

# What we need to do to save the world

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As one who recognizes the ecological, social and political predicament our species find itself in, and as one who would like to save *Homo sapiens* from impending extinction, I have given this a lot of thought and study. Here is my list of must-do actions. The points in it come from well-respected sources.

- Reduce the world's population to no more than 25 percent of what it is now, preferably to less than ten percent. This is Job One. We cannot survive on this planet in our present numbers. All the other actions listed below are in aid of planned population reduction, done intelligently and not forcibly.
- Ban weapons of mass destruction, rein in the world's military-industrial complex and end the international arms trade
- As an alternative to warfare, teach and apply the principles of non-violent resistance and the art of peaceful conflict resolution [1]
- Establish better relations among enemy nations and ethnic groups that hate one another
- Replace repressive governments at all levels with enlightened ones
- Remove corrupt civic employees and reorganize dysfunctional departments
- Build democratic institutions and enact progressive legislation
- Bring in proportional representation, which helps to effect political change
- Protect human rights and civil liberties
- Strengthen intellectual and academic freedom
- Observe freedom of religion—and for those who wish, provide freedom *from* religion
- Ensure that courts are fair, and that police forces are honest and effective
- Guarantee ethnic, cultural and gender equality
- Allow women unfettered reproductive choice
- Make contraception, abortion and voluntary sterilization cheap and readily available everywhere
- Provide clean water supplies, basic sanitation and essential medical services throughout the third world
- Put more money into public health, and halt the HIV epidemic
- Worldwide, improve nutrition and physical fitness generally
- Boost emergency preparedness, so we can deal with the mass social dislocation and other hardships that global warming will bring on
- Beef up the social safety net for all, with special attention to the needs of the young, the old and the infirm
- Stop abuse of children as workers, slaves, prisoners, soldiers, child brides and prostitutes

- Assist education—especially literacy for girls in poorer countries—by ensuring that it is entirely tax-supported and truly universal
- Hire more government inspectors and allow them to enforce health, safety and environmental regulations properly
- Tax the rich and their wealthy corporations enough to restore the funding for indispensable government services such as the ones listed above, which have been crippled for lack of money and staff
- Add an extra levy to all, and protect this money well, to care for the retired as the birth rate declines [2]
- Get control of capitalism, which not only concentrates wealth unfairly but also requires constant population growth
- Encourage cooperatives and other non-competitive ways of doing business
- Increase wages, bolster job security and strengthen workers' rights, to give everyone a sense of worth
- Make exploitive labor practices and corporate damage to the environment unacceptable anywhere in the world
- Erect high standards for doing business generally and apply them in all nations, such that no country attracts investors looking only for cheap labor and lack of regulation
- Set up energy-efficient, inexpensive public transport everywhere, and reduce the distances we need to travel to work
- Decrease the environmental impact of global distribution and transport by relying more on locally grown food and locally produced goods
- Switch over to energy sources that do not emit carbon dioxide or otherwise pollute the atmosphere, that do not produce nuclear waste or destroy ecosystems [3]
- Ensure that all agricultural and industrial activities use minimal amounts of water and raw materials, take up the least land and use the least energy
- Adopt organic farming, and de-industrialize the raising of animals
- Stop overfishing the sea, and prevent further net-dragging damage to the continental shelves
- Quit dumping waste of any kind or quantity into the oceans
- End fish-farming and other harmful forms of aquaculture
- Outlaw the hunting or gathering of any species that is in decline, whether on land or in the sea
- Switch from clear-cut logging to true selective cutting, and protect old-growth forests
- Make certain that the things we manufacture are not produced wastefully or with dangerous by-products. All products must be as long-lasting as possible, minimally toxic and easily recycled. Production processes should incorporate the same principles.
- Clean up existing environmental messes
- Prevent destruction of the world's remaining wildlands

- Award foreign aid only to countries that have instituted these reforms or clearly are trying to do so

The list goes on, of course. These are just the main points. Truly, if we wish to see our children and grandchildren alive and living in a world that is not a nightmare, we have much to do. *Now*.

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[1] Like the need for population reduction, the need for non-violence is being neglected. To learn more about non-violent resistance, read *Nonviolence: 25 Lessons from the History of a Dangerous Idea*, by Mark Kurlansky (Modern Library, 2006).

[2] This is so that fewer numbers of young people do not find themselves burdened disproportionately in supporting larger numbers of old people. After equilibrium is achieved at a reduced population, there should always be more working-age people than retired people, so this should no longer be an issue.

[3] Solar energy is now cheap enough to significantly reduce the burning of fossil fuels. Solar can be used for heating nearly anything, and it generates electrical power efficiently. Wind power, in the form of the large windmills currently used by the dozen on “wind farms,” is proving to be visually unattractive and tough on birds and bats, too many of which get killed by the rotating blades. A new and interesting electrical generator is Ocean Power Delivery’s “Pelamis” device, a 120-metre-long floating, jointed tube, tethered to the seabed. Each Pelamis unit generates 750 kilowatts of power by flexing as waves pass by it. This sounds pretty benign to me. See the Pelamis at [www.oceanpd.com](http://www.oceanpd.com).

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