

**World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD)  
4<sup>th</sup> Preparatory Committee Session, May 27 – June 7, 2002**

**TALKING POINTS OF THE ECUMENICAL TEAM**

*In our recommendations, we are guided by our vision of the sacred nature of all Creation. This understanding is foundational for our critique of the concept of sustainable development and our emphasis on political, social and economic conditions for just and sustainable communities to flourish. This implies a just and moral economy, where*

- *people are at the centre participate in all decisions that affect their lives;*
- *public and private institutions and enterprises are accountable and held responsible for the social and environmental impacts and consequences of their operations;*
- *the Earth and the whole created order is nurtured with utmost respect and reverence rather than exploited and degraded.*

**1. It's all about power**

As the negotiations here at the 4<sup>th</sup> Preparatory Committee to the World Summit on Sustainable Development (PrepCom4 WSSD) proceed, one issue takes centre stage: the consolidation and expansion of political and corporate power. It is time to acknowledge it.

The consequences of economic globalization on the daily lives of people have brought them to protest on the streets throughout the world, most recently in Argentina. This is a movement for justice and an outcry of indignation because of the violence inflicted on people by the impact of globalization on the political and socio-economic structures in their countries. These protests are motivated by a clear sense that the very fabric of social life is threatened and the values guarding social cohesion and ensuring future life of the community are undermined. These values reflect and resonate with convictions that faith communities nurture and support.

**2. The consolidation of political power**

“Good Governance” is a phrase that appears like a mantra in speeches in meeting rooms and halls of the UN. It reminds us of the teachings of good leaders who care for justice. It is hard to disengage oneself from this seductive rhetoric. Speaking with delegates, however, from countries that do not belong to the centres of power, we hear their concerns as to how a concept which is imposed on them limits even further the sovereignty of their states. We are witnessing the tightening of the screws – the further consolidation of political power.

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

- Government policies to specifically address the root causes of impoverishment and environmental destruction, focusing on the rights, needs and concerns of those most affected;
- fair and sustainable distribution of social and public goods such as water, land and other resources necessary for a decent quality of life for all;
- recognition and guarantee of the rights of Indigenous Peoples;
- full participation those concerned in decision making processes and public accountability;
- ratification and implementation by all countries of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and its optional protocol;
- U.N. system-wide efforts to maintain a gender perspective and ensure regular gender impact assessments with regard to sustainable development;
- 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;

- legislation building on the existing human rights instruments so that people have legal redress if their environment is destroyed or threatened.

### **3. The role of military power**

Lack of acknowledgement of the destructive effects of war and military activities on the environment and, of course, on communities leaves one of the worst sources of environmental destruction unchallenged. From another perspective, environmental stress, such as water scarcity can become a source of conflict. The question of control of access to water resources, for example, is a major cause for Israel's presence in the occupied Palestinian territories and a potential source of war in the Middle East and other places.

A reduction of 5% in military spending worldwide and the redirection of the resources towards the development goals of the Millennium Declaration would result in a healthy planet, economically, socially and environmentally. Sustainability requires both justice and peace.

Regarding **military power** the Ecumenical Team recommends:

- reduction of 5% in military spending worldwide and channeling these financial means to ensure food sovereignty and provide for health, education and other goals of the Millennium Declaration;
- appropriate actions by the UN to prevent the escalation of conflicts due to water scarcity.

### **4. The expansion of corporate power**

The WSSD process is heavy with the rhetoric of partnership, a concept that is of value within the lives of families and communities. True partnership is a relationship between equals. The first day of the multi-stakeholder dialogue in Bali saw the confrontation between those who promote privatization of services and social and public goods, such as water, and others opposing it. The latter pointed to exclusion and marginalisation as detrimental consequences of privatization. And they oppose the expansion of corporate power into even more vital areas of their life. Accountability to the public at large and regulatory frameworks for corporations are preconditions before genuine partnerships can be formed.

The Ecumenical Team recommends regarding **corporate power**:

- a regulatory framework for transnational corporations as originally proposed in the Vice-chairman's implementation text, including 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;
- re-institution of the UN Commission on Transnational Corporations;

### **5. Energy, an issue of power**

Low cost energy and cheap access to resources are seen as fueling economic development. Highly industrialized countries give special privileges to those providing energy and other essential resources of industrial production. Subsidies for fossil fuel and for nuclear research and power plants are an expression of that. Lessons learned about the waste of resources in neither cost effective nor sustainable energy projects, such as nuclear plants and big dams, and the dangers of global warming and climate change are not seriously addressed in the negotiations. Necessary measures such as the ratification of the Kyoto Protocol, are questioned by delegations. In this context, the proposal of "energy for all" ignores the need to move away from the carbon and nuclear based development path.

Regarding **energy** the Ecumenical Team recommends:

- a global moratorium on exploration for new oil and coal deposits;
- phasing out of nuclear energy plants everywhere in the world;
- adopting and implementing the recommendations of the World Commission on Dams with regard to hydro-power projects involving large-scale dams;
- ratification of the Kyoto Protocol by the time of the Johannesburg Summit and implementation immediately thereafter;
- initiation at the earliest possible date of a new round of negotiations on the reduction of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions;
- giving priority to the generation and use of energy for appropriate, affordable, ecologically-sustainable and accessible energy for the world's poorest people, reaching a level of at least 10% of sustainable renewables in 2010 and 25% in 2012.
- ensuring Indigenous Peoples' communities access to and control of their land, territories 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.

## **6. Trade, an engine of economic global power**

There is a strong interest to push for trade liberalization and call for support of the results of the World Trade Organization's (WTO) Doha round. The emphasis on trade as a key source of development financing and wealth for everybody has in reality not delivered. This has to be said in view of fragmenting national economies and deteriorating bases of local financing. Fundamental development priorities, such as food sovereignty and adequate nutrition for all are not met. Growth of some sectors is achieved at the expense of vital functions of the economy for communities and the health of the environment.

All aspects of trade should embody the concept of 'fair trade'. Free but unfair trade has a negative impact on food security, human rights, access to education and basic health services, environmental health and income distribution. Trade liberalization as a fundamental policy exposes developing countries to exploitation and unfair competition. At the same time, trade liberalization has rarely been implemented in countries which promote it.

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

- reordering of the international institutions, especially the WTO, before trade can contribute meaningfully to economic development and justice.
- giving precedence to compliance with international environmental agreements over compliance with international trade agreements;
- Tariff/ and quota-free market access for all LDC exports without delay.
- Revocation or prohibition of quotas on products from developing countries such as agriculture, textiles and apparel. This has to be complemented by ending trade distorting subsidies.
- A moratorium on the further implementation and widening of Intellectual Property Rights Regimes in order to first guarantee the rights of people and communities, in particular the rights of Indigenous Peoples.
- The creation and adoption of international agreements and legislation to protect traditional knowledge and genetic resources and prevent their commercialization
- Any further privatization of local, regional and global public goods through the negotiations on the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) must cease.

## **7. Financial power, the driving force of economic globalization**

Poverty prevents peoples and nations from participating fully in the global agenda for sustainable development. Economic inequity is the push factor for uprooted-ness, ecological destruction and civil conflict where the majority of victims are women and children.

The accumulation of foreign debt and the impact of recent financial crises has dramatically worsened the social environment for peoples lives. The number of those living in poverty is increasing instead of reducing as called for by the UN Millennium Summit. Financing sustainable development must focus sharply on the urgent task of eradicating the conditions that foster poverty.

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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;
- 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;
- creation of new and innovative sources of financing, such as currency transaction taxes (CTT) and carbon taxes;
- open and transparent lending policies on the part of the IFIs and elimination of any conditionality;
- 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.

## **8. Health, Education, Water and the corporate agenda**

To halt and reverse the spread of HIV/Aids along with malaria and other major diseases is included in the Millennium Development Goals. Health is a central concern to development. It is both a contributor to and an indicator of sustainable development. Many of the key determinants of health and disease are impacted by the corporate agenda. This agenda is manifested in WSSD, the GATS negotiations of the WTO, as well as the conditionalities imposed through Structural Adjustment Programmes and Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. Privatization of health, education, water and other social and public goods are imposed on countries in the global South. This agenda overshadows the vital elements of health services, education, sanitation and freshwater that are essential to sustainability.

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This version of the Talking Points focus on some of the key issues related to economic globalization, the debate on sustainable development, and the expansion of corporate power. Other issues were addressed by the team in the Talking Points to PrepCom 3 and in a background document with the title "Grounded in Justice". These can be found on the website of the WCC: [www.wcc-coe.org](http://www.wcc-coe.org)