Buddha renounced politics to go sit under a tree. Now it’s time for Buddha to get back into politics, not sit under a tree. Because the trees are all being cut down.

—Ian Baker National Geographic Explorer and Author

Sustainable local economics and grass roots community development are a basis for water and food security, prevention of ethnic violence and terror, in both the developing and developed world.

Maybe our economic assumptions have been wrong. People are not necessarily motivated by greed alone. People’s strength of ethnic identity and cultural pride are equally important as their material development. Maybe we need new measurements of satisfaction and success.

The Himalayan Consensus presents a fresh economic paradigm that does not recognize any one model or economic theory. It is drawn from collective experiences across the Himalayan region. The Himalayan Consensus approach is flexible, seeking solutions from local wisdom in the context of changing global conditions. Examples are Bhutan’s concept of ‘gross national
happiness’ and Bangladesh’s micro-finance. People need micro-finance as much in Detroit as they do in Dhaka.

Himalayan values are based upon the great philosophies of this region: Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, Islam, Taoism, and Confucianism. Each emphasizes community over individual, greater social benefit over self, and the importance of helping those less fortunate than you. At least those are the core principles.

Indigenous people are regional custodians of the environment. Their lifestyles embody valuable local wisdom, a living knowledge that can protect our environment. Never has this been so important as now. Our planet faces crisis of water and food security due to climate change. Indigenous wisdom and holistic approaches are badly needed in our economic equations.

Sustainable economics is the best prevention of violence and terror. People turn to extreme measures when they have no outlet to vent their frustration. Conditions of poverty, ethnic marginalization, or loss of resources — such as food and water — can precipitate this. So changes in our financial system are badly needed. Get funding to local businesses. That is the fastest way to empower and enrich communities. It is not all about capital markets that endear a few people to cash in for the short term. It is about the rest of us, our children, their children, and the long-term health of our planet.

Experience shows that when people are marginalized with no hope of improvement, and have no outlets to vent their frustration, extremism arises. This is what the Himalayan Consensus seeks to prevent.