**5. Long-Term Perspectives**
**How can policymaking be made more sensitive to global long-term perspectives?**

In March 2009 an asteroid missed Earth by 77,000 kilometers, 80% closer to the planet than the moon is. If it had hit Earth, it would have wiped out all life on 800 square kilometers. No one knew it was coming. Few people knew the global financial crisis was coming; fewer still forecast its breadth and depth. We need global, national, and local systems for resilience—the capacities to anticipate, respond, and recover from disasters, while identifying future technological and social innovations and opportunities.

Government leaders should make these systems (see Appendix 4.2 for an example of a collective intelligence system) as transparent as possible to include and increase the public’s collective intelligence. These systems should be supported by global scanning systems (interoperable with all government departments) with the ability to identify and assess expert judgments in near real-time (see Chapter 3). Staff should synthesize futures research from other government departments, calculate a national SOFI (State of the Future Index see Chapter 2), and produce national state of the future reports. Government future strategy units (see Appendix 4.1) could be connected to share best practices, compare research, and verify assumptions, just as the UN Network of Strategic Planning Units connects 12 UN agencies. These two networks could also be connected with the Office of the UN Secretary-General to help coordinate national and international strategies and goals. Decisionmakers and their advisors should be trained in futures research for optimal use of these systems (see http://www.millennium-project.org/millennium/FRM-V3.html).

The G-20 was initiated to improve global long-range policymaking, and one day the G-2 (U.S.-China) may lead global climate change and other long-range policies. National legislatures could establish standing “Committees for the Future,” as Finland has done. National foresight studies should be continually updated, improved, and conducted interactively with other national long-range efforts. Alternative scenarios that show cause-and-effect relations and expose decision points leading to different consequences from different strategies should be shared with parliamentarians and the public for feedback. Government budgets should consider 5–10 year allocations attached to rolling 5–10 year scenarios and strategies. Governments with short-term election cycles should consider longer, more stable terms and funds for staff of parliamentarians. If national SOFIs were constructed and used in evaluating policymakers’ performance, decisionmakers would be more inclined to pursue policies that address the longer term. A checklist of ways to better connect futures research to decision making is available in Chapter 11 of the attached CD.

Communications and advertising companies can create memes to help the public become sensitive to global long-term perspectives so that more future-oriented educated publics would elect more future-oriented global-minded politicians. Prizes could be given to recognize the best examples of global long-term decision making. Participatory policy-making processes augmented by e-government services can be created that are informed by futures research. Universities should fund the convergence of disciplines, teach futures research and synthesis as well as analysis, and produce generalists in addition to specialists. Efforts to increase the number and quality of courses on futures concepts and methods should be supported, as well as augmenting standard curricula with futures methodologies converted to teaching techniques that help future-orient instruction.

Although there is increasing recognition that accelerating change requires longer-term perspectives, decision makers feel little pressure to consider global long-term perspectives. Nevertheless, attaining long-range goals like landing on the moon or eradicating smallpox that were considered impossible inspired many people to go beyond selfish, short-term interests to great achievements. (An international assessment of such future goals is found in Chapter 4.2 on the CD.) Growing threats to human survival discussed throughout the challenges in this chapter, though temporarily masked by the global financial crisis, are accelerating value shifts and drawing attention to the need for longer-term policymaking. Local governments are often responding faster than national ones; commercial organizations are also responding to changing stakeholder values and modifying their behavior accordingly.

Each of the 15 Global Challenges in this chapter and the eight UN Millennium Development Goals—which have become benchmarks for the future—could be the basis for trans-institutional coalitions composed of self-selected governments, corporations, NGOs, universities, and international organizations that are willing to commit the resources and talent to address a specific goal.

Challenge 5 will be addressed seriously when foresight functions are a routine part of most organizations and governments, when national SOFIs are used in at least 50 countries, when the consequences of high-risk projects are routinely considered before they are initiated, and when standing Committees for the Future exist in at least 50 national legislatures.

**Regional Considerations**

**Africa:** China has become a force in African long-range planning. Daily management of many African countries makes future global perspectives difficult; hence, more regional bodies like the African Union, NEPAD, and the African Development Bank are more likely to further futures work in Africa and should build on ten years of work of UNDP/African Futures on incorporating long-term perspectives into mid- and short-term planning.

**Asia and Oceania:** Since China tends to make decisions in a longer-time frame than others, its increasing power and eventually that of India should lead to more global, long-term decision making as these nations interact with Europe and North America on global issues. Japan includes private-sector companies in its long-term strategic planning unit. South Korea is considering legislation for a permanent Future Strategy Unit in the Office of the President. The Strategic Policy Office of the Prime Minister of Singapore is a good example of integrating foresight activities across the government.

**Europe:** The rotating six-month EU presidency may have been necessary to enhance pan-European identification, but it makes long-term policy management difficult. Global long-term thinking continues to be stimulated by the Lisbon Strategy, increasing immigrants from developing countries, public finances for social and health services for an aging population, restructuring energy systems, changing ethnic demographics, and geopolitical shifts such as the emergence of China. The Netherlands’ constitution requires a 50-year horizon for land use planning. The 7th Framework Program of the EU expands foresight support; the Institute for Prospective Technological Studies provides futures studies for EU decision making; the European Foresight Monitoring Network connects futurists; an annual European Futurists Conference is held in Switzerland; and the European Regional Foresight College improves future methods. Foresight was included in the Russian Federal Program 2007–12.

**Latin America:** The UN’s ECLAC journal, CEPAL’s reports, and UNIDO’s technological foresight training should stimulate others to think long-range. The shift toward more socialist politics in some countries is motivating alternative futures thinking. Yet futures approaches are ignored by the academic and mass media that focus on urgent and confrontational issues over ideologies, unmet basic needs, growing inequality, and large economic groups that monopolize services. The Global Millennium Prize was initiated in Mexico for students worldwide who have the best ideas for addressing global long-range challenges. Since the average age in Latin America is only 23, it is fundamental to incorporate the visions of the new generations.

**North America:** Global long-term perspectives are evident in many local governments’ climate change policies. The new U.S. administration is creating alternative global perspectives in national decision making. New interactive and analytical mechanisms could promote foresight if citizens expect and demand it. A collection of high-impact cases should be developed in which foresight leads to demonstrable benefits or when the lack of futures thinking proves costly. (See CD Chapter 11 for examples.) Perpetual collaboration among different institutions and nations is becoming the norm to address increasing complexity and speed of global change.