

WORLD SUMMIT ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (WSSD)
3rd Preparatory Committee Session, March 25 – April 5, 2002__

Talking Points of the Ecumenical Team

1. Ethical Context

A Crossroads Point

Ten years after the Rio de Janeiro UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), we stand at a new crossroads with even more critical challenges to face and choices to make than we had a decade ago regarding our common human future and the capacity of planet Earth to sustain that future. We stand *together* at this crossroads, more and more starkly aware of the interdependence – for good and for ill – of all Earth’s peoples and, indeed, of the whole community of life and physical systems on our planet. Yet at the same time we stand *divided*. Many people are still excluded from the very possibility of making choices about a better future for themselves and for their children. In addition, the urgency of the need to take bold and determined steps along new paths is unmatched by an adequate sense of moral responsibility and collective political will in many crucial decision-making arenas, both national and international.

After more than twenty years of efforts within its own worldwide constituency to build a faith-based understanding of the integral interrelationship between social justice, human development and protection of the environment, and a strong, on-going commitment to the UNCED process, the ecumenical community approaches the Johannesburg Summit with a mixture of hope and trepidation – hope that the urgency of the situation will lead to decisive action, trepidation at the thought that once again hope will be dashed by unfulfilled promises, and that a failure to act decisively in the interests of short-term political or economic gain will have devastating consequences for the future of the whole earth community.

The View from Where We Stand

In the ten years since Rio, the concept of “sustainable development”, combining the need for development with the concept of sustainability, has been undermined by the inexorable march of corporate-driven, market-oriented economic forces and their global outreach. The supposed compact between the North and the South which this concept represented has produced instead a world where there is now the worst incidence of poverty, the least equity, and the worst environmental crisis in recorded human experience.

In other words, the underlying development paradigm, with its strong emphasis on economic growth and market expansion, has served first and foremost the interests of powerful economic players. It has further marginalised the poor sectors of society, simultaneously undermining their basic security in terms of access to land, water, food, employment, other basic services and a healthy environment. In addition, the net flow of wealth from the South to the North has increased as a result of a worsening debt crisis, unfulfilled promises of international cooperation on the part of the OECD countries, and the ascendancy of negative aspects of globalisation.

The dominant economic model and policies pursued by major industrialized countries, and promoted dogmatically with quasi-religious fervour through the World Bank, the International

Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organisation, are rooted in the belief that unfettered liberalisation of markets, deregulation and privatisation will ensure economic benefits for all. Far from reducing poverty or enhancing ecological sustainability, these policies have in fact widened the gap between the wealthy and the poor, and have resulted in greater social exclusion and greater exploitation of the Earth's resources.

Even where globalisation has brought economic benefits, it has often been at the expense of an homogenising effect on institutions and culture. This has included a weakening of political institutions and their legitimacy at national and international levels, and the inability of a majority of countries to ensure the economic, social and cultural rights of their people over against powerful global actors. The beneficiaries seem content as long as their Governments protect their privileged, non-sustainable way of life.

Another World is Possible

The Ecumenical Team's perspective in the WSSD process is grounded in a conviction of the **sacred nature of all Creation**, and of life as an interplay of spiritual and physical dimensions. We uphold the common human vocation to live in right relationship with our neighbours, the Earth and the Creator, respecting the integrity of Earth and working for the health and wellbeing of all members of the Earth community. Its sacred origin makes Earth the common inheritance of all peoples for all times, to be enjoyed in just, loving and responsible relationships with one another.

This understanding is foundational for our vision and our call for an alternative approach. Instead of referring to "sustainable development" we advocate working toward the building of "**sustainable communities**". We speak increasingly of sustainable communities because it implies the nurturing of equitable relationships both within the human family and also between humans and the rest of the ecological community. Such communities imply a **just and moral economy** where people are empowered to be involved in making decisions that affect their lives; where public and private institutions and enterprises are accountable and held responsible for the social and environmental impacts and consequences of their operations; and where the Earth and the whole created order is nurtured with utmost respect and reverence rather than exploited and degraded.ⁱ

By asserting the primacy of justice, ecological sustainability and the creation of viable communities as our goals, the ecumenical community's emphasis is in stark contrast to an approach which focuses on maximising economic growth. Authentic human development can never be achieved when the ultimate goal is amassing wealth and material goods, especially when these are at the expense of others in the global community and of the health of the global environmental commons. **Justice and equity** must be at the heart of any sustainable economic, social or environmental system supporting the whole Earth Community.ⁱⁱ

2. Comments regarding the texts under negotiation: the Chairman's Paper (A/Conf.199/PC/L.1) and related texts.

I. Introduction

From the Ecumenical Team's point of view, the current version of the Chairman's Paper is firmly lodged in a conventional growth-oriented economic model rather than taking an approach based on justice and right relationships within the human community and with Earth. In addition, many of the proposals in the Paper lack the urgency and specificity that could be provided by having concrete timetables.

One significant omission in the Paper is lack of recognition of the major impact of militarism as a factor in undermining sustainable communities. Massive amounts of financial and natural resources are used for arms production and acquisition, reducing what is available to address poverty and meet development needs. Armed conflicts are responsible for the worst ecological degradation. The small arms trade and landmines fuel human and ecological destruction particularly in local and regional conflicts in resource-rich areas.

In addition, the Paper ignores the critical significance of Indigenous Peoples in relation to the fundamental issues of sustainable development. These Peoples are at the cutting edge of the current crisis. Their communities are concrete examples of sustainable societies, historically evolved in diverse ecosystems. Today, in a globalizing world, they are fighting for their survival and renewal as Peoples. One clear criterion for the successful implementation of sustainable development and Agenda 21 must be actions to secure Indigenous Peoples' rights and wellbeing.

The Ecumenical Team strongly recommends that the Chairman's Paper include a specific section on Indigenous Peoples that would express support for the following:

- recognition of Indigenous Peoples' right to self-determination;
- adoption of the UN Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples by the UN Commission on Human Rights and the UN General Assembly before the end of the International Decade of World's Indigenous Peoples in the year 2004; and
- development of national legislation and policies which recognize and promote Indigenous Peoples' rights as elaborated in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the ILO Convention 169, and the full and meaningful participation of Indigenous Peoples in the evolution of these laws and policies.

II. Poverty eradication

While the Chairman's Paper highlights poverty eradication, it lacks reference to the broader context in which poverty is created and maintained. From the Ecumenical Team's point of view, due recognition must be given to the process of impoverishment created by the combined impact of international debt servicing, structural adjustment programmes, and trade rules that favour the developed countries over the developing nations. Furthermore, the exploitation of the natural resources of the South for Northern consumption, both during the colonial era and the current context, leaves developing nations with an on-going legacy of poverty and ecological destruction. The North owes a massive ecological debt to the South.

Sustainable solutions to global poverty need to be based on principles of justice, equity and full participation of affected people in decision-making. The Millenium Development Goals, especially the 8th one concerning a “global partnership for development”, carries some language that could be helpful concerning debt cancellation and relief and freer trade access for the Least Developed Countries. However, we remain sceptical about the commitment of member states to these goals when actions in other fora such as the WTO and IMF contradict them.

Regarding **poverty eradication**, the Ecumenical Team recommends:

- Government policies to specifically address the root causes of impoverishment, focusing on the rights, needs and concerns of those most affected;
- fair and sustainable distribution of public goods such as water, land and other resources necessary for a decent quality of life for all;
- cancellation of debt of the poorest countries, elimination of Structural Adjustment Programmes, and recognition of the ecological debt owed by the North to the South;
- respect for and guarantee of the rights of Indigenous Peoples to equitable access to land and other resources;
- ratification by all countries of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and its optional protocol.

III. Changing unsustainable patterns of consumption and production

Sustainable production and consumption implies meeting all the basic needs of communities while safeguarding the capacity to fulfill the needs of future generations. The organization of production in the modern world is based on the ideology of continuously increasing consumer demands. These demands, and unbridled economic growth, have consumed earth’s resources beyond its means. Transnational corporations play a major role in perpetuating unsustainable consumption and production. They use the advertising media to create artificial needs, utilize excessive and highly polluting forms of energy, and engage in unsustainable resource-extraction and manufacturing processes.

Alternative models can be found in indigenous communities where knowledge and traditional practices are based on respect for Mother Earth and sustainability within a particular ecosystem. Their wisdom can be a force for change in the over-consuming societies of the North. Ironically and tragically, these sustainable practices are threatened in both the North and the South by policies such as privatisation that undermine indigenous communities’ control over their land and other resources.

Regarding **sustainable consumption and production**, the Ecumenical Team recommends:

- drastic reduction of consumption levels in the North through measures such as regulation of production standards, public education, getting the market to reflect true costs (e.g. internalizing the social and ecological costs of products in the purchase price);
- mandatory compliance of transnational corporations with principles of corporate social and environmental responsibility, operational transparency, accountability, allowing access to information, and conformity with enforceable codes of conduct;
- documentation and publicizing of best practices in various sectors that contribute to more sustainable consumption and production;
- re-institution of the UN Commission on Transnational Corporations;
- promoting Indigenous Peoples’ wisdom in sustainability as a model for other societies;

- ensuring Indigenous Peoples' communities access to and control of their land and resources, including the repeal or reform of unjust mining policies and laws, and a moratorium on new applications for large-scale extraction activities and land acquisition in Indigenous Peoples' territories.

Modern **agriculture**, particularly in the North, is characterized by intensification, specialization and concentration, with disastrous effects on the social and ecological situation in many rural areas. Agribusiness has taken control of most elements of the food cycle. Agriculture ceases to be a way of life and becomes increasingly one of the industrial sectors looking for the cheapest way to "produce" and neglecting hidden environmental and social costs of production. The pattern has emerged whereby farmers are pushed to hyper-produce and consumers to hyper-consume. The evidence shows, however, that intensity of production does not ensure food security and is not sustainable in the long-term even economically, let alone socially and environmentally.

Regarding **agriculture**, the Ecumenical Team recommends:

- fundamental changes in intensive agricultural practices to reduce their distorting impact on social life of communities and on the ecosystem, recognizing that intensity of production does not mean the highest effectiveness in the long term;
- special measures to protect and enhance smaller-scale and organic agriculture, especially in rural communities in developing countries, and particularly where food security is at stake;
- recognition of the value, for long-term sustainability, of the 'bioregionalism' concept of food production and consumption.

Energy assumes a paramount role in the economic life of humankind. It is an essential component for increasing and enabling higher levels of economic activity, and for providing the prospect of a higher standard of living. The consumption of energy, however, could be considered as the barometer that measures the inequitable development that has come to characterise the world of today. At one extreme, annual consumption of fossil fuels in the United States is equivalent to 7.5 tonnes of oil per person, while at the other extreme, over 2 billion people in the world, mostly in the rural areas of developing countries, consume no fossil fuels or any other modern energy source. Energy policies at both national and international levels are key to poverty eradication, equitable development and sustainable communities.

Regarding **energy**, the Ecumenical Team recommends:

- giving priority in the generation and use of energy for appropriate, affordable, ecologically-sustainable and accessible energy for the world's poorest people;
- urgent adoption by the developed world of energy efficiency methods to curtail its consumption, including prices which internalize the social and environmental costs, and redirection of resources to developing and promoting the use of renewable energy sources such as solar and wind power;
- technical and financial support to enable developing countries to move toward a sustainable energy future, within the broader context of international cooperation and human rights, and in recognition of the ecological debt owed by the North to the South;
- a global moratorium on exploration for new oil and coal deposits;
- phasing out of nuclear energy plants everywhere in the world;

- adopting the recommendations of the World Commission on Dams with regard to hydro-power projects involving large-scale dams;
- giving precedence to compliance with international environmental agreements over compliance with international trade agreements;
- decision-making for just and ecologically-sound development which ensures full and meaningful participation of those individuals and groups most affected by the project.ⁱⁱⁱ

Transportation is another related issue. In order to eradicate poverty and to achieve sustainable development, all the people of a given society need to have the opportunity to participate in economic activities and have access to employment, to goods, to services like health care, education and leisure activities, and to social relations. Modernization has been characterized by motorization, with consequent devastating environmental costs. Real and sustainable development requires improving people's mobility and access to services, goods and jobs without relying on more and more motorized vehicles. In other words, economic growth and development in general need to be decoupled, in rich and poor countries alike, from the increasing demand of motorized transport. Priority needs to be given to public transit systems which are powered by the most advanced, energy-efficient technology and which are convenient for all segments of society, in urban and rural areas and between them.

Regarding **transportation**, the Ecumenical Team recommends:

- shifting taxes and subsidies, direct and indirect, so that they benefit primarily low and middle income households and countries and facilitate the massive expansion of multi-modal public transit systems;
- commitment to targets and timetables for stronger on road and off road vehicle fuel efficiency (3L/100 km or 60 miles/gallon), tailpipe standards and phasing out of lead;
- dramatic reduction of auto use in developed countries and strong regulations against the dumping of polluting vehicles in low income countries;
- introduction of mandatory high air quality and noise reduction regulations;
- phasing out of short distance flights and balancing international flights regionally through gasoline taxes;
- establishment of national and local master plans, which address urban and rural transport issues, which include rather than exclude the poor, women, elderly and disabled, and which will be supported by international and national decisions in infrastructure investment;
- assistance by international development agencies to poor countries and areas to improve transportation systems;
- the integral involvement of local communities in decision-making processes regarding all the above recommendations.

Tourism is regarded as an important source of national revenue in most countries. Tourism can provide otherwise unavailable economic and social opportunities to host communities. As it becomes more susceptible to market competition in the context of globalization, however, tourism can pose serious social and environmental threats. This is true even with regard to so-called 'eco-tourism' projects. In the interests of purely economic gain, for example, the land and other resources of indigenous communities have been appropriated by the tourism industry, often without community consent, forcing the people and their way of life to become a showcase or "museum of human exhibits"^{iv} for tourists. Many Indigenous Peoples have come to realize the

cost of having their way of life associated with the expansion of tourism. Conventional large-scale, over-consumptive tourism projects should not be considered as a sustainable development strategy unless they are significantly modified to counteract their negative effects on host communities and the environment.

Regarding **tourism**, the Ecumenical Team recommends:

- promoting small-scale, community-owned and managed tourism;
- adoption by Governments and the tourism industry of the principle of prior informed consent. Indigenous Peoples and local communities must have the capacity to develop effective access and benefit-sharing mechanisms and should be participants in project analysis and decision-making concerning tourism, including eco-tourism;
- provision by the UN of a legal framework to safeguard human rights in tourism, particularly with regard to combating sex tourism, child prostitution, trafficking in children and women, and exploitative forms of child labour.

IV. Protecting and managing the natural resource base of economic and social development

Burning fossil fuels results in both local air pollution with major health impacts, and long-term global **climate change** with potentially major but uncertain impacts on agriculture, sea level, fresh water resources, health and other factors. The Third Assessment report issued by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change confirmed that climate is changing because of human activities and that weather and climate extremes will increase in many places. The reduction targets of the Kyoto Protocol are an important beginning but fall far short of what is eventually required as called for by the scientific community. Inevitably, therefore, we shall have to face a higher number of natural catastrophies and will have to adapt to new climatic conditions on the planet.

Regarding **climate change**, the Ecumenical Team recommends:

- ratification of the Kyoto Protocol by the time of the Johannesburg Summit and implementation thereafter;
- immediate introduction by industrialized countries of measures to reduce the emission of greenhouse gases;
- initiation at the earliest possible date of a new round of negotiations on the reduction of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions;
- urgent action on the part of developed countries to go beyond the Kyoto GHG emission targets in order to reach the longer-term 80% reduction level from current annual emissions to stabilize CO₂ concentrations in the atmosphere;
- encouraging the transformation toward low-carbon economies by signaling to business, local government and the general public that climate friendly products, services, and activities will be rewarded by consumers and national policies alike;
- pursuing provisions in the implementation of the UN Convention on Climate Change, so as not to compromise provisions of the Convention on Biological Diversity in terms of the use and management of forests as carbon sinks.

Regarding **biodiversity and biotechnology**:

Human beings depend on the world's biodiversity for their survival, and only a small percentage of this biodiversity is known. Overexploitation of biological resources has caused serious ecological imbalances. Already three species become extinct every day. This situation becomes even more alarming with the recognition that cultural diversity and biodiversity are intimately linked.

In Indigenous communities, traditional knowledge of biological diversity - genetic resources and related traditional knowledge - has been developed and refined throughout millennia. It is innately linked to the care of natural resources as a sacred obligation, as part of a people's identity through which language and all other dimensions of culture are expressed and preserved.

The Ecumenical Team therefore recommends:

- full implementation of Article 8j of the Convention on Biological Diversity which deals with the protection of traditional knowledge of Indigenous Peoples in the conservation of biological diversity;
- priority attention by Governments to the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity;
- promotion of the recovery of ecosystems;
- protection of cultural diversity and acknowledgement of its intrinsic relationship to biological diversity;
- directing access to and distribution of the benefits of genetic resources towards sustainable development, poverty eradication, human wellbeing, and conservation and recovery of ecosystems.
- acknowledging that recognition of the rights of Indigenous Peoples is essential to ensure a significant implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

In general, the patenting of various life forms, including genetic materials from the rich biodiversity of tropical forests, raises serious concerns. Theological and ethical considerations should be brought to bear in decision-making. Commodification – the patenting of genetic material – results in conversion of the building blocks of life into products on the market. As a result, they become bound by infrastructures which treat them solely in economic terms. In addition, it undermines the capacity of people who rely on subsistence agriculture to maintain food self-sufficiency.^v In the burgeoning field of **genetically modified organisms** (GMOs), the precautionary principle should play a major role in decision-making.

Regarding **GMOs**, the Ecumenical Team recommends:

- a shift of international agreements towards the protection of local genetic resources and away from the protection of corporate intellectual property rights that assures the increasing dominance of GMOs;
- aiming at food security through more equitable access to land, improved and increased organic agriculture, and promotion of endogenous food production and consumption, rather than focusing research and development on GMOs;
- guarding against the operation of free trade mechanisms that threaten the creation by developing countries of organic export crops as well as rendering import revenue from conventional export crops vulnerable to international market fluctuations;
- support for the labeling of genetically modified food.

Access to **water** is a basic right of all creatures and a basic human right for people in all communities. Recently, fresh water has become a threatened resource around the world due to population growth, urbanization, economic expansion and an unbalanced development paradigm. Scarcity of fresh water is being accompanied by deterioration in its quality, due to pollution and environmental degradation. Extraction of underground water may cause saltwater intrusion thus damaging the source of drinking water. Deforestation causes erosion and sedimentation of rivers and canals, contributing to global warming and climate change. In many countries, agricultural fertilizers and pesticides that drain into rivers, and eventually into lakes and bays, contaminate ground water and raise the level of pollutants in freshwater bodies, eventually killing many aquatic resources.

With the continuing dominant development model oriented towards economic growth and market expansion, the competition for water between various sectors - agriculture, industry and business – is increasing. Agricultural water regulation policies introduced by governments not only increase the price of agricultural products, but also create confrontation among farmers, and between farmers and industrial and business sectors. When water is treated as a commodity rather than managed as a resource essential for life, its use lends itself to privatization and inequity.

Regarding **water**, the Ecumenical Team recommends:

- recognition of access to fresh water as a fundamental human right;
- designation of essential fresh water as a Global Public Good and not subject to privatization;
- creation of an international monitoring body to track the trade of water in relation to Indigenous Peoples;
- establishment of independent, democratic and participatory water councils at all levels to provide for an integrated strategy for the protection and use of all fresh water systems.

V. Sustainable development in a globalising world

The current model of globalization promoted by the major industrialized countries and their allies through the International Financial Institutions and the World Trade Organization has failed the more than two-thirds of the world's population who live in poverty and has aggravated the pressure on the biosphere. Truly sustainable development will only be possible if the dominant logic of this model - wealth accumulation and unrestrained exploitation of the Earth's resources - is broken and alternatives promoted and fostered.^{vi}

The debate within the UN process on Financing for Development (FfD) this year exposed the contradictions and destructive consequences of this logic. Nevertheless, at the FfD International Conference in Monterrey, liberalisation of trade and finance were again presented as the panacea. The same is happening in the preparations for the WSSD in Johannesburg. The Ecumenical Team rejects this quasi-religious belief in the capacity of "market forces" to provide solutions, since they have in fact pushed the majority of humankind only deeper into death and despair. What we need is globalisation "from below" of real life- and community-centered alternatives. In the words of the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, "another world is possible".

Regarding **sustainable development in a globalising world**, the Ecumenical Team recommends:

- priority be given to national autonomy and local participation in fostering sustainable communities;
- support of small scale enterprises made to fit the local population such as organic farming, renewable energy projects, mobility based on bicycle use, projects on water preservation using indigenous knowledge;
- promote awareness building and education in order to address over-consumption in the North and capacity-building in the South.

Ecological Debt

Sustainable development will not be achieved if industrialized countries continue to degrade and destroy the Earth through long-established practices of resource extraction and production. The plundering of natural resources and environmental degradation practiced during the period of European colonialism have their counterparts in contemporary practices. As well as having a direct impact in countries of the South in terms of economic, social and environmental exploitation, industrial practices of global corporations make their influence felt from afar when, for example, the climate change induced by contamination of Earth's atmosphere threatens the very survival of certain communities, such as Small Island States. The overall consequences of these historical and contemporary activities need to be calculated as ecological debt.

Regarding **ecological debt**, the Ecumenical Team recommends:

- identification and quantification of the historical social and ecological debts due to the peoples and countries of the South, not only in money terms or political economy terms, but in terms of the contamination and destruction of the sources of life and sustenance of affected communities;
- restitution and reparations for those to whom ecological debt is owing, especially workers, farmers and Indigenous Peoples' communities;
- simultaneous abandonment by the northern industrialized countries of a model of development which destroys the Earth.

VI. Health and sustainable development

Health has been defined as “a dynamic state of well-being of the individual and of the society; of physical, mental, spiritual, economic, political and social well-being, of being in harmony with each other, with the material environment and with nature.” “Living healthily is a divine blessing.” The most prevalent causes of diseases and death affecting lower socio-economic groups, are preventable. Poverty, lack of information, poor living conditions, unequal distribution of health facilities, lack of transportation and certain traditional beliefs further aggravate the health situation.

Today, it is clear that health is not simply a physical issue but the sum of multiple life dimensions, which need to be understood within local, national and global contexts. It is an issue of social justice, an issue of who gets what of available resources.^{vii} People's health is intimately related to their income, to their education, to their job opportunities, to their opportunity to access to social services and all of these factors are qualified by a gender dimension. After thirty years of global awareness about the shocking rate of maternal mortality in developing countries,

the situation has scarcely improved: every minute a woman dies as a result of complications in pregnancy or childbirth, going through the risk process of bringing forth human life.

The current global tragedy of HIV/AIDS also illustrates these connections. The majority of the people living with HIV/AIDS are caught in a widening cycle of poverty, and the risk factor is now much higher for women than men. In some countries where people-friendly health programs have been launched, HIV/AIDS is still excluded. HIV-infected people and people living with AIDS are isolated when their infection is known and they are deprived of the basic rights and opportunities enjoyed by the rest of the population. They are discriminated against, stigmatized and demoralized.

Regarding **health**, the Ecumenical Team recommends:

- allocation of increased resources to ensure universal access to and availability of comprehensive health services including family planning;
- health strategies based on an assessment of the differential impacts of risk factors on the health of women and men, and on gender equity and equality;
- enacting anti-discrimination legislation to ensure the basic rights of people with HIV/AIDS and their families to adequate health care, education and employment;
- allocation of adequate resources for programs targeted at decreasing the incidence and impact of HIV/AIDS;

VII. Sustainable development of small island developing states

The World Council of Churches has had a long-term relationship of solidarity with Small Island Developing States (SIDS) which are among the first victims of human-induced climate change. This history includes collaboration with the Pacific Conference of Churches and with the Alliance of Small Islands States (AOSIS). The Ecumenical Team endorses recommendations from a recent WCC Consultation on Solidarity with Victims of Climate Change.

Regarding **sustainable development of SIDS**, the Ecumenical Team recommends:

- advance preparation to enable action in solidarity with the victims of climate change, especially those in vulnerable countries, as the incidence of natural disasters increases;
- strong emphasis on adaptation measures to protect vulnerable communities from increasing weather hazards^{viii}, and on mobilizing resources to enable these measures to be implemented speedily;
- support for initiatives to accelerate national and regional implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States;
- early operationalization of economic and environmental vulnerability indices for SIDS.

VIII. Sustainable development initiatives for Africa

It is laudable that African leaders have initiated the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). It is African driven and owned, and is aimed at consolidating democracy and sound macro-economic management on the continent. Through the program, African leaders are making a commitment to the African people to promote people-centered development and to hold each other accountable in terms of the agreements outlined in the document. Besides

subscribing to the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals, NEPAD provides a comprehensive picture of Africa's economic and political problems that are associated with continued marginalisation, indebtedness, exploitation and policy shortcomings.

However, there are major concerns that need to be addressed. NEPAD is fundamentally market-oriented, based on the neo-liberal paradigm. As such, it runs the risk of accelerating the haemorrhage of the continent's wealth rather than targeting poverty eradication. To date the NEPAD process lacks an in-depth consultation with civil society. This implies that the ownership and management of Africa's development does not include the thoughts and wishes of a majority of the ordinary people. Also there has been an emphasis on promoting the initiative in developed countries and the private sector. This means that the success or failure of NEPAD is built around the support that is received from donor countries and institutions that subscribe to neo-liberal solutions for development. From this perspective, NEPAD is about "partnership with African leaders without African peoples".

Regarding **Africa**, the Ecumenical Team recommends:

- organising widespread consultative processes within Africa to popularize and validate NEPAD and to make its viability a collective process, in accordance with the 1990 ECA African Charter on Popular Participation;
- African governments to work with civil society in defining the role and level of involvement of donors and the private sector in the implementation of NEPAD.
- to develop criteria for global partnerships that strengthens traditional African and financial systems, practices and institutions that generate resources to sustain development.
- community debates, discussions and media campaigns (literacy) on NEPAD to ensure ownership and that Africans remain the cornerstone of the realization of NEPAD; this will require breaking down the document into digestible portions using language and methodology that resonates with ordinary people's experiences;
- a gender analysis of the document and of projects/programs devolved out of it;
- United Nations' support for the promotion of NEPAD and partnerships for development that are based on mutual interests, shared commitments binding agreements that in addition will promote the attainment of the Millennium goals.
- cancellation of the external debt of the poorest African countries by the International Financial Institutions in order to create space for NEPAD's success.

IX. Means of implementation

In terms of **financial issues**, poverty prevents peoples and nations from participating fully in the global agenda for sustainable development. Economic inequity is the push factor for uprootedness, ecological destruction and civil conflict where the majority of victims are women and children. It prevents the growth of human potential, and contributes to the breakdown of social cohesion and destruction of the environment. Financing sustainable development must be anchored therefore on the urgent task of eradicating the conditions that foster poverty. Putting sustainable development within the framework of poverty eradication highlights the urgency of raising resources to finance sustainable development. It also underscores the justness of the demand that developed countries fulfill the financial commitments they made in Rio, to include

building up the resources for improving the financial capacity of both the developing and the least developed countries.

Regarding **financial issues**, the Ecumenical Team recommends:

- immediate cancellation of the debt of the poorest developing countries and establishment of a debt arbitration mechanism to substantially reduce the debt burden of other developing countries;
- repudiation of illegitimate and odious debts;
- creation of new and innovative sources of financing, such as currency transaction taxes and carbon taxes;
- new, strong measures against corruption and tax evasion;
- realization as soon as possible of the commitment of 0.7% of gross national product of industrialised countries as official development assistance to developing countries;

Regarding **education**, the pursuit of sustainable communities requires supporting and encouraging broad stakeholder participation in policies, programmes and projects; developing wisdom and open access to knowledge and disseminating widely the information and analyses necessary to make wise and ethical decisions; and fostering the use of interdisciplinary science and appropriate technology in support of a more just and equitable development. Education and mutual learning are fundamental in building capacities of everybody to become the architects of sustainable development. Both formal and non-formal education, especially sustainable development education, are indispensable to changing peoples attitudes and creating new values so that they have the capacity to assess and address their sustainable development concerns. Indeed, it is essential even for them to have the capacities to access resources, services, and appropriate technology.

Regarding **education**, the Ecumenical Team recommends:

- that Governments set targets and timeframes (such as the Millennium Development Goals) to ensure that every citizen has access to primary and secondary education;
- while basic education provides the underpinning for any environmental and development education, that the latter needs to be specifically incorporated as an essential part of learning;
- that programmes that provide vocational education, and those that involve training in appropriate technology should be encouraged;
- that special legislation and programmes be designed to ensure women's equal access to education.

X. Strengthening governance for sustainable development at the national, regional and international levels

Economic globalization, as we know it today, has taken us far from the vision of the Rio Summit and its goal of achieving genuinely sustainable development through Agenda 21 and Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs), e.g. the Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biodiversity. To correct this departure from the vision of the UNCED process, we need a new system of governance which establishes accountability, transparency, and participation in international institutions as well as at national level. This kind of governance implies significantly improved political leadership within member States. However, additional steps

toward more effective governance within the UN system can also be taken by making better linkages and fostering cooperative action among UN departments and agencies and by establishing or empowering an existing body within the UN to oversee and regulate compliance with the principles of Agenda 21, MEAs, and decisions agreed upon at subsequent world summits.

Regarding **governance**, the Ecumenical Team recommends:

- concerted efforts to promote synergy among the bodies created as a result of the Rio agreements (climate change, biodiversity, desertification, etc.) as well as with the international financial institutions, the UN Environment Programme, the UN Development Programme and the Commission on Sustainable Development;
- a substantive review of these bodies and others in the institutional architecture related to sustainable development;
- open and transparent lending policies on the part of the IFIs and elimination of any conditionality;
- the creation of international legal regimes to protect the intellectual property rights of indigenous peoples against outside interests;
- U.N. system-wide efforts to maintain a gender perspective and ensure regular gender impact assessments with regard to sustainable development;
- measures which will ensure the full participation of non-governmental groups in all aspects of the implementation of Agenda 21, including public-private partnerships to ensure opportunities for the facilitation of women's empowerment.

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