



Poems for Parliament (publishing house)

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Submission to the Paris Climate agreement Global Stocktake - deadline 6 March 2023

Title: Call for inputs from Parties and observer States, UN Agencies and other international organizations and non-Party Stakeholders and observer Organizations, to the first global stocktake. **Session Name:** **SB 58**

Mandate: Decision 19/CMA.1, paragraph 19: requested the Chairs of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice and the Subsidiary Body for Implementation to issue a call for the inputs referred to in paragraphs 36 and 37 of the same decision, taking into account that such inputs should be submitted at least three months before their consideration in the technical assessment

Executive Summary

‘Poems for Parliament’ claims that no genuine mitigation has been achieved since the Paris climate agreement because the cultural causes of climate and ecological collapse have not been identified correctly nor addressed. This paper seeks to inspire behavioural changes in our global community that will enable maximum mitigation from climate and ecological collapse, together with effective adaptation in a peaceful and equitable manner.

‘Poems For Parliament’ specialises in addressing the cultural causes of climate and ecological collapse. The two main memes which need to be challenged are the widespread peer pressure to overconsume and to procreate. The global pursuit of increasing Gross Domestic Product perpetuates these two cultural memes which are escalating the climate and ecological collapse. We have been exceeding the carrying capacity of Earth for decades, and we cannot afford to continue these memes any longer.

The prevailing global mindset is guided by growth economics; this mindset regards financial profit as more valuable than allowing space for healthy ecosystems. Failing ecosystems are now triggering global financial collapse. The growth mindset exacerbates inequalities with regards to both power and our use of natural resources. A global aspiration to voluntarily and equitably reduce the size of our global economy, would focus on empowering everyone to voluntarily minimise family size, and equitably minimise global resource usage.

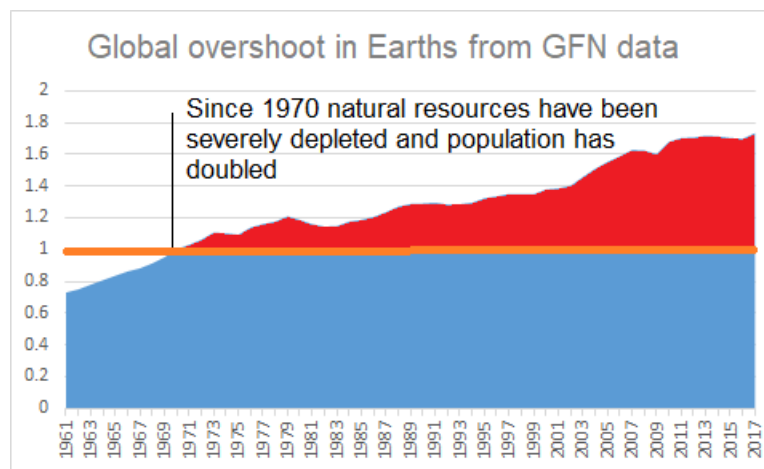
This shared aspiration facilitates maximum mitigation from climate and ecological collapse. It also allows novel ideas to emerge for adapting lifestyles, so that we maximise our emotional resilience in ways that have minimal ecological impact. The hectic demands of growth economics, denies people the time and energy to even begin to imagine such novel ideas.

Global acknowledgement of ecological collapse, and the imminent danger of unplanned population collapse, or even extinction, will initiate collective remorse. This globally shared emotion will inspire peaceful collaboration and reparations towards each other and the ecosystems on which we depend for survival. Our education systems will be redesigned to allow young minds to develop by interacting with Nature sympathetically, and with infinite respect; rather than teaching them to perpetuate the unwise ego-centric and anthropocentric behaviour patterns that prevail at the moment.

Our shared purpose will focus on building collective emotional resilience, in order to resist the desire to overconsume and to procreate. From all our diverse backgrounds and qualities, we shall unite behind our shared aspiration to work against these damaging memes. As we steadily enhance our awareness of the interconnectedness of Nature and humanity in all its diversity, we shall increasingly celebrate the peaceful collaboration which arises from working together. In this way we shall begin genuine mitigation from, and adaptation to, the awful damage that we have inflicted on Earth's climate and ecosystems.

Aspiring to end Ecological Overshoot

The wellbeing of all life on Earth is threatened by chronic global ecological overshoot¹; caused by the global tendency to encourage peer pressure to procreate and overconsume. The ecological crisis due to overshoot has been deepening for over fifty years, see figure below:



The data from the Global Footprint Network² ignores the biocapacity needed to maintain biodiversity. We need to allow half of Earth's total biocapacity to ensure healthy ecosystems. We first began exceeding Earth's carrying capacity in this respect before the data collection began in 1961.

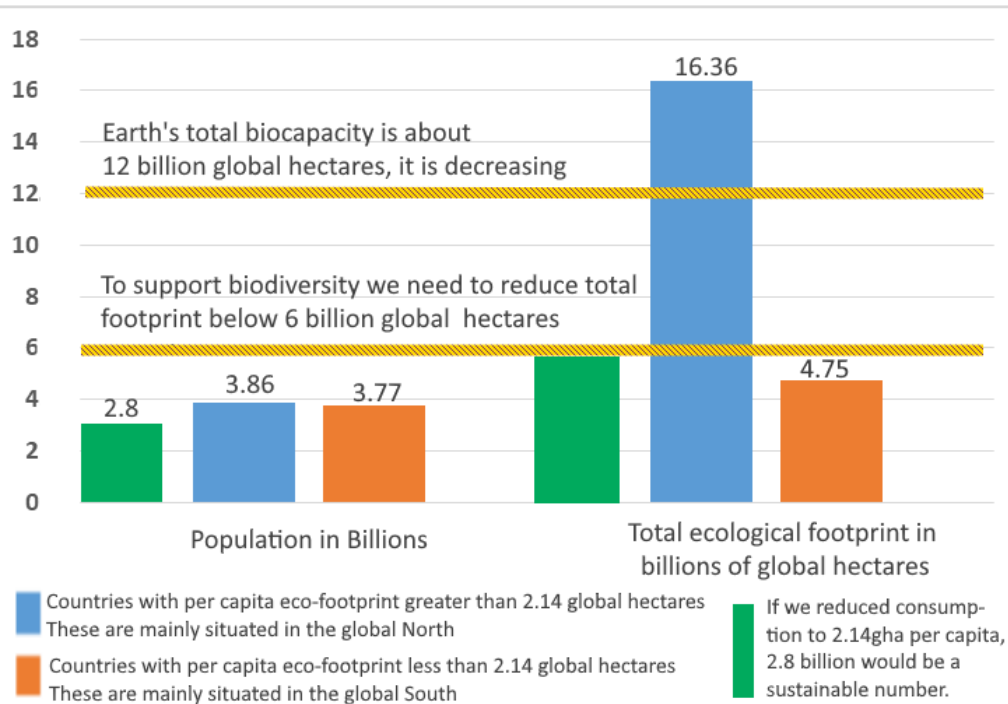
In 2018 there were about 12 billion global hectares of biologically productive areas on Earth. The global population is now 8 billion; this makes the biocapacity available per person about 1.5 global hectares. Allow half the biocapacity available for biodiversity to thrive, and this only leaves 0.75 global hectares per capita. Researchers suggest that 2.14³ global hectares should be adequate to offer a fulfilled lifestyle.

Analysing the 2018 data from the Global Footprint Network according to consumption above or below this level, provides the bar chart overleaf. The figures provided are all in billions; population size is shown on the left, or ecological footprint in global hectares on the right. The green columns represent a hypothetical population with a sustainable size and consumption patterns.

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecological_overshoot This article points out that the only solution is Degrowth

² <https://www.footprintnetwork.org/> Global Footprint Network is the recognised authority for footprint data

³ <https://overpopulation-project.com/reconciling-human-demands-with-planetary-boundaries/> 2.14 gha



The ecological injustice between the Northern and the Southern hemisphere is starkly evident in the chart above. Neither North nor South are operating sustainably. Assuming that we aspire to operate within half the total biocapacity available, as recommended by E.O. Wilson in his book 'Half Earth', this means that we have roughly 6 billion global hectares available between us. If we successfully reduce our resource usage to achieve an average consumption of no more than 2.14 global hectares per capita then we are still not sustainable. Before we can reach a sustainable and safe steady state, we shall still need to voluntarily depopulate until our numbers are less than 2.8 billion; this hypothetical scenario is green in the chart.

The total global biocapacity of Earth is likely to rapidly diminish in the coming years, because of our persistence with unwise cultural memes. There is no scientific reason to believe that humans are exempt from the escalating Holocene mass extinction⁴ event. Some demographic models⁵ predict that population collapse is already underway. This might be case, because the population data from the countries most affected by the collapse is not the most reliable. Climate changes can completely destabilise ecosystems; this is a tragic reality that we need to accept. Until we address the cultural memes which are driving climate and ecological collapse, our prospects continue to diminish, and there is no genuine mitigation. The proposed UN Charter for Ecological Justice, discussed next, would enable us to steer into a direction that offers genuine mitigation in a peaceful manner.

UN Charter for Ecological Justice

The proposed charter would serve as a global peace treaty, inspiring global collaboration and mutual aid on a level never before achieved by humanity. The most powerful uniting factor is the recognition that if we care at all about our wellbeing, and that of our children, our children's children, and all the lives to come, we shall empower and advise young adults not to venture into parenthood until there is a real possibility of eliminating ecological overshoot.

⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holocene_extinction The escalating Holocene extinction event

⁵ <https://doi.org/10.1371%2Fjournal.pone.0247214> Prof C. Bystrhoff, Footprints to singularity

The proposed wording for the charter is provided below; it quantifies a collective aspiration to voluntarily and equitably shrink our global ecological footprint until we once again operate within the biocapacity of our planet. All countries that ratify this aspiration and have an average ecological footprint per capita over 2.14 global hectares, will aspire to reduce their level of consumption per capita to 2.14 global hectares or less. This guiding goal of 2.14 global hectares will apply unless harsh climatic conditions justify extra consumption; some populations may consider relocation during the downsizing years.

This ‘Charter for Ecological Justice’ seeks to inspire a new emotional maturity within the human race. This new era will be characterised by increasingly selfless behaviour both individually and collectively in the face of escalating existential threats. To this end, it recognises that our environmental impact is a product of our population size and the way that we utilise our affluence and technology. Henceforth we shall collectively and individually aspire to combine our free-choice, affluence and technology to redress the ecological imbalance, which is escalating the sixth mass extinction. All nations will collectively aspire to reduce their ecological footprint to less than half of the biocapacity available within their borders, as determined by the Global Footprint Network data. Globally, education and empowerment goals will prioritise the symbiotic relationships between ecological footprint, ecological balance, and the urgent need to release more than half of the biocapacity of the planet to sustain the needs of wildlife and biodiversity. Human intervention in wildlife populations will be discouraged unless an invasive species is deemed to be a serious threat to either local or global eco-systems. The Charter recommends that communities work towards living within the biocapacity of their borders. The ecological footprint of 2.14 gha per capita is a guide for a fulfilled life within a healthy ecosystem. Local targets for average footprint will need regular reviews to equitably reflect changing global and local circumstances.

Voluntary reduction in family size helps to achieve the goal of eliminating overshoot as rapidly as possible. Educational priorities will switch to challenging and eliminating the damaging memes in our cultures. This should enable a higher level of emotional maturity and resilience to emerge; resulting in realisation, remorse and voluntary reparations to all species; including the many who are dispossessed within our own species⁶.

The Roadmap to Ecological Justice

The Charter for Ecological Justice offers a global ambition to shrink the global economy in an equitable manner; resulting in an even distribution of ecological resource use globally. The steps suggested below will alert the general public to the need to deliberately shrink the economy in the over-developed countries; they encourage direct involvement from everyone in the mindset shift to move from the growth mindset into the reverse gear⁷:

- Democracies are advised to establish an all-party government, working with the civil services to share ideas and responsibilities for ‘scaling-down’ strategies.⁸
- UN General Assembly to consider ratifying the ‘UN Charter for Ecological Justice’⁹

⁶ <https://minorityrights.org/2023/02/23/beyond-just-conservation-a-history-of-maasai-dispossession/>

⁷ <https://poemsforparliament.uk/etui> European Trade Union Institute ‘Beyond Growth’ conference

⁸ <https://poemsforparliament.uk/democracy> Paul Smith author of ‘Rescuing Democracy’ offers his book free

⁹ <https://poemsforparliament.uk/framework> Initial proposal for the UN Charter for Ecological Justice

- Governments can sign up to become a ‘Wellbeing Economy government’¹⁰.
- Use fiduciary funding¹¹ to finance Universal Basic Provision so everyone can subsist, whilst we reshape our workforce, prioritising wellbeing and eco-recovery over profit.
- Private and public institutions do internal reassessments, to identify and dismantle work processes that are deemed unjustified in the context of urgent downsizing.
- Publicly expressed remorse for past unwise practice, is helpful from any parties.
- Governments to call for emotional maturity and resilience from citizens, urging them to collaborate peacefully towards the global objective of rapid downsizing.
- Universities can use methods like the Participatory Futures model¹², to break the perpetuation of past mistakes; establishing revised ethics to assist Degrowth; the younger student voice needs to drive these discussions, not the entrenched staff.
- Mainstream media, social media, arts and culture will all collaborate in the relearning process of experimentation and evolution, working to build emotional resilience to face our man-made tragedies with courage, resolve and humility.
- Public education exercise, explaining about the three key drivers of ecological damage (I=PAT)¹³, and the urgent need to redeem our ecological overshoot¹⁴.

Europe are signalling that the shift into post-growth thinking is gaining momentum, by hosting a ‘Beyond Growth’ conference in May 2023¹⁵. In December 2022 the European Trade Union Institute hosted a conference called ‘A Just Transition Beyond Growth’¹⁶.

Emotional Evolution

Profound cultural issues exist which pose a huge barrier to achieving the necessary socio-economic transformation in a peaceful manner. A collective emotional evolution will overcome these barriers, enabling the higher level of emotional maturity required in order to achieve this. Deploying our emotional toolkit in a helpful way, enables us to collaborate peacefully towards Ecological Justice. We shall navigate emotional transitions such as these:

- **Anxiety** can evolve into **Resolve** to act wisely and collectively
- **Anger** can evolve into **Empowerment** if a suitable mode of expression can be found
- **Hate** can evolve into **Respect and Understanding** given a suitable relearning process
- **Guilt** can evolve into **Reparation** if a route for reparation can be identified
- **Blame** can evolve into **Forgiveness** if reparation is offered, and forgiveness is sought
- **Judgement** can evolve into **Trust** in each other given enough collective discussion

¹⁰ <https://wellbeingeconomy.org/wego> so far Scotland, Wales, Iceland, Finland and New Zealand

¹¹ <https://medium.com/@barbarawilliams1/fiduciary-funds-for-global-ubuntu-ef4c5eb3e2f1>

¹² <https://foresightprojects.blog.gov.uk/2021/07/26/participatory-futures-integrating-public-voices-in-futures-thinking/> Participatory Futures

¹³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/I_%3D_PAT Environmental Impact = Population * Affluence * Technology

¹⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecological_overshoot Ecological Overshoot

¹⁵ <https://www.beyond-growth-2023.eu/about-beyond-growth/> Beyond Growth conference in Europe.

¹⁶ <https://poemsforparliament.uk/etui/> A Just Transition Beyond Growth, European Trade Union Institute

Envisioning a better future

This paper is intended to inspire global culture changes that will enable maximum mitigation from the escalating climate and ecological collapse in a peaceful manner. The predicament that humanity face today has been engineered by people who have lost their connection with Nature; this arises as a consequence of an education system which encourages us to use our ingenuity in ways that will generate a financial profit, with no regard for the fact that we urgently need to shrink our enterprise back within the biocapacity of the Earth. We have unwisely introduced a huge ecological debt over several decades. This has precipitated chaotic collapse of the climate and ecological systems that we rely on in order to survive.

Strategies to implement worthy aims like the United Nations 'Sustainable Development Goals', 'Our Common Agenda', and the 'Paris climate agreement' are unfortunately often tainted by the misconception that increases in money, technology and global population size can solve the ecological problems which they cause. All strategies will need to be reviewed to eliminate the influence of the damaging cultural memes that arise with the economic growth mindset. Mercifully there are still many subsistence farmers in the global South who simply wish to continue their simple lives, and would be willing to continue with very low resource usage. Many of these people may require support to subsist, as weather extremes disrupt their means to farm. By providing basic provisions when crops fail¹⁷, and empowering and encouraging everyone to limit family sizes, we should be able to minimise economic migration and global suffering throughout the chaotic collapse that is now unfolding.

The high consumption Nations need to relearn the value and power of Nature from the indigenous low-consumption civilisations; so that they only extract what is essential for their survival. This requires an emotional evolution; where remorse for past mistakes will drive the urgently needed reparations from the affluent to the dispossessed. We shall all need to collaborate peacefully and urgently to build a global community that exploits the full strength of its diversity as we share and discover ideas to assist with the urgent downsizing exercise.

The bloated overdeveloped economies need to reorganise their work ethics to move away from the ecologically destructive growth mindset; and the resource wasteful ways of life that result from coercive consumerism. For example, international tourism has no place in a world that is serious about striving to reduce emissions and eliminate ecological overshoot. International travel can only be justified for essential goods and services, for example when skills are being offered for free to assist with adaptation.

All affluent countries and individuals habitually waste energy just in order to maintain a growing or stagnating economy. For example diesel is burned in order to create artificial snow to maintain ski slopes. This type of behaviour is an insult to the lives, both human and non-human, that are daily being shortened due to man-made climate and ecological collapse.

Existing capital and revenue can be redirected into offering basic provisions¹⁸ where needed. This will defuse the migration crisis and empower anyone to move out of eco-costly enterprises and still be able to subsist in the face of ecosystems collapse. This basic provision will include family planning services and education about the global aspiration to minimise birth rates and consumption voluntarily and rapidly. As our joint aspiration to downsize takes

¹⁷ <https://medium.com/@barbarawilliams1/fiduciary-funds-for-global-ubuntu-ef4c5eb3e2f1> Global provision

¹⁸ <https://medium.com/@barbarawilliams1/fiduciary-funds-for-global-ubuntu-ef4c5eb3e2f1> Global provision

hold, we can anticipate successfully reducing our numbers voluntarily and rapidly. For this reason the ecologically damaging construction industry can halt new builds, and concentrate on repurposing existing buildings and improving insulation.

Faith leaders will assist in the spiritual and emotional evolution that is involved, to help people to reduce their dependency on consumerism and the nuclear family. Working instead as minimal consumption communities. Coupled with universal basic provision, many women should be freed from the cultural need to enter into marriage. Humanity will have an opportunity to improve the gender dynamics. It is hoped that a more open and flexible attitude to sexual relations can be embraced, which might open the door to more fulfilled and mutually respectful sexual interactions, hopefully rendering the sex industry unnecessary. All inter-gender relationships will hopefully move to a more equal footing where all participants are concerned with working together peacefully to repair the ecological damage that we have inflicted. Ironically, after such a long period of chronic ecological overshoot, the survival of our species is now more dependent on our use of contraception than our ability to conceive.

Further Reading

The ideas presented here are further embellished in the paper entitled ‘Scientists Warning proposes a Roadmap to Ecological Justice’¹⁹, which is currently undergoing peer-review. Once published it will be included in the series of recommended papers offered by Scientists Warning²⁰. The ideas in the Roadmap evolved out of two submissions in 2022 to the High-level Advisory Board for Effective Multilateralism (HLAB). These were titled: ‘A Framework for Maximum Mitigation’²¹, and ‘The Ego to Eco Journey in Leadership and Governance’²². Prior to these two submissions to HLAB, the preface in the paper produced by the UN Commons Cluster as part of the COVID review in 2022, explained the science that justifies the need to reduce GDP globally²³. This Commons Cluster paper also observed that our current education system plays a major role in perpetuating our cultural problems.

¹⁹ <https://ssrn.com/abstract=4366187> ‘Roadmap to Ecological Justice’ was under peer-review 3 March 2023

²⁰ <https://www.scientistwarning.org/> Scientists Warning

²¹ <https://poemsforparliament.uk/framework> A Framework for Maximum Mitigation (HLAB paper) 2022

²² <https://poemsforparliament.uk/ego-to-eco> The Ego to Eco Journey in Leadership and Governance (HLAB).

²³ <https://poemsforparliament.uk/unity-in-diversity> Unity in Diversity – UN Commons Cluster 2022