



**A PROPOSAL for
the GLOBAL
SHARING of BASIC
GOODS**

Rok Kralj

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A Proposal for the Global Sharing of Basic Goods

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“An entirely new UN agency will be set up specifically to oversee the process of sharing the world's resources.”¹

“Each nation will be asked to make over in trust into a common pool that which it has in excess of its needs, and out of that common pool the needs of all will be met. A sophisticated system of barter will replace the present system.”²

“We will return to a more fundamental economic system based on barter. The central department will act as a 'resource director,' recording the assets and needs of all the countries of the world. If one country has an excess of a certain product, then it will be matched with a country in need of the same item. Similarly, if a country is in crisis, if its grain crop is destroyed by drought, then others will offer food from their own stores to fill the demand. Every country will eventually be both recipient and donor in this program. Disaster relief will be instantaneous and so prevent the moral degradation that comes when such distresses are left too long unattended.

In this way our economic structures will begin to serve the people. The focus will be on human need, not blind profit.”³

“Any act that tries to contribute towards ending the prevalent suffering caused by absolute poverty is, in itself, the purest expression of a sharing economy via the heart, via our maturity and via common sense, especially if that act is focused on trying to persuade our political representatives to commit to sharing the resources of the world.”⁴

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PREFACE

The following publication by Rok Kralj gives an inspired proposal for sharing the world's resources to alleviate the major crises threatening our civilisation. First written in Slovenian and now translated into English, it attempts to envision a new international mechanism for ensuring that everyone on Earth has their basic needs fulfilled, while respecting planetary environmental limits. This common-sense case for “global sharing” is still far from the mainstream, hence the author has endeavoured to raise its profile by highlighting certain core ideas for further debate, reflection and correction. No doubt, it is an advanced proposition in our divided and profit-driven world. But as inequalities and injustices escalate almost everywhere, it may not be long until the great cause for sharing becomes the number one issue of our time.

Adam W. Parsons, editor at Share The World's Resources
(www.sharing.org)

December 2019

THE NEED FOR GLOBAL ECONOMIC SHARING

There are 195 recognized countries⁵ and 7.7 billion people⁶ who live on Earth today. According to the latest figures, 821 million people are hungry,⁷ 2.1 billion have no access to clean drinking water, 4.5 billion do not have adequate sanitation.⁸ Additionally, 303 million young people between the ages of 5 and 17 cannot attend school.⁹ At first sight, one might say that there is a vast scarcity of basic goods. However, looking only at the most basic of human goods – food, it is not only enough but even too much for the present population of Earth. According to available data, we have enough food to feed 10 billion people.¹⁰ The fact that we waste one-third of all food for human consumption annually, which amounts to roughly 1.3 billion tonnes,¹¹ is more than illustrative.

The current global economic system is, on the one hand, very effective, creating many technological “wonders” and many goods of more than sufficient quantity for all people. On the other hand, this system creates “pockets” of enormous wealth and vast areas of extreme poverty and deprivation. Global wealth is so unfairly distributed that only the 26 wealthiest people on Earth have as much wealth as the poorest half of humanity – a total of 3.8 billion people.¹²

This substantial economic and, consequently, social inequality is one of the fundamental cause of the world's most significant problems such as hunger, poverty, overpopulation,¹³ large-scale migration, social conflicts and wars. Also, environmental crisis and climate change are results of global inequality (poor people in the fight for survival don't care for the environment).

What can we do then? If the prevailing market-based economic system is not suitable for humanity and Earth, then we have to change it. The main purpose of the economy is to meet basic human needs for everyone. These needs are also fundamental human rights, described in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,¹⁴ as the right to clean water, clothing, housing, health care and education.

Meeting these needs must not depend on a global market system based on the selfishness and greed of powerful nations and large corporations, stock market speculation and commercialization (the process of transforming goods and

human relations into commodities) and competitiveness. This system has no interest or purpose in providing necessities for everyone. It is also environmentally destructive because it gives the profit motive an absolute advantage over the safeguarding of the environment and people's basic needs.

Therefore, there is a clear need and urgency for essential resources to be not in the exclusive domain of the global market-based economic system, which endangers social stability and environmental sustainability and consequently threatens the future of humanity.

Of course, today's economic system cannot be simply discarded, as it co-creates the world in which we live. It's hard to imagine life without modern means of transportation, the Internet, computers and smartphones, modern medicine, the ability to produce sufficient quantities of food, renewable energy sources, etc.

First and foremost, we have to regulate tax, environmental and labour laws that would prevent, at a global level, the widespread abuse of people and the environment. Even if we modify the current market-based economic system, it will still fail to meet the basic needs of everyone on the Earth, though there are enough goods for all. This system is effective, but it lacks social justice and is not designed for the less successful, the weak, the vulnerable, the sick, etc.

We must take care of all people. As we take care of each member of our families, we must also take care of the fundamental needs of each member of our larger family – humanity. Therefore, nations need a global agreement to provide necessities for everyone. That would solve, or at least ease, many of the most significant problems of modern humanity, including hunger and poverty, overpopulation, migration, social conflicts and also global warming.

Since the market-based economic system cannot find an answer to these problems, nations have to create an appropriate mechanism for the equitable distribution of essential goods to meet basic human needs. This global mechanism can be understood as the economic sharing of basic goods.

By this means, we may envisage right human relations on a global scale that would lead humanity on the way towards true prosperity and peace.

An International Agreement on Global Sharing

Suppose that nation A is in urgent need of staple food products. Nation B has a surplus of clean water and a shortage of some essential medicines. Nation C has a surplus of wheat and maize. Nation D lacks energy resources. Nation E has an excess of food products but needs the necessary medication. Nation F has been recently hit by a natural disaster and is in desperate need for almost all kinds of essential goods (food, water, medicines, clothing, temporary housing, energy, etc.).

We described a fictional situation that could be true. We have listed just a few nations and the basic goods that they need (shortage) or have too much (surplus). If global markets run fairly and countries are equal, then supply and demand work for everyone without external influence.

But the fact is that we don't live in a world like this. The international community is very unevenly developed, not only between nations but also within different communities. A prevailing economic system based on competitiveness, selfishness and greed produces an enormous gap between the worlds of the rich and poor.

To make the situation even more complicated, nations that are committed to caring for their residents, at least at a basic level, are not leading players in the most crucial area – global economic governance. Powerful corporations and financial institutions, which usually have entirely different interests than nations, have taken this leading role. They do not care for the well-being of the people and the protection of the environment, but above all, run for power and for maximizing their profits or wealth. The result is an extremely unfair distribution of global goods that don't reach a large part of humanity.

That is why, despite the abundance of resources and goods in the world, we have extreme hunger and poverty today. We cannot expect that such a situation will resolve by itself. The international community has to create a mechanism that will enable all people to meet basic needs and live in prosperity. Citizens' well-being is a moral commitment of all nations, and they are bounded by a series of international declarations, treaties and agreements.

Foundations for global sharing

After the Second World War, the world's governments committed themselves to peace and prosperity for all. The experience of both world wars, triggered by the belief of some nations that they have a "holy" right to new territories and to dominate smaller and "inferior" countries, was alarming. That is why, in 1945, the world states established an international organization – the United Nations – with the founding purpose of guaranteeing international peace, security and inclusive global prosperity.

Today, many countries are again becoming selfish in their pursuit of national interests, repeating the same story we have seen so many times: "We are stronger, better, more important". Therefore, we may be nearing another World War again, which, because of nuclear weapons, could end human life on Earth. To prevent this, we need something genuinely new. Let's take a look at what we have committed ourselves to many decades ago, and think about how we can finally implement these noble aspirations.

In Article 55 (Chapter IX) of the UN Charter, adopted on June 26, 1945, the United Nations defines "international economic and social co-operation":

With a view to the creation of conditions of stability and well-being which are necessary for peaceful and friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, the United Nations shall promote:

- a. higher standards of living, full employment, and conditions of economic and social progress and development;
- b. solutions of international economic, social, health, and related problems; and international cultural and educational co-operation; and
- c. universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion.¹⁵

Three years later, on December 10, 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted, affirming in Article 25 that basic needs are the basis for the “health and well-being” of all humans on Earth:

(1) Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.

(2) Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection.¹⁶

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is the basis for the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR; adopted on December 16, 1966, in New York and entered into force on January 3, 1976). With ICESCR, the articles of the Declaration became legally binding provisions. The ICESCR commits the signatory states to guarantee the economic, social and cultural rights of all citizens.

Article 11 of this legally binding document reads as follows:

1. The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions. The States Parties will take appropriate steps to ensure the realization of this right, recognizing to this effect the essential importance of international co-operation based on free consent.

2. The States Parties to the present Covenant, recognizing the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger, shall take, individually and through international co-operation, the measures, including specific programmes, which are needed:

(a) To improve methods of production, conservation and distribution of food by making full use of technical and scientific knowledge, by disseminating knowledge of the principles of nutrition and by developing or reforming agrarian systems in such a way as to achieve the most efficient development and utilization of natural resources;

(b) Taking into account the problems of both food-importing and food-exporting countries, to ensure an equitable distribution of world food supplies in relation to need.¹⁷

At the global level, therefore, we have not only universally-agreed commitments that recognise the socioeconomic rights of all people, but also legally binding documents that include, among other things, an obligation for States to achieve an equitable distribution (i.e. sharing) “of world food supplies in relation to need”. Therefore, if this proves necessary (the fact is that 821 million people are hungry today), we are morally and legally obliged to establish a fairer sharing of essential goods to meet the basic needs of all humanity.

UN SPECIALIZED AGENCY FOR THE COORDINATION OF GLOBAL ECONOMIC SHARING

When it comes to the monumental task of sharing basic goods on a global level, the best place to start is by reviewing the international treaties that already exist. Indeed in the UN Charter, we already have the “foundations” for the economic sharing of goods. Article 57 states that the intergovernmental agreement establishes specialized agencies which have “wide international responsibilities, as defined in their basic instruments, in economic, social, cultural, educational, health, and related fields, shall be brought into relationship with the United Nations in accordance with the provisions of Article 63”.

However, Article 59 emphasizes that the United Nations “shall, where appropriate, initiate negotiations among the states concerned for the creation of any new specialized agencies required for the accomplishment of the purposes set forth in Article 55”. In this Article, the United Nations undertakes “to the creation of conditions of stability and well-being which are necessary for peaceful and friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples”.

We, therefore, have a legitimate basis for setting up a United Nations specialized agency to tackle the task of coordinating the global sharing of basic goods, as set out in Article 11b of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights: “Taking into account the problems of both food-importing and food-exporting countries, to ensure an equitable distribution of world food supplies in relation to need.” However, food alone does not meet all basic needs, so we have to share basic goods to meet all fundamental human needs. Let us first consider these concepts briefly.

Basic needs, basic goods, basic rights, resources and commons of humanity

The following are some commonly accepted definitions to shed light on the fundamental concepts behind our discussion.

A traditional list of immediate “basic needs” is food (including water), shelter and clothing. Many modern lists emphasize the minimum level of consumption of 'basic needs' of not just food, water, clothing and shelter, but also sanitation, education, healthcare, and internet.¹⁸

In economics, goods are materials that satisfy human wants and provide utility, for example, to a consumer making a purchase of a satisfying product. A common distinction is made between goods that are tangible property, and services, which are non-physical.¹⁹

If we were to try summarizing the many statements on human rights within the United Nations system, it might be as follows: basic goods are basic rights.²⁰

In economics, a resource is defined as a service or other asset used to produce goods and services that meet human needs and wants.²¹

The commons is the cultural and natural resources accessible to all members of a society, including natural materials such as air, water, and a habitable earth. These resources are held in common, not owned privately. Commons can also be understood as natural resources that groups of people (communities, user groups) manage for individual and collective benefit.²²

Let's try to make a brief summary:

The basic needs of everyone for his survival, health and well-being are his basic human rights. Basic needs of every human being are food, clothing, housing, healthcare and education. These needs could be met with basic goods such as food, water, clothes, houses or apartments, energy, sanitation, school equipment, medicines, hospitals, health services (e.g. doctors, nurses) educational services (e.g. teachers and other school staff), etc.

These goods can be produced from the resources available to humans, which are part of the commons of humanity. Sharing goods and resources and caring for the commons of humanity is, therefore, the foundation for peace, health and prosperity on Earth.

Basic needs and rights are universal, which means everyone has the right to them, regardless of race, gender, age, skin, colour, religion, etc. Meeting these needs provides every person with “health and well-being” as defined in Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Let us now consider how the new United Nations specialized agency, which may be called the UN Specialized Agency for Coordinating the Global Economic Sharing of Basic Goods (from now on referred to as the Agency), will work.

Each country will promptly report to the Agency its surpluses and shortages of basic goods; especially those that enable human needs to be met. The Agency, which will thus have a global overview of these goods, will coordinate their transfer or transport to the areas of deprivation (as previously noted, the market economy is failing to fulfil this imperative function). We already have more than adequate information and communication technologies, transportation and logistics for this vital job for the future of humanity.

The Agency will be a kind of centre or “heart” of the sharing of basic global goods. It will neither own nor store these goods, but will play the role of coordinator; the states themselves will provide the direct transportation of goods.

The Agency will perform the function of equitably sharing basic goods between countries, thus to enable everyone on Earth to meet their basic needs. It will act as a kind of fair global “market” of basic goods to meet basic human needs on a non-profit-oriented basis. In this way, we will create a global “pool” of basic goods available to all humans.

In addition, the Agency will have two other important tasks: emergency intervention (in the case of droughts, earthquakes, floods, etc.) and the calculation of the recommended scale of using natural resources (which are part of the commons of humanity) for each country so that we can maintain a natural balance to ensure a sustainable future for humanity and the planet.

The Agency will, therefore, perform three essential tasks:

1. coordinating the sharing of basic goods between countries to meet the basic needs of everyone;
2. managing regional intervention funds of the basic goods for intervention in the event of natural disasters and other emergencies;
3. determining resource limits and assigning quotas for the use of the 'commons of humanity' for each country.

1. Coordinating the global sharing of basic goods between nations

The Agency's principal task will, therefore, be to coordinate the sharing of basic goods between countries. The system will be based on the principle of “barter” (method of exchange of goods/services for other goods/services), which means that nations will exchange goods and services (we mostly use the word “goods” for both: goods and services) between themselves. Consequently, the Agency will have a global “picture” of all basic goods.

The Agency will not receive, gather and deliver the physical goods, which would be logistically impossible, but only coordinate the exchange between countries themselves. The Agency will be in fact the coordinator of goods exchange among all countries, thus representing a kind of “global bartering” of basic goods.

Barter

In trade, barter (derived from baretor) is a system of exchange where participants in a transaction directly exchange goods or services for other goods or services without using a medium of exchange, such as money.²³

Thus the greater symbolic meaning of the sharing economy can be summarised in the following terms: it will represent an imminent end to an era defined by the dominance of material and commercial values, and it will signify the resurrection of barter as the principle mode of economic exchange for the first time in modern history, albeit on a higher turn of the spiral that vouchsafes the continued spiritual evolution of our race.²⁴

Organization of the Agency

The Agency will be led by a group of experts from various fields of society (economists, politicians; experts in logistics, transport, distribution, information technology; ecologists, representatives of human rights and humanitarian organizations etc.) from different regions of the world.

Critical decisions (of the fundamental policies of the Agency, the future functioning, control, etc.) will be taken by the Assembly of the Agency, in which all its members will participate.

Activities of the Agency

As we said before, the Agency will not have the task of directly handling basic goods around the world. It is hard to imagine a colossal storehouse for food, water, energy resources and other goods that would first be transported from one country to the storehouse and from there to another country.

States will provide the Agency with information on surpluses or shortages of goods. The Agency will ensure that the right goods come to the right hands, where they are most needed (e.g. in case of poor harvests, natural disasters, etc.).

The Agency will thus solely coordinate the flow of goods between countries, which will not be a difficult task with the help of today's highly developed information and transport technology. Countries themselves will take care of the transport and storage of goods. Transportation of goods will be a matter of agreement between countries, and in most cases, traffic will be carried out by countries that send their surplus goods to countries where they are in short supply.

A simplified example of the global sharing of basic goods

For better understanding, let's look at a simplified example of sharing between just three countries: A, B and C. The sharing of basic goods takes place in three main phases.

PHASE 1 – Receiving information about surpluses and shortages of basic goods

Countries report to the Agency the following surpluses (in Figure 1 marked with a + sign) and shortages (marked with a – sign) of basic goods:

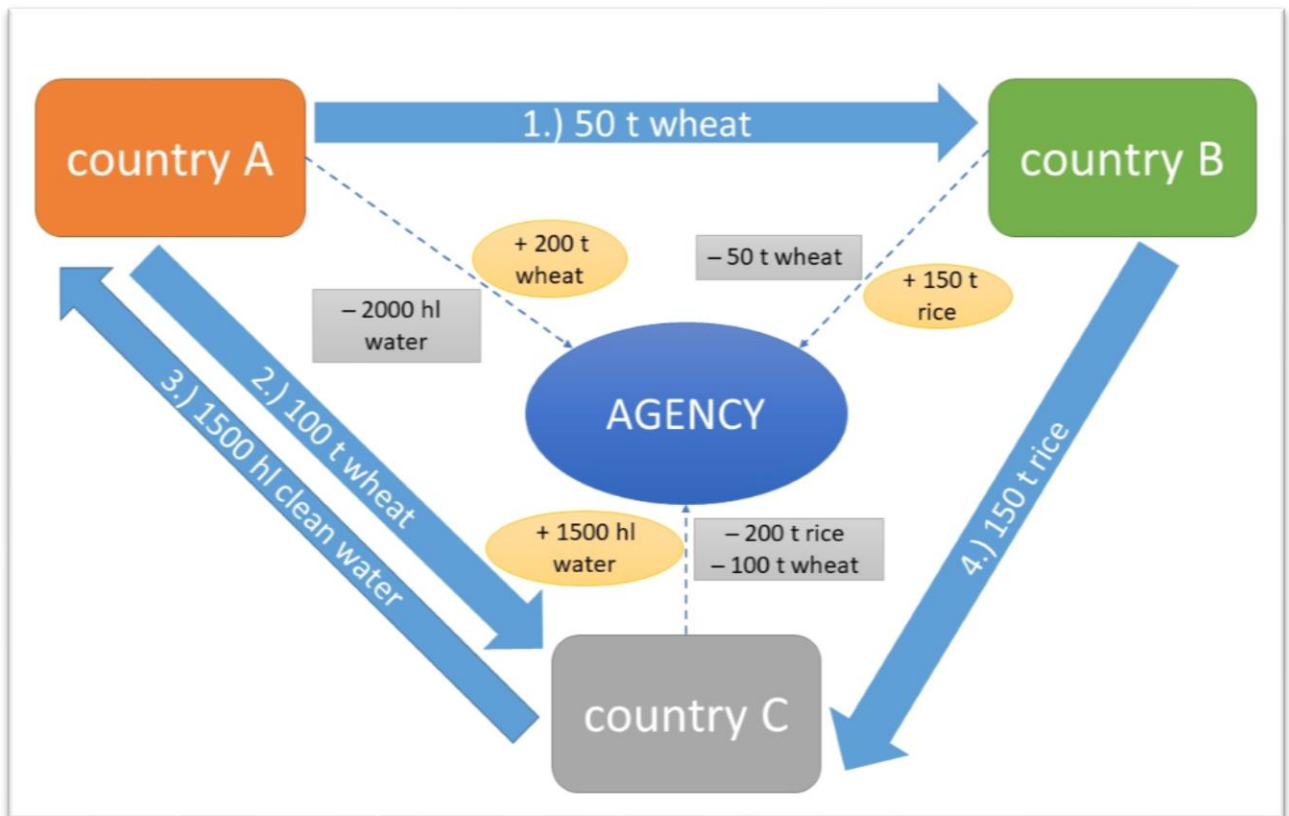
- Country A reports to the Agency 200 t (tonnes) of surplus wheat and the shortage for 2000 hl (hectoliters) of drinking water.
- Country B reports to the Agency 150 t surplus of rice and the shortage of 50 t of wheat.
- Country C reports to the Agency 1500 hl surplus of drinking water and shortages 200 t of rice and 100 t of wheat.

PHASE 2 – “Linking” surpluses to shortages

Based on reported surpluses and deficits, the Agency informs countries how to send each other goods (illustrated in Figure 1 with events 1, 2, 3 and 4):

- 1.) Country A should send 50 t (tonnes) of wheat to country B.
- 2.) Country A should send 100 t of wheat to country C.
- 3.) Country C should send 1500 hl of drinking water to country A.
- 4.) Country B should send 150 t of rice to country C.

Figure 1: An example of sharing between three countries



PHASE 3 – Exchange of basic goods between countries

Based on the Agency's recommendations (Phase 2), countries send basic goods to the target countries in appropriate quantities and report this to the Agency.

As we can see, not all countries got everything that they needed (A, C), nor did they send all the surpluses (A). The result after the shipment of goods is, therefore:

- Country A has still 50 tonnes of wheat surplus and the shortage of 500 hl of drinking water.
- Country B has neither a surplus nor a shortage.
- Country C still needs 50 t of rice.

We study an example, on a very elementary level, only among the three countries. The global system of sharing shall be significantly larger and more complicated (perhaps as many as 195 recognized world countries). The Agency will continuously have an overview of the global situation of basic goods. Still, if certain goods are not available for a more extended period, the country in need will get goods from the intervention funds, which store the most important goods for the event of natural disasters or current deprivation.

We have shown in the simple example above how the mechanism of global sharing of basic goods will work. It should be an UN-backed international system that will establish a permanent solution to the lack of basic goods in the world. Instead of humanitarian aid for endangered areas of the Earth, we thus will be able to permanently ensure that the basic needs of all people on Earth are met.

Every country is potentially exposed to natural disasters, such as droughts, floods, hurricanes, earthquakes; or affected with an economic or social crisis, which may lead to a lack of essential goods. However, if countries put in place a mechanism that balances the surpluses and shortages of basic goods globally, fears about the future will be superfluous. Better than the accumulation of wealth, assets and power (which in no small extent result from fear of future scarcity), it is the confidence that goods will always be available to meet our basic needs.

When we have too much, then we give; when we have too little, then we get – this is our collective “insurance policy” for the future. A sense of security and mutual trust will reduce tensions between countries, arising mainly from the extremely unfair distribution of global goods. On the one hand, we have extreme excess of wealth, on the other, we have severe poverty and a lack of even the most basic goods.

A fair sharing of basic goods would also reduce environmental pressures, as countries today are obsessed with the idea of an ever-growing economy, based on endless production and consumption. We all know that continuous economic growth is unsustainable on a planet with finite resources, and is therefore unacceptable for the future of humanity.

However, if we want the global sharing of goods to be transparent and equitable, we can consider an option, which is the “valuation” of goods shared through the Agency. Although this process is not necessary for a process of global sharing of basic goods, it may be useful for the benefit of transparency of the sharing of basic goods in each country.

To ensure fairness and transparency, the Agency will be able to maintain a separate account for each country, recording the values of goods sent and received. A special unit of account could be introduced to serve the transparency of the mechanism of sharing the goods, but not as a traditional payment method.

UNCU - the global unit of account for sharing basic goods

To determine the value of a new unit of account, we must choose as a base such goods, or a “basket of goods”, which are widely accepted in the world and are part of the essential goods for meeting basic needs. For example, take 1 tonne (t) of wheat as a base to determine the value of 1 unit of a new “currency”. This unit of account could be called UNCU (**U**nited **N**ations **C**urrency).

For all other goods that will be exchanged within the global sharing of goods, the value will be determined by the ratio to the value of basic good, i.e. 1 tonne of wheat. The special expert team within the Agency will take care to establish a fair value relation between goods.

Now let's take a closer look at how to determine the value of particular goods. We have already said that one tonne of wheat worth 1 UNCU could be used as the basis for determining the value of the new unit of account. All other goods will be related to this particular good. Suppose (these are entirely fictitious relationships) that the value of 1 UNCU (1 t of wheat) is equal to 10 hl (hectoliters) of clean drinking water, to 1 t of rice, to 5 hours of teaching work, etc.

After defining the value of individual common goods and determining their exchangeable value relations, we can consider how the calculation of shared basic goods can be done. Let's take a look at the example of the sharing process between the three countries described above.

After the exchange of goods between countries, the Agency will calculate their value and record them in account (Figure 2):

The Agency will credit the account of country A with 150 UNCU (for 100 tonnes sent to country C and 50 tonnes of wheat to B; 1 tonne of grain is worth 1 UNCU). At the same time, country A account will be debited with 150 UNCU for received 1500 hl of drinking water.

Country B will be credited with 150 UNCU for the rice sent to country C and debited with 50 UNCU for the wheat received.

Country C will be credited with 150 UNCU for drinking water sent to country A, and debited with 150 UNCU for received rice and 100 UNCU for wheat.

Figure 2: Accounting transactions

	COUNTRY					
	A		B		C	
	transfer	UNCU	transfer	UNCU	transfer	UNCU
1.	50 t of wheat for country B	+ 50	50 t of wheat from country A	- 50		
2.	100 t of wheat for country C	+ 100			100 t of wheat from country A	- 100
3.	1500 hl of water from country C	- 150			1500 hl water for country A	+ 150
4.			150 t of rice for county C	+ 150	150 t rice from country B	- 150
ACCOUNT CREDIT		0		+ 100		- 100

After the transactions are completed, the situation is as follows:

Country A still lacks 500 hl of drinking water, with 50 tonnes of surplus wheat, and the balanced account (0 UNCU).

Country B has neither the need for goods nor the surplus of goods, but at the same time, it has 100 UNCU in its account.

Country C needs another 50 t of rice and has 100 UNCU “debts”.

In a global system of sharing, goods are more important than money, because human life is the most precious “value” and meeting basic human needs is of primary importance. In this way, we can think about the new currency UNCU. It is just a unit of account, which means that countries cannot use it to buy and sell goods in the classic market perception.

Since the global sharing mechanism involves many basic goods and as many as all countries worldwide, the Agency will undoubtedly locate those basic goods, which countries in the above example still urgently need.

However, if the Agency does not locate them, it will provide them from intervention funds, where the basic goods will be available – food, drinking water, medicines and vaccines, clothing, temporary housing, etc. These intervention funds will be set up in different world regions. They will represent the necessary global reserves in the event of major natural disasters and sporadic shortages in some countries.

Therefore, in the case described before, the Agency will send 500 hl of water to country A and 50 t rice to country C from nearest intervention fund. Similarly, we can think about surplus goods. If the doesn't find countries for surplus 50 tonnes of wheat, those goods will be sent to the nearest intervention fund. These transactions will also be recorded in the accounts (Figure 3; events 5 and 6).

Figure 3: Accounting transactions with intervention fund transactions

	COUNTRY					
	A		B		C	
	transfer	UNCU	transfer	UNCU	transfer	UNCU
1.	50 t of wheat for country B	+ 50	50 t of wheat from country A	- 50		
2.	100 t of wheat for country C	+ 100			100 t of wheat from country A	- 100
3.	1500 hl of water from country C	- 150			1500 hl water for country A	+ 150
4.			150 t of rice for country C	+ 150	150 t rice from country B	- 150
Intervention fund transactions						
5.	50 t of wheat to the intervention fund	+ 50				
6.					50 t of rice from the intervention fund	- 50
ACCOUNT CREDIT		+ 50		+ 100		- 150

Let us emphasize once more that the accounting records does not mean that the country has a positive or negative balance as we understand it today – in terms of profit or loss. A country with a positive balance cannot spend this value on purchases of goods, nor is a country with a negative balance obliged to sell its goods to fit its negative balance. When we talk about meeting basic human needs, we should not even think about the gains and losses, as is characteristic of today's economic system.

However, recording the value of goods sent and received via Agency could have some benefits. The first will be greater transparency in the system of global sharing of basic goods. Countries can thus aim, at least in the long run, towards a balanced account and focus their attention on areas that may be underdeveloped in the country, such as improving sanitation, educated more teachers etc.

Countries with surpluses in the account could meet the shortages of countries that are in a negative balance due to underdevelopment, natural disasters and other problems. Therefore, country B could donate 100 UNCU's to state C, thereby setting its balance to 0.

This can be seen as a far better system for ensuring a global safety net than today's voluntary charity, because it derives from the understanding that country C is experiencing temporary problems, and country B is currently thriving. Countries also show solidarity and strengthen interconnectedness and mutual understanding.

In the initial phase of the Agency's operation, some countries may have large deficits due to the impoverished state of their economic systems. But international sharing will gradually improve today's unequal global distribution of goods. However, if a country is affected by a natural disaster or other difficulties, other countries may jointly write off its "debts", e.g. at the annual summit of countries involved in the mechanism global sharing of basic goods.

A further advantage of UNCU currency system could be "the gold standard" for traditional currencies (e.g. 1 UNCU equal 100 EUR), which would stabilize global exchange rates and significantly reduce speculation, that is a significant threat to many developing countries today.

The world urgently needs a financial base that could be represented by the UNCU global accounting department. Although the worldwide unit of account will not be real money, individual countries can fix the value of their money to this "global currency" and thus ensure the stability of their monetary system. Money used to have a base in gold, but in the future, we can establish a new "gold standard", that is basic global goods, which is sharing globally. And that will give money stability and proper function as a medium of exchange.

A few more questions regarding the mechanism of global sharing of basic goods

What will be the benefits of a global sharing of basic goods?

The benefits of the global sharing of basic goods, coordinated by the UN Agency, will undoubtedly be significant since the introduction of this mechanism alone will affect the behaviour of people and the relations between countries in a more just and equitable way. In general, the benefits will be:

- Chronic poverty and hunger will be rapidly eliminated on the global scale, and the incidence of treatable diseases (e.g. malaria) will be reduced.
- The Agency will be able to react quickly to urgent needs in the event of natural disasters and other catastrophic situation (this would be dealt with by special intervention funds), so it will not be necessary to seek the charity assistance of the international community on a case-by-case basis. This will introduce a system of permanent solidarity and charity.
- Countries and their citizens will feel safer as their livelihoods will not be in a state of permanent risk.
- The global sharing of basic goods will have a positive impact on the level of trust between groups and nations.
- The introduction of a mechanism of global sharing will also encourage other forms of social and economic sharing at “lower levels”, such as between regions, countries, local communities, organizations and groups, as well as among individuals.
- Since the UNCU unit of account will depend to the value of basic goods, their value will not always change, which is happening all the time in the modern world of global financial markets and causes uncertainty and the impossibility of any long-term economic planning.
- The mechanism of equitably sharing basic goods will stabilize commodity prices in global markets, considering surpluses of these commodities will no longer reduce market prices, and shortages will not increase them.

- The actions of the Agency will significantly reduce the possibility of speculative and corrupt practices, which is extremely widespread in the world economy today.
- Countries will be able to stabilize their currencies by bidding them to the UNCU.

What about the negative aspects of the global sharing of basic goods?

The disadvantages of introducing this mechanism may be “painful” to some, especially among today's privileged groups and wealthy individuals who unjustifiably own the vast wealth of the planet and the benefits that this wealth brings. Due to the sharing of basic goods, more affluent people will still exist, but the scourge of extreme poverty and the false scarcity of basic goods will be forever erased from planet Earth.

What kind of control will the mechanism sharing of basic goods need?

Countries will participate in the global mechanism of sharing basic goods due to meeting the basic human needs of all humanity. Individual countries know best their situation with regards to surpluses and shortages of basic goods. Therefore, countries themselves will be responsible for fairly using goods which they will receive via the Agency. The sharing of basic goods on a global scale could be called “a permanent system of global solidarity and justice”.

One of the Agency's tasks could also be to occasionally monitor the results of the global mechanism of sharing basic goods within individual countries - but more in terms of improvements than of control.

Will the market economy as we know it today survive?

The traditional market economy will survive, but it will have to work on a fairer basis. The Fair Trade Movement has already established the ideal of a fairer global market system, where every part of the chain, from producer to seller, receives their fair share of selling their piece of the world's “cake”. However, the buyers themselves with their responsible purchases can compel traders and suppliers to share the benefits of selling goods more fairly.

How would the Agency be funded?

The Agency will operate within the United Nations and will be financed either from United Nations funds or from membership fees. Countries will also be able to voluntarily contribute to the Agency's operation in the form of basic goods or money.

Is the proposed system of global sharing different from today's humanitarian aid?

The fundamental problem of humanitarian aid is that it is almost always insufficient and relies on individual organizations that can't meet all global aid needs. The assistance provided is unevenly spread among world regions, and depends on the goodwill of the donors.

Likewise, the world is repeatedly “surprised” when a major natural disaster occurs; every time, a lot of help must be quickly gathered. This assistance is not coordinated adequately as very different humanitarian organizations and countries are involved. The fact is that disasters such as droughts, floods, earthquakes, hurricanes, etc. will continue to occur, and climate change is likely to be even more frequent than ever.

The global mechanism of sharing basic goods will, however, ensure permanent access to basic goods and constant readiness due to disasters – through the intervention funds for providing basic goods on a rapid-response basis.

Let's look at the Agency's other two main tasks: managing intervention funds and determining the recommended use of natural resources.

2. Management of regional intervention funds

Although the Agency's main task will be to coordinate the sharing of basic goods, as mentioned earlier, special intervention funds (warehouses or systems of warehouses) will be set up in different regions of the world to store the essential goods needed in the event of a natural disaster or shortage and will be available to people as soon as possible.

The warehouses will store food, drinking water, medicines, temporary accommodations, clothing, elementary school equipment and other necessities. These warehouses will cover all the regions of the world (South Africa, North Africa, Eastern, Western Europe, Southeast Asia, etc.). The Agency will manage the operation of these regional warehouses or the warehouse system with the participation of countries directly concerned by the operation of the fund.

The international community will have the responsibility of sending basic necessities to the system of warehouses, with each country contributing certain goods available or financial resources. The type and amount of products or financial resources will be supervised by the Agency, including, where necessary, purchases made in local markets.

In the event of a natural disaster (drought, earthquake, floods, etc.), the Agency will have to respond quickly, autonomously and in accordance with its professional responsibility for impartiality, and only later will it have to justify its actions to the countries of the region in which the intervention fund will operate. In the event of a more extensive disaster, basic goods from several intervention funds around the world may be combined.

This idea is not new. The NGO Share The World's Resource (STWR), which has the status of a consultative body at the UN Economic and Social Council, proposed the creation of global food reserves. In a paper published after the world food price crisis of 2007/8, the STWR authors of *Global food reserves: Framing the context for a new multilateralism* (2009), wrote:

The prime function of a strategic food reserve is to provide the first line of defence in the event of a food emergency, which could include floods, droughts, pest attacks, bad weather, or man-made events such as war and violent civil disorder. A system of internationally coordinated humanitarian reserves could

significantly improve food security in times of a catastrophic shortfall in supply by reducing the need for short-term ad hoc fundraising.²⁵

In 2010, the Institute for Agricultural and Trade Policies (IATP) proposed the creation of global food reserves²⁶ (Why We Need Food Reserves), and in October 2012 the institute, together with the OXFAM and the ACORD (Agency for Cooperation and Research in Development) organized a seminar to present information on local, national, regional and international food reserves.²⁷

Global food reserves will not only ensure that, in the face of natural disasters, people are not depending on the current charity of the international community, which is often generous (especially in the case of severe emergencies), but that food will always and immediately be available. But we need to think more broadly: food is not enough, intervention funds must also contain all the other necessities – medicines, temporary housing, drinking water, clothing, temporary toilets, etc. – necessary to meet basic human needs at any time.

The reason for setting up intervention funds is not just that natural disasters always arouse the sympathy of the international community. Far from the public eye, there is a catastrophe of unimaginable proportions in which 821 million people are chronically malnourished, according to UN statistics. For these impoverished individuals and families, tragedy is a daily experience and causes unthinkable suffering and often unnecessary deaths, a large number of which are young children.

However, highlighting this shameful reality is not attractive to the media because it is not glamorous or dramatic enough for them. Also, the mainstream media works in the interest of their owners and the wealthiest people in the world, who benefit most from the current system. As a result, the permanent global catastrophe of avoidable poverty-related deaths is almost entirely off the radar of our consciousness or attention. The media, however, are our “eyes” on global events. If the media is “looking away” when it comes to hunger and extreme poverty, then so do we.

In a world where food and other basic goods are plentiful enough, where we have modern technology and transport systems readily in place, setting up regional intervention funds should not be a problem for the international community.

3. Determining the recommended limit for the use of the commons of humanity for all countries

In 1992, the environmental group Friends of the Earth Netherlands launched a project to determine the recommended amount of “commons” that humanity can use without endangering the natural balance of the environment. Such a calculation could also provide a basis for a more equitable distribution of basic goods among all humanity.

The basic idea of this project is expressed in the concept of the fair share in environmental space. “Environmental space is the total global amount of energy, non-renewable resources, agricultural land and forests that we can use without causing irreversible environmental damage or depriving future generations of the resources they will need. The amount of environmental space is limited: we have only one Earth. For example, there is a limit to the area of land we can put sustainably into agricultural production, or only so much timber we can fell each year without depleting our forests.”²⁸

Fair share, however, means that each country must consume a proportion of planetary resources (commons of humanity) that is compatible with the percentage of its population related to the entire population. Of course, concessions will be tolerated – for energy consumption, for example. Residents of colder areas of the planet may receive more energy per capita than in sunnier places; differences will also be possible due to culture, social and cultural differences, but never to the cost of meeting basic human needs.

The Agency will, therefore, deal with the assessment of the annual exploitation of natural resources, or in the broader sense of the commons of humanity, to the extent that it will not threaten the natural ecological balance of the planet.

Of course, such calculations will be carried out with the participation of countries that are themselves best informed with their available commons or natural resources, and the needs of their populations. Based on the estimates obtained, the Agency will recommend to countries the extent to which they can exploit natural resources and other commons and how much they can charge the environment with the use of these resources. The surpluses and shortages of the commons will, however, be settled through the Agency as well as in the regular markets.

The commons of humanity

The commons is the cultural and natural resources accessible to all members of a society, including natural materials such as air, water, and a habitable earth. These resources are held in common, not owned privately. Commons can also be understood as natural resources that groups of people (communities, user groups) manage for individual and collective benefit.²⁹

In the 21st century, commons must be understood more broadly, in line with the rapid development of humanity:

The traditional idea of the commons is undergoing a major revival in the 21st century, with a newfound meaning that goes far beyond the old notion of communally shared pasture lands. In our time, the commons is generally promoted as a new theory and praxis of sharing resources that encompasses every aspect of modern life, from the environmental to the social, cultural, intellectual and digital spheres.

But there is another way of trying to understand the meaning and significance of the commons that requires an inward investigation, which cannot be helped by any conventional analyses of this subject through studying academic literature. Let us begin by positing that the commons has a divine origin which is inextricably connected to the ageless principle of sharing, although the comprehension of this essential truth demands a wider lens of perception than the usual modes of thinking and action.³⁰

The role of the state in the system of global sharing of basic goods

The state (here we mean the government and other related state institutions) knows very well its economic and social system and the needs of its population; surpluses and shortages of basic goods, the situation of their natural resources and the environment. Expert knowledge of all this gives the state an excellent starting point for establishing a nation-wide distribution of basic goods based on a mechanism for global economic sharing and for participating in the management of regional intervention funds.

Similar to the global system, it is possible to set up an agency for the sharing of basic goods at the national level. Its tasks will be similar to those at the global level, and each country can, in accordance with its culture, traditions and political system, manage to share goods in its own specific way. Consider some options:

1. Coordination of the sharing of basic goods within the country and with other countries – through the global Agency.
2. Monitoring the condition of its resources and recommending the amount of their use, which will be in line with the recommendations of the Agency.
3. The granting of the right to usage of a country's commons to public and private institutions, and to control their performance.

Let's take a closer look at these tasks:

1. Coordination of the sharing of basic goods

This task will be twofold: the state agency will coordinate the sharing of goods within the country and with other countries via the global Agency, which we have already discussed. But what does the coordination of the sharing of basic goods within a country actually mean and entail?

The Agency will monitor or obtain information on surpluses and shortages in the country and coordinate its distribution in different ways.

Let's look at a simple example:

A government agency detects surplus bread on store shelves or anywhere else in the production chain. In doing so, it will have more options to address this problem:

- the state agency purchases surplus bread and sends it to supply centres where poorer people can get cheap or free groceries;
- with various benefits (such as lower taxation), encourage shops to sell bread at significantly lower prices in certain hours;
- assist producers and shops in allocating surplus bread products (properly packaged or processed) for the global sharing of goods, thereby gaining the right to particular tax or other benefits.

2. Monitoring the state of resources in the country

The state will first have to make an inventory of all the commons in the country. Of course, not all goods can be measured in the same way, but they can be accurately calculated, for example:

- the total volume of forests in the country,
- the extent of arable land,
- the size of water sources (amount of drinking water, water as an irrigation source, etc.),
- the volume of the total production of food and other basic goods, etc.

The state agency will provide this information to a global Agency, which will get an overview of the total amount of the commons of humanity. In the case of the forest, which is an essential part of maintaining the climate balance, the global Agency – based on the inventory and the overall comprehensive “picture” – will recommend how much forest each country can use.

3. Granting the right to use commons

“Commons” are the collective property of humanity. However, this is not in accordance with today's understanding of property assets, where owners think they can use and exploit “their property” without limitation. Commons are entrusted with governance and stewardship for their unique role on the planet. The responsibility of each country is to manage its resources properly and to care for them for the benefit of the entire global community.

The state can grant property rights to public and private companies, non-profit organizations and individuals, but only as a temporary right and under certain conditions that are consonant with the principles of sustainable development.

At the same time, the state (as well as local communities) should assume a supervising function over the management of commons – e.g. supervision of forests, waters, arable land etc. Only in this way can we ensure the sustainable development of the planet, the safeguarding of the environmental commons, and thus the future of humanity.

A state agency could be organized similarly as a global agency. Still, it is entirely within the domain of the state how to deal with its sharing of basic goods according to its tradition, culture, political and legal system. Sharing of goods is not a kind of new economic or political system, but rather a framework within which we can, in many ways, share and manage goods for the common good of humanity and the planet.

The equitable sharing of basic goods will not significantly affect the economic system of the country as we know it, but it does introduce a number of new things:

- control and review of the basic goods of humanity,
- a solution to the vast inequalities in the distribution of these goods,
- a balance between public and private interests,
- better management of environmental issues.

The sharing of basic goods is like a socially democratic and environmentally-oriented economic system that exists alongside the prevailing international free trade system (and other local and regional economic systems). We must learn that it does not matter what kind of political system or ideology each nation has, for the major importance is that each system meets the basic needs of its society as a whole, while maintaining the ecological balance of the planetary environment.

However, it is also clear that every national economic system will have to undergo profound changes in line with established international standards of human rights, justice, sustainability, and above all the principle of sharing.

CONCLUSION

We have studied the possibility of establishing a mechanism for the global sharing of basic goods that would eliminate, or at least ease, many of the most significant problems of the modern world – hunger, extreme poverty and inequality, which together leads to social conflicts, wars, migration and the environmental crisis.

We already have the United Nations Organisation, within which we can establish a new specialized Agency to coordinate the global sharing of basic goods. The fundamental purpose of sharing basic goods through alternative international economic arrangements is to enable every individual to meet their basic needs, which is essential for the health and wellbeing of every society and the world as a whole. The global sharing of basic goods could also have a significant impact on the future sustainability of the planetary commons.

The mechanism of sharing basic goods could be very simple in theory, despite its technological sophistication. Countries will report to the Agency the surpluses and shortages of all their basic goods. The Agency will recommend to the countries which goods to send directly to each other. For the purpose of transparency, a new unit of account (UNCU) could be created to make the whole system more transparent.

In addition to coordinating the sharing of basic goods, the Agency will manage regional intervention funds, which will store basic goods for the purpose of mitigating the human impact of natural disasters or other crises. Also, the Agency will make recommendations to countries as to the extent they can use the commons of humanity, such as forests, oceans, fresh waters, arable land, etc.

Like any proposal, of course, this one is open to further debate and reflection. And yet, we have to start somewhere. The global sharing of basic goods and caring for the commons of humanity is the foundation upon which we can build peace, prosperity and a viable future for all.

If we want to live as One humanity, in peace and wellbeing on our common Earth, then the only way to achieve this urgent objective is through the principle of sharing.

Global sharing of basic goods

Humanity is but One Family,
which shares a common home – planet Earth.
We all have the same basic needs,
that provide us with health and well-being.
Everyone needs food, water, clothing, housing,
health care and education – the basic goods of humanity.

These goods are enough for everyone but in some parts of the world
there is a shortage, but there are too many elsewhere,
for we have been created exceedingly unjust
and a selfish economic system;
so we have hunger and poverty, conflicts,
wars, migration and a sick environment.

With the global sharing of basic goods
no one will suffer shortages
and only this way we will create the conditions for world peace
and prosperity for all people
and only then we will be able to fix our relationship with the environment
and turned the Earth into a flourishing planet.

Petition “To accept the principle of sharing and act”

Although we are so different, humanity is but one family. We all share our common home – planet Earth. We need to realize that we cannot live peacefully together, if we compete with each other for the Earth’s goods.

Commercialization, based on competition, selfishness and greed, is becoming the main principle of our societies. Because of commercialization there are more than 800 million people hungry worldwide, and every day around 40,000 people die from avoidable poverty-related causes. Because of commercialization we now live on the brink of disaster.

Instead of destructive commercialization, we must recognize sharing as a key principle that governs new economic relationships between nations. Food, water, air, soil, forests, energy resources; biodiversity and genes; education and healthcare, the Internet, cultural heritage and other “wealth of nations” are our common goods, belonging not just to some individuals, groups or nations, but to all humanity.

Sharing is the noble path to peace and prosperity, understanding and empathy between people of the world. We must unite together and tell our leaders to start sharing food, water and other key global resources. Let's make the movement for sharing unstoppable - add your voice by signing the petition!

Link to petition:

https://secure.avaaz.org/en/community_petitions/To_all_world_leaders_To_accept_the_principle_of_sharing_and_act/

Notes

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