

Shared Societies Presentation

My thanks to my fellow panelists for their remarks.

This section of the discussion will focus on the role of Shared Societies as the vehicle through which solidarity economies can be implemented as a means for ending poverty in all its forms.

The term *Shared societies* was first used by the **World Leadership Alliance-Club of Madrid** in their **Shared Societies Project in 2007**.

This distinguished group of 95 members— all democratically elected former presidents and prime ministers from over 60 countries around the world— coined the term **Shared Society** to delineate **a socially cohesive society** founded on the principles of human dignity and human rights, that is the basis of peaceful, stable, and productive societies capable of economic growth and sustainable development.

As part of the Shared Society Project, they agreed on ten broad commitments— aspects of policy and inter-group relations that are key to achieving a shared society. These are shown on the screen. These commitments form the invisible infrastructure of trust that actually enables social cohesion to occur. And they can only be initiated at government level.

Due to our time constraints, I would like to comment briefly on three of the commitments. II and V and also VII.

Commitment II. Create opportunities for minorities and marginalized groups and communities to be consulted about their needs and their perception of the responsiveness of state and community structures to meet those needs.

And Commitment V. Take steps to deal with economic disadvantages faced by sections of society who are discriminated against, and ensure equal access to opportunities and resources.

As both of these are extremely important parts of creating a shared society, I'd like to comment on a direct approach that governments can utilize as a way of addressing both commitments: **That is by providing universal access to the Internet**—an accomplishment that a number of nations, among them Rwanda, have already managed.

- With universal access to the Internet, governments have the capacity to set up online portals that allow people to formally and informally give their opinions and identify needed changes about local, regional and national policies, legislation, and issues that affect them. And to poll their constituents about how well government is meeting their needs.

- This kind of online dialogue is already being done in a number of countries with excellent and often surprising results. We often don't know what our constituents think or what they need until we ask them.

As well,

- Providing Universal Access to the Internet is one of the most effective ways for **all** people in any sector of society to access the wealth of free and inexpensive resources available for innovation, capacity-building, knowledge sharing and education to empower development for at every level of society.

To fund this initiative, ODA can usefully be applied to this relatively inexpensive resource for unleashing individual potential.

Commitment VII. *Ensure an education system that offers equal opportunity for developing the knowledge skills, capacities and networks necessary for children to become productive, engaged members of society and that demonstrates a commitment to a shared society and educates children to understand and respect others.*

As an educator, I would like to highlight three types of education that governments must encourage in their educational systems to move their societies forward, beginning at the earliest levels. These are not in priority order. They are all equally important.

- ***Education in peaceful conflict resolution*** starting with 8 year olds (as is already being done in a number of schools around the world); as well as education for children and adults on implementation of the ***Eight Action Areas of the Culture of Peace***.
- ***Technology-related education*** starting in early childhood to master the computer and the technological systems that power and empower 21st century society.
- ***Sustainability-related education*** to increase children and adults' accountability for their impact on Earth Systems, as well as of the positive contributions they are making to sustainable development.

All three of these aspects of education are vital to giving children twenty-first century tools to effectively deal with our increasingly inter-related, interconnected and imperiled world.

In closing, I would like to share a principle from consciousness research that I believe is pertinent to this workshop— *Einstein's famous statement that that no problem can be solved from the same level of consciousness that created it.*

Scientists who study the workings of the Earth's planetary systems observe that matter continues to form larger and larger systems. One-celled organisms create the possibility for more complex forms of life, which grow and evolve into interdependent ecosystems, which share their resources in intricate webs of life.

Perhaps for humanity, our current planetary perils are also creating the opportunity for collective growth and development into shared societies capable of interdependent collaboration and collective action.

Thank you.