished by then, and chose priority actions to lead us there.

The process of developing Generational Goals and holding decision-makers accountable to progress towards them has helped people, governments and businesses in other countries make major strides towards their visions of a sustainable future. We hope that this effort will contribute to similar success in the United States—where there is both urgent need and great opportunity for courageous decision-making by individuals and institutions—with the result of a new era of health and well-being for future generations and the natural world.

## **GOALS FOR THE NEXT GENERATION AND STEPS TO GET THERE**



# THE NEED AND OPPORTUNITY OF THE CURRENT CRISIS

**T**ODAY, AT AN UNPRECEDENTED PACE, we in the United States are advancing the depletion and extinction of myriad species with which we share the planet. Through our occupation and destruction of habitats, our disposal of wastes, our contributions to climate change, and our global dissemination of toxics and invasive species, we threaten the diversity and integrity of our ecosystems.

In many parts of the world, failure to maintain and restore the health of ecosystems over the next generation not only threatens biodiversity, but promises to deprive hundreds of millions of people of clean air, water, and healthy soil that are essential to human survival. In more industrialized countries such as the United States, loss of green-space, environmental contaminants, and unhealthy individual behaviors accompany steep rises in rates of chronic diseases or conditions. These include diabetes, obesity, heart disease, many cancers, and asthma.

Decisions by individuals contribute to environmental and human health problems, but higher level societal choices

made by our governments, businesses and communities also play a critical role: choices about our sources and uses of energy; our food production systems; our transportation and building infrastructure; the chemicals in the products we buy; the kind of health care we deliver and pay for; the health and environmental policies we enact or fail to enact; the resources we devote to education; how to resolve problems with other nations.

We have created these crises, and they are unfolding at a speed and level of intensity that has not been seen before. Yet, across the globe and in the United States, there are remarkable initiatives that do not deplete and destroy, but rather enhance health, protect the environment, and build prosperity. These are sustainable and just approaches to natural resource protection, production and consumption of materials, and reversing dangerous strife between peoples. They have succeeded because they take into account the interconnections between the health of people, ecosystems and economies, as well as the importance of just and equitable distribution of benefits and burdens. They demonstrate human ingenuity and commitment to long-term well-being for people and the planet, and they are fueling an emergence of a sense of responsibility as well as hope and opportunity.

However, these successful sustainability initiatives remain small in scale and disjointed. The world urgently needs thought and action to promote sustainability on a grand scale. It is this imperative that inspired nearly 100 leaders to contribute to A Common Agenda for Health and Environment: a statement of commitment to six ambitious cross-cutting Generational Goals—goals to be achieved within one generation—that will leave our children a healthy world full of hope and possibility.



Setting Generational Goals begins with a statement of underlying principles. The most important principles that emerged from our process are:

- We in the United States have a responsibility and an opportunity to move purposefully and boldly, understanding the interconnections between the well-being of the global environment, people, and fellow species.
- Healthy people\* and a healthy environment are achievable but require fundamental shifts in attitudes and practices.
- Uncertainty about the science relevant to these topics is inherent, and while we must continue to advance understanding through science, we cannot allow uncertainty to prevent us from taking promising steps to reverse unintended consequences of past actions and to better anticipate and avoid problems in the future.
- Racial, ethnic and socio-economic disparities in health status and environmental degradation are not acceptable.

We are confident that these principles, and the Generational Goals that flow from them, will resonate with many people. We encourage you to read on, paying attention to what moves you about this Common Agenda and which Generational Goals most inspire you. We ask you to consider how you might use the Common Agenda going forward—by finding new allies that haven't yet engaged on these issues; convening discussions about local action steps that your community thinks will best advance the Generational Goals; advocating for a particular policy proposal, or in other ways we haven't imagined. The essential purpose of the Common Agenda is to effect a shift in the way we tackle the environmental and health problems we have created, with the goal of leaving a safe, clean, healthy and peaceful world for future generations. Welcome to the effort!

\* As defined by the World Health Organization, health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.

### Generational Goal-setting

Generational Goal-setting has been used successfully in Europe to advance sustainability at the local and national levels.

In Sweden, the government has shifted policies and reallocated resources to achieve sixteen long-term environmental goals, among them “a non-toxic environment,” “a protective ozone layer” and “a good built environment.”\* Goal-setting holds promise for overcoming roadblocks to sustainable practices, some



within environmental, health and other civic organizations, some within government and some within businesses, by prompting reassessment of policies and practices in light of clear guideposts. Goal-setting provides tools to hold decision-makers accountable. Generational Goal-setting in particular encourages a focus on and commitment to lasting solutions. In contrast to shorter-term decision-making, which operates within existing institutions or mandates, Generational Goal-setting motivates people to work across sectors where it makes sense, and to design new institutions, new technologies, as well as new legal and social frameworks that have fresh capacity to achieve a long-term vision. Generational Goal-setting has the potential to contribute to cultural shifts on the scale that is needed now.

\* See: <http://www.miljomal.nu/english/english.php>

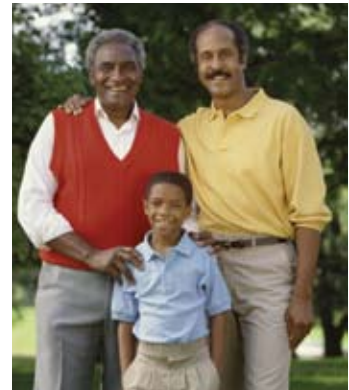
## GENERATIONAL GOAL 1

# SAFE AND HEALTHY PEOPLE

**One generation from now, all people in the United States have access to adequate and nutritious food, affordable housing, and the environmental conditions for optimal health and well-being. All people have full access to a high-quality, prevention-oriented health system that reduces rates of disease and minimizes costs.**

### **OBJECTIVE 1: Environmental, Social & Economic Conditions Promote Health and Safety**

Relevant federal, state and municipal policies and individual actions seek to ensure a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of all people. This includes sufficient food, clothing, housing, medical care, necessary social services and security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood. The public, health providers and policy makers understand the links between the health of individuals, communities and ecosystems. Stringent human and wildlife health-based standards, regulations, and economic incentives are in place for air, water, soil, and food quality, as well as for the built environment (housing, schools, parks, and roads). Materials and products are non-toxic. Conditions that impose undue stress on vulnerable people are identified, and targets and strategies are developed to ameliorate those conditions.



### **OBJECTIVE 2: Food Production and Distribution Promote Health**

Agriculture, livestock husbandry and fisheries depend minimally on fossil fuels. Efficient use of resources conserves soil and water. Healthy and accessible food free of pathogens and toxic residues is grown locally and regionally with sustainable agricultural methods, promoting crop diversity, a varied nutritious diet, and minimal environmental impacts from farm to table. People who work on farms or in fisheries enjoy healthy working conditions and full labor rights.

### **OBJECTIVE 3: A Comprehensive Health System Emphasizes Primary Prevention and Health Promotion**

All people have ready access to quality primary care, health education and promotion, environmental interventions, and needed social services. Economic incentives align with prevention-oriented health care, including a strong role for primary care providers, and resources and infrastructure for health education, environmental interventions and social services. Mechanisms of paying for care do not impede access to or quality of care.





## GENERATIONAL GOAL 2

# VIBRANT COMMUNITIES

**One generation from now, communities across the nation are characterized by people working together to ensure social connection, a spirit of caring for one another, a healthy ecosystem, and economic vitality. Past environmental and health harms are remedied.**

### OBJECTIVE 1: Local Infrastructure Promotes Health

New community development and redevelopment programs locate homes, community centers and businesses within walking distance of one another, including retailers of healthy affordable food from regional sources. Safe biking, walking, and mass transit systems are priorities, reflected in transportation funding allocations that favor public transit over highways. Funding is used to “fix it first” by repairing existing infrastructure before beginning new construction projects. Water reuse systems encourage conservation. All electricity comes from clean, green, and renewable energy sources and from smart, distributive energy grids that are resilient, flexible, and adaptive. Government and private programs are in place to protect communities from ecological destruction related to climate change—including storms, droughts, floods, food and water shortages, and disease outbreaks—until the climate stabilizes.



### OBJECTIVE 2: Local Biodiversity is Preserved; Greenspace is Restored

Development is focused in existing towns and cities. In more rural areas, a substantial percentage of private agricultural acreage is devoted to conservation. All communities have implemented plans and measures to restore species diversity and intact habitats. Community zoning, planning and policies encourage easy access to abundant greenspace.



### OBJECTIVE 3: Communities Are Free From Toxic Chemicals

Hazardous waste disposal sites and other contaminated lands are fully remediated. Businesses understand and respect environmental and occupational regulations, and employ production practices that do not rely on hazardous substances. All transportation vehicles use renewable energy and comply with strict air quality standards. Food is produced, processed and marketed without adding toxic chemicals to the environment or the food supply. Potential sources of drinking water contamination are identified and steps taken to keep water safe and

plentiful. Buildings are constructed using environmentally benign materials that are non-toxic.

## GENERATIONAL GOAL 3

# GREEN JOBS IN A GREEN ECONOMY

**One generation from now, the engines of a robust economy are businesses and technologies that provide safe, well-paying jobs and enhance environmental quality and public health. With an economy that now accounts for the costs of public health and environmental harms, new technologies have designed-out hazards that once were viewed as acceptable risks of modern life. Resulting jobs meet the market demands of a green economy by providing a skilled labor force to retrofit America's cities with new energy efficient technologies, construct new mass transit infrastructure, grow our nation's food with sustainable practices, and enhance greenspace for the well-being of people and nature.**



### **OBJECTIVE 1: The Promotion of Sustainable Technologies and Renewable Energy is a Primary Strategy for Economic Prosperity**

Policies, investments and incentives drive the proliferation of safe and sustainable technologies. The primary sources of energy used in the United States are renewable. Initiatives to promote conservation and reduce per capital energy use are prevalent and successful. Manufacturers are producing and users are demanding non-toxic renewable materials that produce no extraction, synthesis, or production waste. New technologies are developed to support sustainability goals including substitution of more dangerous technologies, rigorous consideration of environmental, health and social implications, and public involvement in the technological development process. Publicly funded

green job projects further regional sustainability efforts by using locally manufactured materials wherever feasible. Public and private job creation strategies at the local, state and national levels have created millions of new, well-paid, career-track jobs as well as jobs for those workers displaced by the transition to a green economy. Economic growth in support of a green economy provides pathways out of poverty and racial injustice. Unions are recognized as key partners in assuring this just transition.

### **OBJECTIVE 2: Full Cost Accounting Encourages Environmental Restoration and Protection**

The full costs of the environmental and health impacts of producing goods and services are identified. Policies are in place to assign those costs across the supply chain, reflecting the full lifecycle of the product or activity—from extraction and production to consumption and waste disposal. These policies acknowledge the inequitable cost burdens of sustainable products and account for hidden costs of unsustainable products. Product pricing reflects the true costs of pollution, climate change, biodiversity loss, and depletion of natural resources. This helps to stimulate innovative technologies and solutions that avoid such costs and improve environmental restoration and protection.





## GENERATIONAL GOAL 4

# PROTECTION AND RESTORATION OF ECOSYSTEMS

**One generation from now, native species and ecosystem processes are conserved, restored and sustained. The United States is well on its way to a 2050 target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by at least 80% from 1990 levels.**

### **OBJECTIVE 1: The Public is Engaged in the Health of Ecosystems**

United States residents respect the diversity and abundance of species and ecosystems. They understand the impacts of personal consumption on ecosystem health. Through advocacy with government and businesses and through personal choices, people living in the U.S. take responsibility for minimizing harm to the planet.



### **OBJECTIVE 2: Promotion of Healthy Populations Is a Priority for the United States**

The U.S. engages in diplomatic and educational initiatives that help stabilize population at home and across the globe. This helps ensure sufficient access to food, water, energy, and housing/habitat for all species, and minimizes impacts of human populations on ecosystems.

### **OBJECTIVE 3: International Collaboration and Public Policy Stabilize the Climate and Restore Environmental Quality**

The United States has demonstrated leadership at home and abroad by enacting and enforcing strong, mandatory policies that reduce greenhouse gas emissions associated with energy development, transportation, agriculture, mining, construction and other industrial practices. Decision makers at all levels of government consider and act on the climate impacts of policies and programs. Agricultural and forestry practices that sequester carbon and reduce carbon emissions are used to their full potential. The United States provides international leadership on important global environmental concerns in addition to climate change, including persistent organic pollutants, degradation of the marine environment, and depletion of biodiversity. The United States conducts effective diplomacy on international conventions and demonstrates compliance at home.

### **OBJECTIVE 4: Species Connectivity and Conservation of Habitat are Ensured**

All development projects, mineral extraction, farming, ranching and fisheries prioritize the need of species to move between different habitats during different seasons and years via intact pathways in non-toxic ecosystems, ensuring the survival of all species for centuries to come.

### **OBJECTIVE 5: Threats by Invasive Species are Minimal**

Biodiversity and the resilience of functioning ecosystems are enhanced to decrease the threat and presence of invasive species.

## GENERATIONAL GOAL 5

# SHARED RESPONSIBILITY FOR ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

**One generation from now, there is a spirit of shared responsibility for respecting, protecting, and fulfilling the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: no person is kept from living a healthy, active and meaningful life by poor environmental and social conditions beyond his or her control, and groups of people are not at higher risk of environmental threats to health by virtue of their race, gender, or economic status. There is an understanding that human health is interdependent with the health of the environment and that part of our shared responsibility is to ensure that ecosystems are healthy and intact, allowing all life on the planet to thrive.**

### **OBJECTIVE 1: A Healthy Environment is an Essential Human Right**

Relevant federal, state and municipal policies and programs, as well as individual actions, seek to respect, protect and fulfill the rights of humans and other species to a healthy environment. Eliminating disparities in environmental exposures and restoring ecosystems are seen as essential functions of a transparent and responsive government and an open and responsible private sector. A healthy environment is affirmatively established as a Constitutional right.



### **OBJECTIVE 2: People Share Responsibility for Ensuring the Viability of All Species**

U.S. residents value the rich diversity of life on earth. They understand that protecting habitats and species preserves some of the most basic building blocks of our economies and societies. Federal, state and local agencies share a culture of conservation that informs planning decisions and regulatory structures.

### **OBJECTIVE 3: Safe Work with Fair Compensation is Respected, Protected and Fulfilled as an Essential Human Right**

Relevant federal, state and municipal policies respect, protect, and fulfill the rights of all adults to employment that provides a living wage, a safe working environment, and opportunities for personal advancement. Reductions in income disparities between the top 1% of the population and the remaining 99% contribute to a stronger economy.

### **OBJECTIVE 4: U.S. Residents are Active and Effective Participants in Decision-making**

Information needed to understand environmental conditions and health consequences is widely available and accessible to all communities and interest groups. Public participation in decision-making processes of agencies and other organizations responsible for protecting environmental and public health is considered a civic duty, embraced, supported and facilitated by government, and validated by transparent processes that are accountable to the public. Participation in decision-making by vulnerable people and those who have not been able to participate previously—because of discrimination or disenfranchisement—is strongly encouraged and fairly compensated.

## GENERATIONAL GOAL 6

# A WORLD AT PEACE



**In one generation, our nation leads the world toward ending the unsustainable toll on human health and the environment of perpetual violence and war. Industrial, institutional, and human capacity for providing war materials is retooled to serve current and emerging environmental and public health priorities.**

### **OBJECTIVE 1: Security is Enhanced by Supporting the Social Good**

The United States demonstrates its commitment as a global leader of peace, enhancing security by addressing the root causes of violence, while not compromising the country's ability to defend itself if attacked. A substantial percentage of resources historically spent on military activities is now devoted to working with the international community to mitigate the primary drivers of insecurity and violent conflict. Military forces are transformed into viable, internationally sanctioned and directed peacekeeping forces that help protect human rights and environmental resources for all people in all nations, relying on the use of force to deter violence only as a last resort. Retraining of dislocated workers provides new, well-paid jobs that restore people and ecosystems damaged by war, including the clean-up of sites contaminated by military production; rebuilding of infrastructure in war-torn areas; and long-term care and support for military personnel and other individuals harmed by prior wars and conflicts. Technology developed for military purposes is applied to solving problems of environmental and health degradation as well as providing economic growth opportunities in clean technologies.



### **OBJECTIVE 2: Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical Weapons are Eliminated, and the International Arms Trade is Closing Down**

There is complete compliance by the United States and all other nuclear powers with new treaties for nuclear disarmament which achieve the shared vision of a world free of nuclear weapons. The United States leads other nations in ending all current biological and chemical weapons programs and negotiates robust inspection and verification regimes to strengthen the Biological Weapons Convention and Chemical Weapons Convention, closing all loopholes. The United States leads the termination of the global arms trade that fuels "small arms" conflicts throughout the underdeveloped world and transitions these industries towards supporting sustainable technologies and livelihoods.

### **OBJECTIVE 3: The U.S. Embraces Peaceful Conflict Resolution**

All primary and secondary education programs teach conflict resolution and prioritize the development of related curricula. Both the federal and state prison systems emphasize humane treatment, rehabilitating incarcerated people and integrating them productively into society. Social factors that currently lead to disproportionate rates of incarceration of low-income people and people of color are addressed through constructive measures aimed at root causes: improving education, creating jobs, eradicating poverty and providing treatment programs and social opportunities for people in need. A range of initiatives and investments prioritize peacemaking and peacekeeping, contributing to a cultural shift in which power and domination are seen as ineffective approaches to resolution of most problems among individuals, groups and nations.



## PRIORITY ACTIONS

**P**ROGRESS TOWARDS A FUTURE DESCRIBED by these Generational Goals—safe and healthy people, vibrant communities; green jobs and a green economy; restored and protected ecosystems; shared responsibility for environmental justice; a world at peace—depends on action in the near term by all of us in our personal and professional lives.

Turning the vision in this Common Agenda into a reality requires innovation, bold action and focus at the international, national, state, and local levels. The 12 priority actions described here will not by themselves achieve the Generational Goals. Instead, they are concrete steps that together will begin to accomplish changes on the scale required for reversing environmental destruction and the burden of human disease.



## PRIORITY ACTION 1

### **Establish a National Council for Sustainability and Future Generations to Promote Action across Federal Agencies to Restore Public and Ecosystem Health**

Setting Generational Goals is a new approach to government policy and program planning in the United States. The purpose of the National Council for Sustainability and Future Generations, made up of government and non-governmental representatives, is to support the development, implementation and tracking of national-level Generational Goals. The Council will provide coordination among government programs and promote accountability among government and non-government activities on sustainability, using participatory and democratic operating procedures and systems. The Council will help ensure that decisions made today do not hurt the ability of future generations to meet their needs, in keeping with the World Commission of Environment and Development's definition of sustainable development, so that they enhance biodiversity and health going forward as well as restore damage from past activities.

#### **Suggested activities for the Council are:**

- **engaging the public** in reviewing and refining the Generational Goals;
- **assessing the likely impact** of proposed government policy and budget decisions on progress toward Generational Goals and on future generations;
- **supporting and encouraging accountability** for government sustainability initiatives, including developing criteria and benchmarks for success;
- **tracking and regularly communicating progress towards Generational Goals** to a range of audiences using indicators agreed upon through a participatory, multi-stakeholder process;
- **creating a comprehensive data system** of essential natural resources, and of population trends and consumption patterns that can be used to identify and prevent over-consumption and potential resource shortages;
- **supporting stakeholders** (businesses, governments, trade unions, and relevant civil society groups) in their work toward achieving Generational Goals and objectives by providing planning guidance, technical assistance, educational materials and opportunities for information exchange and collaborative action, as well as access to data for tracking progress; and holding activities accountable to high standards of environmental sustainability to prevent “greenwashing”;
- **re-establishing and strengthening the Congressional Office of Technology Assessment** to play a critical role in assessing technologies, including their social, economic, health, and environmental implications.

## PRIORITY ACTION 2

### Restart Local and National Economies by Advancing Clean Technologies and Healthy Consumer Products

**T**his action reflects the potential for investment in clean technologies, cleaner production systems and sustainable products to provide a robust base for economic and environmental health across industrial sectors. **Policies and programs to advance clean technology, cleaner production, and healthy consumer products include:**

- **providing incentives for investment in clean technologies and healthy products**, including renewable and non-polluting energy, safer chemical and materials, organic and sustainable agriculture, and sustainable fish harvesting, by using revenues from taxes levied on especially damaging consumer products and technologies;
- **establishing a system of rewards and incentives** for innovation leading to an enhanced ability to meet basic human needs while protecting environmental quality;
- **stimulating further innovation** by widely disseminating technological advances resulting from public investments;
- **developing a new integrated chemicals policy** for the United States to phase out the manufacture and use of disease-causing chemicals such as carcinogens and reproductive toxicants, and to ensure the safety of all chemicals remaining in commerce through rapid decision-making and incentives for the substitution of hazardous substances by safer alternatives and green chemistry;
- **establishing a national Fund for Clean Technology Job Training and Retraining** using taxes levied on polluting industries;
- **promoting decision-making and consumer choice based on precaution, full life-cycle analysis and human needs**, including providing educational materials and tools for assessment and marketing;
- **establishing a Consumer Products Labeling Program** to track chemicals in consumer products, disclose on labels all ingredients in the product, and provide life cycle information about the impacts of the product's ingredients and manufacturing processes on human and on ecosystem health;
- **developing publicly available databases organized by product and technology** that provide more detailed environmental health and safety information about the technology and/or product during its life-cycle including: when key resources used in production and transport of the product are being extracted faster than they can reproduce themselves, whether wastes involved in production and disposal are being emitted faster than they can be absorbed, and what ecosystems and endangered species are affected.



## PRIORITY ACTION 3



### Celebrate Farming that Supports Human & Ecosystem Health

**T**his action calls on consumers, local, state and federal government agencies and institutional purchasers to promote healthy farming as the bedrock of vibrant rural communities, environmental protection and a safe and healthy food supply. **Specific healthy farming steps include:**

- **encouraging the development of indicators and monitoring** to help conserve and restore soils, water and air quality, and reduce and sequester greenhouse gas emissions;
- **encouraging a multi-stakeholder process** to decide how **to measure and reward sustainability** in food systems;
- **providing stronger incentives and more funding in agriculture legislation** to increase food safety and security in low-income, inner-city, and rural communities while also promoting farming opportunities and the protection of biodiversity, such as the preservation and restoration of habitat and migratory corridors for fish and wildlife on private and federal lands;
- **reducing reliance on pesticides** by advancing biologically-based integrated pest management, aiming for zero synthetic pesticide and fertilizer inputs within a generation;
- **identifying and reversing policies and programs** that encourage monocultures, unhealthy factory farming practices, and centralized ownership and control of farmland;
- **revamping agricultural subsidies** to prioritize low-impact, energy-efficient, and climate-friendly farming practices over conventional ones and promoting policies that lead to improved environmental stewardship;
- **promoting and supporting the marketing and consumption of locally grown and seasonal crops;**
- **creating incentives** for all people to access traditional farming livelihoods;
- **enforcing transparency and fairness** in the market;
- **protecting farmers, farm and food workers, farm animals, and natural resources** from exploitation by any nation, corporation, or individual.

## PRIORITY ACTION 4

### Promote Energy Security and Independence with an Agenda for Renewable Energy and Efficiency

**T**his action promotes policies and programs that phase out the use of dirty, risky, and unsustainable fuel technologies, replacing them with clean, renewable energy sources for transportation, electricity generation, and other large-scale needs while promoting energy efficiency and conservation. A priority is to ensure well-paid new jobs, and appropriate training and/or compensation for people who might otherwise be displaced by the transition to sustainable energy. **Specific initiatives include:**

- **establishing national, near-term renewable electricity targets**, and promoting policies to achieve them, including incentives for deploying and overcoming the barriers to renewable energy technologies;
- **aligning and focusing tax and other financial rules, regulations, and policies** to favor clean and sustainable energy choices over fossil fuels (for example, using production and consumer tax credits to promote and fund investment in renewable energy and energy efficiency, including research and development);
- **establishing and enforcing stringent efficiency standards and sustainability standards** for fossil and renewable fuels and technologies as well as for products, appliances, homes, utilities, commercial and industrial buildings, transport and other large systems;
- **providing information, tools, ideas and incentives for communities and individuals to reduce energy consumption and access alternative sustainable energy** (e.g. passing local ordinances to make buildings energy neutral within a generation);
- **expanding, supporting and incentivizing public transportation systems** that are pollution-free and powered by renewable energy, and promoting steps that make public transportation more viable such as mixed-land uses and cluster development;
- **identifying and meeting needs for assistance of those impacted by the transition to a more sustainable and less carbon-intensive economy**, including: retraining and green jobs programs developed in partnership with trade unions, industry, and community groups; and financial assistance for low-income communities, displaced workers and other groups adversely impacted by the transition;
- **phasing out existing coal-fired power plants and the construction of new coal-fired plants** as well as barring federal funding and permitting for “clean coal”, carbon capture and storage, and liquefied coal and shale, until these and other experimental technologies have been proven to be non-polluting throughout their lifecycle;
- **ensuring that revenues from auctioning carbon emission allowances are used to benefit the public** and those disproportionately impacted by resulting emissions; this includes using them to support renewable energy technologies and energy efficiency measures;
- **providing climate adaptation assistance** to communities detrimentally impacted by climate change.

## PRIORITY ACTION 5



### Promote Rights to a Healthy Environment and Accountability for Environmental Injustices

**T**his action calls for the establishment and/or recognition in the United States of the right to a clean and healthy environment, and the civic duty to protect it. The constitutions of some states in this country and of many countries around the world affirm rights to healthy environments or freedom from environmental conditions that undermine health. This action calls for the exploration and promotion of constitutional amendments or other actions at the state and federal levels, as well as legislative and associated judicial enforcement to eliminate racial and socio-economic disparities in exposure to dangerous and unhealthy environmental conditions. Specific actions to promote rights to a healthy environment and accountability for environmental justice are:

- **examining language and experience of states and other countries** whose constitutions include a right to a healthy environment;
- **convening conversations among community leaders, scholars, elected representatives, and health and environment experts** to discuss and craft language for state-level Constitutional Amendments for a Healthy Environment, and to explore the possibility of an amendment to the U.S. Constitution;
- **strengthening compliance and enforcement of environmental objectives** at the federal level by codifying into law Executive Order 12898 “Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations & Low Income Populations” to ensure that discriminatory agency decisions and actions are addressed, and to provide clear leadership to the states;
- **supporting healthcare and family support services** for those suffering disproportionately from the impacts of environmental exposures.



## PRIORITY ACTION 6

### Harness the Market to Enhance Human and Ecosystem Health

**T**his action calls on the public and private sectors to examine economic incentives and disincentives for protecting public health and the environment. Economic instruments such as price and tax incentives, full-cost accounting, labeling, and preferred procurement will be used to stimulate the development of sustainable technologies and healthy products, materials and processes, with the goal of making them the dominant technologies within one generation. **Recommendations for policy changes to reverse current economic disincentives and to promote healthy and sustainable production include:**

- **requiring full cost accounting for the environmental and health impacts** of manufacturing and consumer choices, and encouraging labeling, taxes and/or pricing to reflect full costs;
- **establishing a system of ecosystem services taxation** to encourage conservation practices and the use of safer alternatives in the production of materials and products, using revenue to fund programs to restore and protect environmental and human resources;
- **establishing caps for activities impacting natural resources**, such as total allowable amounts of pollution, deforestation, fish harvest, and other threats to ecosystem function, using an auction system to distribute 100% of allowances. Revenues from these auctions will fund ecosystem restoration and preservation programs as well support communities disproportionately impacted;
- **transitioning subsidies** from those that create environmental harm and degrade social capital (e.g. support for chemical-intensive agro-industry, fossil fuel production, polluting industries, unsustainable fishing and timber practices, etc.) to those that support public health, and restore and preserve environmental resources and biodiversity.

## PRIORITY ACTION 7



### Develop a National Blueprint for Biodiversity Preservation

**T**his action would create a plan for protecting biodiversity in the United States and for minimizing the impact on biodiversity in other countries of our public and private sector activities. **Suggested elements of the National Blueprint include:**

- **prioritizing clean water, healthy ecosystems and biodiversity** on federal and state public lands (including ocean preserves), while providing for uses that are compatible with such priorities;
- **applying National Environmental Policy Act requirements** to significant private as well as public decisions;
- **prioritizing the protection of intact corridors** for species that must move between habitats;
- **maintaining integrated fisheries** that support genetic and species diversity while encouraging natural nutrient cycles;
- **launching a multi-faceted public relations campaign** about the services provided to humans by a healthy ecosystem and a diversity of native species;
- identifying and taking steps for **reducing non-native and invasive species**.

## PRIORITY ACTION 8

### Focus Health and Human Services on Disease Prevention and Health Promotion

**T**his action aims to reduce the burden of poor health in the United States by preventing the onset of new illnesses and more effectively managing existing chronic diseases. It envisions changes in financing and delivery of health care to address the environmental and social conditions that cause and exacerbate disease. **Suggested steps to reverse trends in poor health are:**

- **Developing primary and secondary prevention programs** that recognize the importance of socioeconomic disparities in determining the health status of individuals and populations:
  - **For primary prevention:** develop and implement policies that improve economic and social determinants that contribute to disease, including access to high-quality education starting in early childhood; increasing the number of households with adequate income through a variety of means, including tax policies; and improving access to new opportunities for enhanced job skills;
  - **For secondary prevention:** develop and implement policies that remove barriers to health associated with being among the least advantaged in society, including universal access to quality health care; ensuring safe, affordable, and healthy housing and neighborhoods; limiting workplace exposures to physical and chemical hazards and workplace stress;
- **establishing financing systems** that ensure sufficient resources efficiently allocated **for disease prevention programs and chronic disease management services**, including environmental and social interventions;
- **expanding mechanisms for delivery** of prevention-oriented in-clinic and home-based medical, social and environmental education, interventions and services;
- **rewarding health care providers** who effectively emphasize and implement disease prevention;
- **investing in educational programs that train new and existing health care providers** in best practices for implementing disease and injury prevention within routine services;
- **developing and implementing a disease prevention research agenda** that involves the public in establishing priorities in the design of research and establishes mechanisms to preserve the integrity of the scientific process and the dissemination of results;
- **providing universal access to reproductive health services** and the provision of free contraception and education to ensure responsible reproduction, and ensuring that all reproductive health programs adhere to the strictest standards of respect and sensitivity regarding gender equity and reproductive rights;
- **establishing a timeline to phase out hazardous chemicals, medical products, and practices** that pollute or contribute to disease in order to drive the development of safer alternatives.

## PRIORITY ACTION 9



### Promote Sustainable Development Zones across America

**T**his action calls on public and private decision-makers at the local, state and national levels to establish Sustainable Development Zones to transform dying neighborhoods into thriving centers of social connection, economic activity, and health-enhancing environments, involving residents actively in the design and implementation process. **Suggestions for specific steps to promote Sustainable Development Zones are:**

- **launching initiatives to clean-up and develop degraded and vacant lands** to foster environmental, health and economic sustainability;
- **using economic incentives** to attract clean technology businesses;
- **supporting job training and retraining** to strengthen the workforce that develops and produces clean technologies;
- **establishing viable vibrant communities** using economic incentives, zoning ordinances, and other tools to ensure healthy housing, abundant greenspace, and access to healthy food and quality health care;
- **ensuring efficient and health-enhancing transportation systems**, including public transportation and safe biking and walking routes.



## PRIORITY ACTION 10

### Promote Corporate Accountability for Community and Workplace Health and Safety

**T**his action calls on corporations, community and labor leaders and government decision-makers to take steps through legislation, enforcement and their purchasing power to establish United States companies as models of sustainable production. **Suggested steps to promote corporate accountability for community and workplace health and safety include:**

- **reversing incentives for United States companies to operate where regulations do not exist or are not enforced**, and requiring that all employers (private and public) follow United States and international labor, environmental and consumer policies and procedures while operating on our shores or in other countries;
- **expanding and reforming occupational health protections** (with the participation of workers and non-governmental community health advocates), including permissible exposure levels, chemical release data, “right-to-know” and “right-to-say-no” programs in order to more effectively protect worker, community health and the health of future generations;
- **building into international trade agreements** the strongest environmental, consumer, labor, and workplace standards possible;
- **creating incentives for corporations to move away from business models** based solely on short-term quarterly profits for shareholders and towards long-term planning and reporting standards that incorporate the operating costs and benefits to public health and the environment;
- **reforming inspection and audit systems** at the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration and the Environmental Protection Agency by requiring annual certification of enforcement standards and the identification and mitigation of safety and health hazards;
- **enhancing the rights of workers to refuse unsafe work conditions and discrimination** with steps such as increasing union density, instituting policies such as the Employee Free Choice Act, and repealing “right-to-work” state laws that undermine employees’ right to unionize;
- **providing funding for coalitions** that enable labor, health advocates, environmentalists, and occupational health and safety groups to work together to ensure that environmental and consumer protections are not achieved at the expense of healthy and just workplaces;
- **democratizing the boards of publicly held corporations** to include stakeholders, such as consumers, employees, local businesses and communities affected by corporate decisions.

## PRIORITY ACTION 11



### Promote Tolerance, Security, Healthy People and Ecosystems Around the World by Establishing a U.S. Department of Peace

**T**his action requires working with the legislative and executive branches to establish a Department of Peace charged with helping to create conditions conducive to peace in the United States and around the world. The mission and strategies of the new Department of Peace would be developed by a team of individuals from in and outside the government with a broad range of backgrounds and experiences in diplomacy and violence prevention. The department would benefit from reallocation of military capacity to activities that prevent conditions conducive to war, without compromising the United States' ability to defend itself if attacked. **Five suggested initiatives for the new Department of Peace are:**

- **redirecting publicly funded military activities** to support global peacekeeping operations, including supporting education and other opportunities for young people in the United States and other countries so that they do not turn to violence;
- **allocating surplus military industrial capacity**—including knowledge and personnel—to advance sustainable production using clean renewable technologies. Defense research and development facilities could become Centers for Green Technology and Conflict Resolution, for example;
- **promoting mutual understanding, respect and preservation** of the diverse cultures, religions, races and ethnicities throughout the world;
- **restoring environmental resources and social-public health services damaged by violent conflict;**
- **providing analysis and support for policies that advance peace**, for example, promoting the ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty on nuclear weapons.

## PRIORITY ACTION 12

### Ensure Basic Education about Environment, Health, and Sustainability

**T**his action aims to ensure that the next generation is knowledgeable about the interconnections between natural and social environments, and human and ecosystem health, and is inspired to act on their knowledge. It seeks to educate students about the role of human beings in environmental degradation and to motivate and empower them to seek solutions. **Suggested steps for promoting education about environment, health and sustainability are:**

- **developing and teaching a curriculum**, adapting it as appropriate for K-8, high school and university students, that includes:
  - links between the health of ecosystems and human well-being, as well as strategies for economic development that align with sustainability;
  - the basics of precaution and life-cycle analysis, so that students are competent and confident in assessing the safety, origin and future of everyday materials and products;
  - conflict resolution skills;
- **establishing a Green Conservation Corps** to assist in performing health-enhancing and environmental restoration activities, and to train the next generation of skilled environment and health leaders and practitioners, compensating students with free higher education for each year of work in the Corps.

## CLOSING

**T**HE AGES OF THE PEOPLE WHO WROTE THIS COMMON AGENDA RANGE FROM 26 TO 70. A generation from now, many of us will be gone, and the youngest of us will be welcoming grandchildren into the world. What kind of world will that be? A world in which food production replenishes the land and fosters connection among people, and between people and nature? A world where entrepreneurs find economic opportunity in products and services designed to enhance environmental quality and prevent disease? A world where we understand that we depend on thriving ecosystems and act accordingly; where burdens and responsibilities are shared equitably; where communities are prosperous and vibrant; a world at peace? Or something else—where climate change, depletion and contamination of natural resources, and deterioration of infrastructure have continued on their current trajectory, worsening disparities, fomenting violent conflicts, and robbing all species of the opportunity to thrive?



We have a responsibility to leave our children and our children's children a safer, more prosperous, cleaner and sustainable world full of hope and vision. We know that we cannot prevent all detrimental impacts of human activities, but we seek to set the bar high by committing to steady, measurable elimination of unnecessary or avoidable detrimental impacts.

We are confident that the vision in this Common Agenda will resonate with many people. We believe that the action items we have chosen have great potential to foster new alliances and move us towards these Generational Goals.

We call now on community, civic and professional organizations, businesses, unions, students and scholars, health care providers, elected officials and our public institutions to use this Agenda, as context for reaching out to people and organizations they have not worked with before; as a standard for proposed policies and programs; and as a tool for tracking progress and holding ourselves accountable to choices that lead to a healthy future for our children.



# CONTRIBUTORS

**N**EARLY 100 LEADERS OF PUBLIC HEALTH, LABOR, ENVIRONMENTAL, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT and agriculture organizations contributed to the Common Agenda, by providing guidance to the project, participating in issue-specific discussion groups, representing issue areas at one or two multi-day meetings, and commenting on draft documents. The Lowell Center for Sustainable Production designed, coordinated and supported the process. Project leaders included:

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ORGANIZATIONS LISTED FOR IDENTIFICATION PURPOSES ONLY



## FINDING COMMON GROUND

**T**HERE IS A WEALTH OF EVIDENCE POINTING TO THE FAILURE OF INCREMENTAL and reactive decision-making in the U.S. to reverse dangerous trends in the health of people and the planet. Compelled by the promise of a different approach to decision-making undertaken in Europe, the Lowell Center for Sustainable Production at University of Massachusetts Lowell convened a series of discussions among nearly 100 community, state and national leaders to identify a shared vision for health and environment in future generations and goals to get there.

The starting place for developing Generational Goals was to focus on single issue areas. A group of labor leaders discussed goals for jobs and workplaces; a group of conservation leaders discussed biodiversity goals; a group of climate and energy leaders discussed climate and energy goals—seven discussion forums in all (read these goals at [www.TowardTomorrow.org](http://www.TowardTomorrow.org)). When the groups presented their work to each other, distinct common ground and ideas for action emerged—visions that cut across the silos which often divide environmental and health leaders. Over the course of a year, the discussion groups developed A Common Agenda for Health and Environment comprised of six cross-cutting Generational Goals that reflect the connections between the health of people, economies and the natural world. The Objectives under each goal provide standards against which near-term policies and programs can be assessed, and the Priority Actions showcase initiatives that together will begin to accomplish changes on the scale required to reverse environmental destruction and human disease.

The authors of the Common Agenda hope that the document and the process that created it will inspire people and the organizations that represent them to take bold action to realize the future they envision: one in which human ingenuity drives sustainable production and energizing work; healthy social and physical environments nourish both human and non-human life; and vibrant communities thrive, without discrimination and without violence.



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