

## **Global Compassion Coalition: Vision and Practical Implications**

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As we begin now to lay the foundation of the GCC, it's vital to be clear about the the primary, fundamental, first principles of what we're creating: our North Star. We will pursue this vision in practical ways, and need to ensure that our methods stay true it.

The vision statements that have been the basis for founding the GCC are contained in the essay, Restoring Healthy Human Politics, and the Summary of GCC Vision and Actions, both appended at the end of this document. Let's explore some of their practical implications.

### **Reestablishing “caring-and-sharing”**

As Paul Gilbert has shown, our ancestors evolved caring-and-sharing - compassion and justice - as the basis of their hunter-gatherer bands. This was a remarkable departure from the holding-and-controlling strategies of all other primate species. But as agriculture began to spread 10,000 years ago, wealth and power became increasingly concentrated in the hands of the few, to the cost of the many.

There have been some significant improvements in the human condition, particularly in the past couple centuries. Nonetheless, huge structural inequalities

remain, 60% of humanity lives under authoritarian rule (with only 6% in a full democracy), and we continue to hurtle toward climate catastrophe.

Clearly, there is much to do! There have been many aspirational statements such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals, but little progress toward them. What will it take, for real, to have a world that works well for *everyone*?

The primary purpose of the GCC is to gather together millions, potentially billions, of people and organizations worldwide – and focus their efforts toward reestablishing compassion and justice as the basis of all societies. How we intend to do this is sketched in the Summary document, and that plan will of course be enlarged and improved over time.

### **Seriously ambitious**

This global coalition is a framework that will enable humanity to come together at a scale that could actually change the course of history. Even then there is no guarantee of success. But if we don't find a way to combine our efforts at this vast scale, we're guaranteed that business as usual will persist, as it has more or less for thousands of years.

In conversations with many people, the scope and audacity of our mission is what has most evoked their passion and inspiration, their support and their hope.

While keeping our mission clearly in mind and in the foreground of our descriptions of the GCC, as a practical matter we will spend our first several years focusing on

the first purpose outlined in the Summary: supporting our members in doing what they do even better. But this early focus is in the context of our long-term aims.

The GCC's activities – such as having a website, sponsoring conferences, or facilitating synergies among its members – are worthy undertakings in their own right. Still, we must never forget that they are primarily a means to the end of our mission.

For example, if we fostered an association of compassion researchers and teachers, that would be a good thing, but if the fundamental power structure of our world nonetheless persisted through the end of this century, that would be a great disappointment.

### **We stand together**

This is a coalition of individuals and organizations. They belong to the coalition. Innately, they are all members of it.

This is the primary matter. The overall financing of the GCC is vital but secondary. How to do skillful fundraising is important but tertiary. We have to make sure that the tail does not wag the dog.

### **Finding new forms**

This is an historically unprecedented undertaking. We should not force the vibrant and audacious essence of our coalition into old forms simply because they're familiar to us.

For example, just because those who belong to a coalition are innately members of it does not mean that we should impose a conventional “pay-to-play” model of membership on what we are building.

### **Inclusive from the start**

It is by being an inclusive coalition of millions, eventually billions of people and organizations worldwide, that we will accomplish our purposes. The only way we will accomplish our big aims is *by being big ourselves*.

Therefore, our primary stance must be an open hand of invitation to all. This must be how we meet potential new members.

We can certainly begin with invitations to those we know – and to those *they* know – to join us. With meanwhile an eagerly open hand to the general public. The practical and natural sequencing of our early membership efforts should not create structural distinctions between who belongs to this coalition.

We only get one chance to make a good first impression. The initial framing of what we are will persist in a self-fulfilling way. For instance, we must not allow the GCC to be perceived as one more association of well-educated professionals, mainly from affluent Western countries, that after a while invites the general public to support it.

We need to form our coalition with vast numbers of people who are and feel like outsiders. They are less likely to join if the GCC looks like another bunch of insiders.

### **With equal status**

In humanity, every person has equal standing. In our coalition, every member has equal standing. Sure, some contribute more money than others, and we thank them for that. But this does not give them higher standing than other members.

The stratification of humanity based on concentrations of wealth and power *is* the problem. We will not solve that problem if we're perceived as creating similar stratifications within the GCC.

### **And equal access**

We invite people and organizations to join this coalition for the greater good. Humanity is hurting, all are welcome, and we should never approach membership in this coalition as something that is *purchased*. The doors are open, and we invite everyone to come on through. Buying a membership in the coalition is antithetical to its far-reaching vision.

This equality of access is primary. As a tertiary matter, we will be forthright and skillful in asking for their support: their suggestions, their involvement, their good will, their outreach to others, their volunteering of time, and yes as they have it to give, their money.

We will be clear and direct in asking for financial donations. For the coalition to succeed in its mission, it will need a lot of money. But the majority of its funding will likely come from major donors, foundations, large grants, and offering certain

programs for sale (with a scholarship for anyone who needs it), and not from general membership donations.

We should never allow a sense of financial pressure to move us away from first principles. Additionally, as a practical matter, if our initial communication to prospective members is the very conventional “pay \$100 to buy access to these great resources,” that will immediately turn off many many people, and defeat our primary purposes. For example, it is much better for the coalition to have, say, 10,000 members whose average donation is \$10 than 1000 members whose donation is \$100.

In the tertiary matter of fundraising, we can have minor distinctions related to how much a person or organization contributes, with a particularly appreciative thank you for larger forms of financial support. But these should not be “tiers” of membership and support in which by definition someone is above and someone is below.

### **Giving from the heart - not primarily to get back**

People and organizations will become members of this coalition primarily because they are moved by compassion. They want to relieve suffering and its causes. Secondly, we hope that they get personal or organizational benefits out of participating - including the wonderful benefit of knowing that their compassion is making a difference at a vast scale.

But we must not approach potential members transactionally. We are not asking them to give in order to get. For example, our welcome video to new members is

simply that: a deeply grateful welcoming “thank you.” It is not a goodie that they get if they sign up.

We should never lead with what they are going to get if they give . . . perhaps because at some level we doubt they’ll support the great cause of compassion unless they get a bunch of benefits in return. That would be deeply mistaken about the nature of this coalition, and it would undermine what should be the primary motivations of its members.

We will make a financial ask during the registration process, and make additional asks in other skillful fundraising activities. But everything we do involving money needs to stay out of a scarcity worldview, and it needs to be artful and to respect the first principles of the coalition we are creating.

### **In conclusion**

If we’re talking about mere nuances of languaging or sequencing, no worries. But if we are departing from what is fundamental and primary in our vision, we’ll be building the GCC on a tilted and wobbly foundation.

If we are ever in a mindset that commodifies compassion, stratifies the coalition itself, waters down our audacious mission, defaults to familiar financial models just because we’re used to them, frames membership as something to buy in order to get benefits, or allows ourselves to be perceived as a mainly professional, Western organization . . . then we are in trouble, and will be creating more trouble for ourselves down the road.

So I hope we can stay aligned on the fundamentals . . . and then hit home runs with the nuances!