

the consequences of its actions. It is hard for people to stop doing something that is intimately tied to their strongest held values. And finally,

4. Does a group give up because some problems are just too difficult to solve with the available technology?

Prof. Diamond concludes that our biggest risk is not of an asteroid collision about which we can do nothing – which would destroy us like the dinosaurs. Instead, all of our major problems today are problems caused by us, primarily the consequences of population. There are many bright spots where smaller segments of society, including many individuals, are working diligently to solve problems created by unsustainable activities and practices. Even with these bright spots, as a global community of nations and of individuals we appear to be somewhere between level 2 and 3 – failure to recognize the problems and not trying to solve them.

## **ECOSYSTEM DEGRADATION**

The degradation of ecosystem services could grow significantly worse during the first half of this century, according to the MEA report (UNDP,2005), and is a barrier to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Ecosystem degradation can rarely be reversed without actions that address the negative effects or enhance the positive effects of one or more of the five indirect drivers of change: population change, change in economic activity, sociopolitical factors, cultural factors, and technological change.

The challenge of reversing the degradation of ecosystems involves significant changes in policies, institutions, and practices that are not currently under way. An effective set of responses to ensure sustainable management of ecosystems (UNDP, 2005) must overcome barriers related to: “ inappropriate institutional and governance arrangements; market failures and the misalignment of economic incentives; social and behavioral factors including the lack of power of some groups dependent on ecosystem services or are harmed by their degradation; underinvestment in the development and diffusion of technologies to increase use efficiency; and insufficient knowledge about ecosystem services and management to enhance them while conserving them.”

## **MOVING TOWARD NEW HORIZONS**

So maybe the problem really is the system we live with and are an intimate part of. If so, what lies ahead? Dr. Meadows and her colleagues (2004) suggest a simple set of guidelines about restructuring any system. These common sense