

Among the world’s most pressing needs is a plan of action for human survival. This short talk outlines the key components of such a plan.

A draft plan for Human Survival

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(slide 1 title)

Among the world’s many pressing needs, the most urgent of all is a plan for human survival.

At present no country or international body has one.

(slide 2 megathreats)

What we currently have is a chaotic road to avoidable disaster, driven by ten vast, interconnected threats which are all the result of human activity.

The existential emergency in which all humanity now stands has been building steadily for over half a century.

Our capacity to inflict mass harm on ourselves through our own actions has increased exponentially since the end of WWII.

The science is in.

(Slide 3 extinction)

* We’ve wiped out two thirds of the world’s large animals;

(Slide 4 resources)

* We’re losing fresh water, topsoil, fish, forests and other key resources at appalling rates;

(Slide 5 toxicity)

* We poison everyone and everything on the planet every day, especially our children;

(Slide 6 midnight)

* We’re constructing weapons than can obliterate us many times over;

Slide 7

* We’re shaping a climate that will render the Earth largely uninhabitable within a few generations;

Slide 8

* We’re building dangerous technologies over which society has no control;

Slide 9

* We throw away half our food and ruin the planet trying to grow more;

Slide 10

* Each year we try to cram another 80 million people into Lifeboat Earth - and this drives all the other threats.

Slide 11

* We unleash new plagues every 2-3 years and spread them worldwide like wildfire;

Slide 12

* And we lie, constantly and continually, to ourselves about it all.

Slide 13 wise

These are not the actions of a wise species. Or even, maybe, an intelligent one.

Our governments and corporations seem paralysed, unable to grasp the magnitude of the overwhelming, interlinked risks that are engulfing us.

Slide 14 solutions

The ten megathreats I have listed are all connected. They cannot be separated. None of them can be tackled on its own. They *must* all be solved together.

All of them are consequences of the sheer scale of the human enterprise – overpopulation, overconsumption, overpollution and money are the chief drivers.

Mostly, they stem from the 101 billion tonnes of resources we now devour every year to support our ‘lifestyle’ – 12 tonnes each – and the damage this process unleashes on the planet and ourselves.

Slide 15 book

The good news is that solutions to all these threats already exist. That is why I have written ‘How to Fix a Broken Planet’ – so that people will know that this complex problem is amenable to solution.

They can all be solved in ways that do not generate fresh perils or make other threats worse.

We have the brains and we have the technology to save ourselves. The bad news is that we do not have the governments, the leadership or the will to do so.

No government on Earth has a plan for overcoming these risks and securing the human future, as the [Council for the Human Future](https://humanfuture.org/reports) has warned. Most of them are not even aware such a need exists, so poorly do they understand the messages of science over the past half century – and so effectively have selfish interests managed to mislead, deceive and frustrate action.

In “[How to Fix a Broken Planet](https://www.cambridge.org/us/academic/subjects/earth-and-environmental-science/environmental-science/how-fix-broken-planet-advice-surviving-21st-century?format=PB)” (Cambridge University Press 2023) I explain the scientific understanding of these risks, but more importantly I list all the main actions which governments, institutions and individuals can take in their work and own lives to make ours a safer, more sustainable, more enduring world.

This amounts to a first draft for a World Plan of Action for Human Survival. I did it because nobody else seemed interested.

It isn’t the complete answer. No short book could provide that. But it is an outline of what the world’s wisest minds now consider we must do in order to survive. It shows that thinking and acting our way out of the biggest crisis ever to face humanity is entirely possible.

Furthermore, it is positive, encourages hope, prosperity, confidence and opportunity.

Slide 16 top 12

Among several hundred solutions proffered for policymakers, governments, companies, groups and individuals, here are the top dozen.

They should not surprise anyone who has considered our situation objectively.

Slide 17 Treaty

* 1. An Earth System Treaty addressing all the catastrophic threats, open for everyone to sign.

Slide 18 nukes

* 2. A ban on all nuclear weapons.

Slide 19 renewables

* 3. An end to the use of fossil fuels, to stem both climate change and global poisoning.

Slide 20: circular econ

* 4. A Circular World Economy which wastes nothing and re-uses everything

Slide 21: food

* 5. Renewable Food for everyone, to sustain all humanity and reduce the threat of war.

Slide 22: rewilding

* 6. A Stewards of the Earth plan for rewilding half the Earth, run by farmers and indigenous people

Slide 23: Clean Up

* 7. A Clean Up the Earth Plan, including a new Human Right Not to Be Poisoned.

Slide 24: population

* 8. A World Population Plan, providing voluntary family planning for all.

Slide 25: pandemics

* 9. A world pandemic plan to prevent and arrest the uncontrolled spread of disease by human behaviour.

Slide 26: Tech convention

* 10. A Global Technology Convention to oversee all powerful new technologies before they are put to dangerous misuse.

Slide 27: WTC

* 11. A World Truth Commission, to expose the liars and their lies to public shame.

Slide 28: Index

* 12. An Earth Standard Currency, to try to correct the rape of our Planet by an infinite supply of otherwise imaginary money.

There are many other actions that must be taken to mitigate the danger in which humans now stand, and most of them are explained in ‘How to Fix a Broken Planet’.

At the heart of all this is an Earth System Treaty, a legal compact by the world’s people (note: not just its nations or governments, but everyone, you and me) which commits all those who sign it to work for a habitable Earth and a safer human future, by addressing all ten of the great threats.

Slide 29: Boundaries

It commits us to living within the safe [planetary boundaries](https://www.stockholmresilience.org/research/planetary-boundaries.html) defined by Johan Rockstrom and his colleagues.

The answers to the human emergency do not lie in business-as-usual, in government procrastination, in the corruption of public discourse, the poisoning or overheating of an entire planet or the destruction of nature.

They lie in employing the chief attribute which has distinguished human survival for over a million years: wisdom

That is the ability to read the future and take action in good time to achieve a better, safer outcome.

Self-evidently the world’s governments, intent on the rivalries of yesterday, are not interested in this, or able to achieve it.

Slide 30: mind

Instead it must be driven by the wishes and concerns of eight billion humans united in a desire for their grandchildren to survive on a world that hasn’t been reduced to a charred ruin by human negligence and greed.

Today we have the means. By 2030 all 9 billion of us will be online. We can, for the first time in our history, join minds across an entire Planet – to secure our future.

This is, without a doubt, the greatest and noblest undertaking in the long ascent of human aspiration and achievement. It is a task worthy of us all – and which cannot be completed without the co-operation of all. I urge you, implore you, to get behind it.

Slide 30: lifeboat

The Earth is a lifeboat, sinking under the pressures of overcrowding and fearsome demand.

We either row it to safety together – or we go down together.

The choice is stark, and it is now before us.

Slide 31: book cover

ends