

The evidence of global crises is all around us:

- Global military spending has climbed to \$1 trillion annually (almost five times greater in real terms since the end of the Second World War) and accounts for 6 per cent of world output. Enough nuclear weapons are scattered over the globe to kill everyone on earth at least 12 times. Dominant as the nuclear factor is, fully 80 per cent of arms spending today is on conventional weapons -- which have been used in 150 regional wars since 1945, killing more than 20 million people.
- More than one billion people live in poverty: 780 million are under-nourished, 850 million are illiterate, 1.5 billion have no access to medical facilities, and one billion are inadequately housed. Fourteen million children under the age of five die each year from dehydration, diarrhoea, and malnutrition. This "silent emergency" of frequent infection and widespread undernutrition kills 280,000 children every week -- more than twice the number of casualties generated by the Hiroshima bombing.
- Fifteen million acres of productive land round the world are transformed into worthless desert every year; 27 million acres of forest are destroyed. The result has been declining food and fuel production in many parts of the world and, for the world as a whole, contamination of the atmosphere, climatic change, a mass extinction of plant and animal species. In many ways, the cutting, burning, and bulldozing of tropical rainforests reflect a calamity that has already arrived: it threatens the lives of a billion people, as their water resources dry up and their land turns to dust.

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