

Thames, New Zealand  
Hamburg, Germany  
On behalf of thousands of professionals around the world

10 December 2019

To Representatives, Scientists, Media and World Citizens at COP 25

Dear Concerned Friends,

Firstly, thank you for the demanding and challenging work you do on behalf of us all, to bring equilibrium and alignment between the needs and activities of human beings and those of the planetary system on which we depend.

Representatives of the world's professional psychological associations met in Lisbon recently where they made a shared proclamation to "*advance progress on critical global issues, including the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals*" with an initial focus on Goal 13: "Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts".

Over 4,000 of the many thousands represented by such bodies and others like them have added their names and support to "grass roots" initiatives such as Psychologists for Future, Climate and Mind, Climate Psychological Alliance, Globe and Psyche, and many more. This letter is from some of us. We represent professionals who identify as working within the psychological, psychosocial and psychospiritual domains. These include clinicians, therapists, academics, priests and researchers from many countries, cultures and traditions.

We are writing on their behalf to ask that you name a particular elephant in the room: namely, our sense of identity. This has resulted in the distortions that have caused and now maintain the disarray in the biosystem that supports us all.

In differentiating ourselves from the systems around us, human beings have progressed by working *on* our environment. In the process of becoming successful, this useful differentiation has led to dangerous disorientation: we have become accustomed to behaving as if we are no longer part of the systems upon which we depend.

This is particularly true of the "mainstream" culture that requires a sense of identity that is not in alignment with the planetary system. Our current global situation challenges interrelated geophysical, ecological, cultural, social and personal processes that have evolved over millennia and in which the human and more than human world is embedded. This is a developmental moment, and our identity is under challenge.

The physical science of our situation is well-known, and its physical and emotional impacts on individuals and communities are increasingly apparent, but this challenge to identity is seldom considered as central to either problem or solution. As in any "identity crisis" or "crisis of meaning" the very dilemma offers us the feedback and raw materials from which to develop a new vision, as well as clues.

Psychological and other existential professionals understand how denial, fear, anger, avoidance, and distraction are common human defences. We assist our clients to develop their understanding and confidence to recognise and respond appropriately to the feedback from a situation, including our natural environment. In any situation, signals and information may be suppressed or denied. This generally raises signal intensity, evoking traumatising impacts and eliciting familiar freeze, fight and flight responses.

The existential professions work with individuals and particular groups to help recognise habituated patterns, to clarify individual purpose within changed circumstances and to enable inclusive ways of realising the security, comfort, support, and well-being we all need. Groups such as Psychologists for Future, Climate and Mind, and Globe and Psyche are looking at how we might bring these skills and resources to the wider community to assist collective re-visioning in ways which are appropriate to local needs, local practice and story and local vulnerabilities to ecosystem challenges.

We are asking that as part of your urgent work you:

- ~ recognise and explain that the ecological challenge is presenting us with a traumatising identity crisis, and that you are committed to the existential professions having a greater voice in the big picture discourse;
- ~ encourage the existential sector's registration and professional bodies to support the emergence of inter-disciplinary grass-roots initiatives;
- and
- ~ specifically call for psychologically informed grass-roots initiatives to pursue the conversation at the local, community level.

Whilst the climate is global, the future is local, and it is here that the necessary changes will be received and supported – or not.

Thank you for your time, commitment and energy.

Mark Skelding, Katharina van Bronswijk, Deryn Cooper, Lea Dohm, Mareike Schulze, Sabine Wahler, Malte Klar, Deryn Cooper.

*on behalf of over 4,000 psychological, psychospiritual and psychosocial professionals from more than 25 countries aligned through -*

Globe and Psyche – [globeandpsyche.com](http://globeandpsyche.com)

Psychologists for Future - <http://psychologistsforfuture.org>