

Context for J.F. Rischard on November 6th

In his 2002 book *High Noon*, Jean François Rischard identified 20 global issues and argued that humanity had 20 years to resolve them before they escalate significantly, with catastrophic consequences. Rischard defines an inherently global issue as one that is insoluble outside an international framework of collective action taken by all the countries of the world.

It has now been ten years and the problems remain. Monsieur Rischard will talk about progress (and regress) with respect to these large-scale global issues. Here is his list, divided into three categories: (1) global commons issues; (2) social and economic issues; (3) legal and political issues:

Twenty Global Issues, 20 Years to Solve Them

Sharing our planet: Issues involving the global commons

- ***Global warming***
- ***Biodiversity and ecosystem losses***
- ***Fisheries depletion***
- ***Deforestation***
- ***Water deficits***
- ***Maritime safety and pollution***

Sharing our humanity: Issues requiring a global commitment

- ***Massive step-up in the fight against poverty***
- ***Peacekeeping, conflict prevention, combating terrorism***
- ***Education for all***
- ***Global infectious diseases***
- ***Digital divide***
- ***Natural disaster prevention and mitigation***

Sharing our rule book: Issues needing a global regulatory approach

- ***Reinventing taxation for the twenty-first century***
- ***Biotechnology rules***
- ***Global financial architecture***
- ***Illegal drugs***
- ***Trade, investment, and competition rules***
- ***Intellectual property rights***
- ***E-commerce rules***
- ***International labor and migration rules***

Rischarid identifies two big forces that are driving these global problems—a rising global population and an increasingly complex and interconnected world economy. The first part of his book analyzes these forces. The second part documents the 20 global issues. And the third part invites us to consider solutions. “What can we do,” he asks, “to preserve our small planet before it’s too late?” What options can we devise for what calls Rischarid’s “serious, accelerated global problem solving?”

Outline Comments on the Twenty Global Problems

Issues Involving the Global Commons

1. Global Warming—Extreme weather events increasing. Bird migration patterns changing; the growing season shortening, and agricultural production decreasing; rising ocean levels, warming polar ice caps, increased risks from flooding; increase in mortality (heat stress, insect-borne and water-borne diseases).
2. Biodiversity and Ecosystem Losses—Increased rates of species extinction; loss of habitats, deforestation. Coral reefs threatened, tropical forest cover shrinking, marine life depleted. Ecosystem stress with decreased biodiversity; human health consequences with drugs derived from natural resources.
3. Fisheries depletion—Viability of fisheries and survival of species threatened; illegal fishing, unsustainable practices; aquaculture chemical pollution.
4. Deforestation—Shrinking forests, expanding deserts; forest fragmentation; forest fires; excessive cutting of timber; retention and regulation of water flow compromised; effects on biodiversity and carbon emissions.
5. Water Deficits—Water scarcity, deficits, pollution; conflict over water rights and demands.
6. Maritime Safety and Pollution—oil spills and accidents; waste discharge; cruise ship tourism; pollution by industry, agriculture, municipalities.

Issues Requiring a Global Commitment

7. Fight against Poverty—Poverty a breeding ground for disease, conflict, terrorism, environmental degradation. Increasing disparity in wealth; increase in poor populations in developing countries; the challenge of Africa.
8. Peacekeeping, Conflict Prevention, Terrorism—Increased intra-state warfare; spreading of violence and disease (AIDS); increased child mortality; increased risk, reach, and destructiveness of global terrorism.
9. Education for all—Illiteracy rampant; girls neglected; quality of primary, secondary, and university education substandard; key to global citizenship and international understanding; key to reducing poverty and inequality; need for world-wide cross border accreditation systems.
10. Global Infectious Diseases—AIDS, malaria, TB, pneumonia, measles et al growing; danger of flu pandemic; debilitated health systems in poor countries.
11. Digital Divide—Uneven distribution and access to technology; digital divide leads to economic divide; increased isolation; decreased services and participation in political process; acceleration of differences between digerati and others.

12. Natural Disaster Prevention and Mitigation—Natural disasters increasing in scope and scale; linked with ecosystem collapse and with global warming; financial costs increasing; inadequate dedicated financial and social resources.

Issues Requiring Global Regulation

13. Reinventing Taxation—Complicated by new world economy; ecommerce and fraud; inequitable sales and real estate, corporate, inheritance, and other taxes; challenges of collecting taxes due.
14. Biotechnology Rules—Explosion of discoveries in biotech; critical mass of global rules needed but lacking; political and moral, social and economic complexities involved; social risks; threats to species and ecosystems (transgenic plants); moral controversy.
15. Global Financial Structures—need for increased global problem solving; management of international financial crises; strengthening of financial systems; consequences and challenges of e-money.
16. Illegal Drugs—Giant multi-hundred billion dollar market; rising drug use worldwide; drug cartels and wars with increasing collateral damage; increased sophistication in smuggling and distribution of drugs; health effects; consequences for criminality.
17. Trade, Investment and Competition—Liberalization of trade brings benefits and complications; asymmetrical and disproportionate subsidies, tariffs, outcomes; asymmetry in imports and exports; quality and environmental standards at stake. Investment instruments increasingly complex and confusing; antitrust issues across borders with global corporations.
18. Intellectual Property Rights—Patents, trademarks, copyrights, trade secrets are complicated, even obscure; consequences for impacting the speed and strength of innovation; conflict between protection and incentive for shared and safeguarded intellectual property; key areas biotechnology and software.
19. E-Commerce—Dotcoms soar and crash; on-line communities; a “seventh virtual continent”; issues involving taxes, adjudication of disputes; building trust and confidence; security and cybercrimes.
20. International Labor and Migration—Development of a global labor market; core labor rights; “decent work”; a “living wage”; new styles of work; trafficking, smuggling, and asylum issues; brain drain issues.

Final Notes

The 20 Global Issues represent planetary challenges. They are urgent. They are tough politically. They are becoming worse by the year and increasingly more difficult and more expensive to solve. Current ways of dealing with them are inadequate: treaties and conventions, intergovernmental conferences, global multilaterals, G-8 style meetings. One direction toward a solution: Networked Governance and Global Issues Networks with three phases: (1) constitutional phase; (2) norm-producing phase; (3) implementation phase. What’s needed are imagination, determination, and fully committed collaboration.