

*At the United Nations World Summit on Sustainable Development in Copenhagen (UNWSSD) (1995) daily experiential workshops and seminars on framing global issues around underlying values were conducted by the Values Caucus on such topics as the new visionary leadership and values—to standing room only crowds.*

*In addition the Values Caucus organized an extensive and intensive lobbying process to influence the documents of the UNWSSD. Daily interactions with governmental representatives and support from Ambassador Somavia were successful in the inclusion of values for the first time in the final documents. The Values Caucus was invited to address all 184 governments. As representative of the Co-Chairs, and the Caucus Nancy Roof introduced the rationale for the fundamental need to address values in global affairs in the plenary session of UNWSSD. In the year 2000 all governments declared values as the foundation for global policy.*

*The following is the talk given by Nancy Roof at UNWSSD in 1995.*

## Values in the Contemporary World

Nancy Roof



Why is it that the topic of “values” is becoming increasingly central in the media and in everyday conversation? Why is it that the World Summit for Social Development has been called a summit of “values”? Why does the Commission on Global Governance call for a fundamental shift in values for our time?

In times of integration we hear little about values. But our world is in the process of profound change. Societal disintegration and global integration are happening simultaneously. Managing these changes requires a new global vision of global interdependence, cultural diversity, and participatory decision-making. We must identify practical values that will work in the contemporary world, and provide the foundation for a better, kinder world.

Further, we are asked to develop processes and structures, which will foster these values. We can no longer accept empty rhetoric about ideals and values that are exploited in the name of a cause, no matter how bloody. We must demand that leaders who attest to ideals and values be required to demonstrate them in their actions. We must ask the same of ourselves.

Only collective action will solve global problems in the contemporary world. Building trust and cooperation between states will be required if we are to avoid collective destruction.

The extensive research of Sisal Book, Harvard University, indicates that three universal values are fundamental to building trust and cooperation. In their absence global society lacks the cohesion necessary to find common solutions. We can honor diversity only if it does not violate these basic values

- Mutual caring, support, reciprocity
- Constraints on violence, lying, betrayal
- Rudimentary system of justice

We must make a commitment to practice values that lead to societal cohesiveness. The sacred and secular are converging today in attesting to the reality of the One Humanity. Thinking about us as one helps avoid the negative values of separation and otherness, which lead to fear, suspicion, and ultimate dehumanization, inviting violence without conscience. The solution of contemporary global problems requires global solidarity. We must identify ourselves at more inclusive levels as members of the One Humanity. We must change our attitudes, values and behaviors to adapt ourselves to this new identity.

We must choose leaders in all fields who put a high value on changing themselves and developing the values and skills needed for the changing times. We need leaders who are integrated thinkers to build an integrated world.

The time is short. The opportunity is now.

We are at a defining point in history, when breakdowns are occurring, and institutional changes have not yet become stabilized and impermeable to change. In the past sweeping historical changes have occurred through fear and catastrophe rather than through choice and wisdom. Potential global catastrophe threatens us through nuclear disaster, environmental pollution, poverty, and eruption of violence. We must examine the value choices that created a threatening and materialistic world. Change can occur through a change of mind and a choice of values that include global responsibility. Civic society, governments and we together, can and must define our future through moral courage and the wisdom of our highest values. We, the people of the world, will be satisfied with nothing less.