

AGAPE INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL CAMP ON ECO-JUSTICE:  
VISION AND PRAXIS

05-12 AUGUST 2013, PRALI, ITALY

MANIFESTO

*We, students, activists, pastors, social workers, artists, educators, and interpreters from countries representing all continents of the world, have come together at the Agape Ecumenical Center in Prali, Italy from 05-12 August 2013 to explore and develop a vision for just and participatory societies that respect cultural and biological diversity and richness. This manifesto articulates our joint reflections on how alternative governance and political structures, financial and economic systems, science and technology, religions and spiritualities, and lifestyles and mentalities can contribute towards averting eco-cide and shaping an eco-just future for all members of the Earth community.*

**What kind of political and governance systems are required to build an eco-just world?**

The prevailing system of governance is inadequate to respond to the increasingly tenuous relationship between economy and ecology, a relationship wherein economic objectives supersede ecological ones. At the global level, the United Nations (UN) – the only public square where governments can be heard – has failed to implement a global climate strategy in the face of this crisis. We acknowledge the fragility of a global institution that was founded on the premise of advancing world peace, and stress that the UN does not reflect the multitude of voices that need to be at the table. We further recognize that political and financial interests are often in collusion.

We therefore seek to shift from governments and intergovernmental institutions dominated by the economy to governments and intergovernmental institutions that oversee the economy. We envision a post-capitalist society in which the regulatory framework is just and fair for both human and biotic communities and in which the relationship between and among people and the rest of ecology is based on mutuality and care rather than exploitation and greed. We aspire to a political system that has transformed problems of deregulation, insatiability and infinite growth to a post-capitalist political system that exists within the confines of our planetary boundaries and upholds the rights of nature and people. We comprehend the importance of enhancing local, regional, national and global governments to foster an environment of inclusivity. We need to find new models of governance that act globally while respecting the voices of local administrations as well as that support just and sustainable local economies.

In line with this transformation, a range of political strategies has to be pursued. The UN has to be reformed with a view to building a coherent global governance structure where economic, social and ecological concerns are tackled together rather than disparately. The UN Security Council in particular must be reformed to reflect a post-millennial geopolitical reality. States, big and small, as well as institutions governing the global economy, such as but not limited to the World Trade Organization, International Monetary Fund, and World Bank, must be held accountable to the reformed UN. Political processes must be democratized in the spirit of equity, diversity and accountability. As such, more power ought to be entrusted to local, indigenous and other marginalized communities. Grassroots political organizing is essential for enabling a people's movement demanding for an eco-just system of governance.

### **How do we restructure our financial and economic frameworks to promote eco-justice?**

We dream of new financial and economic structures that are founded on values of equity, inclusiveness, interdependence, harmony and care for creation. We dream of a post-extractive, post-growth economy:

- Where rules governing trade and other economic activities are formulated and implemented justly and fairly;
- Where everyone – regardless of class, sex, race, religion or orientation – is able to participate in economic decision-making processes that affect their lives and their communities;
- Where all people's basic needs (e.g. food, water, shelter, health and education) are met;
- Where community and ecological well-being – rather than unlimited growth in material wealth, profit and Gross National Product – is the primary goal;
- Where corporations, governments, international financial institutions and other economic actors are held responsible and accountable for the social and ecological debts arising from their operations;
- Where human rights (including economic, social and cultural rights), community rights and Earth rights are respected and protected; and
- Where the limits of the planet are recognized and the vital cycles of our natural world are preserved.

In realizing this vision, we need to advocate for a genuinely democratic system of global economic governance that re-embeds the economy in society and society in ecology. We need to put in place economic policies:

- That promote transparency and curb corruption (e.g. anti-monopoly laws and a global system of taxation to deter tax avoidance and close tax havens);
- That promote just and fair rules of international trade and the development of local and sustainable businesses;

- That encourage investments in economic activities that serve life (e.g. safe and renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, health and education) rather than in economic activities that harm creation (e.g. arms production and trading and large-scale extraction);
- That guarantee decent livelihoods for all (e.g. minimum wages, basic incomes, sharing available work), and that discourage, if not penalize, overconsumption (e.g. resource and emission caps, salary caps and pricing that reflects the true costs of production);
- That ban harmful financial speculation (especially on food) as well as large-scale extractive activities (especially in fragile bio-diverse environments) and other ecologically-destructive activities;
- That enable a more equitable distribution of economic resources within and among nations (e.g. progressive taxation and land redistribution); and
- That revise our national accounts to include social and ecological costs, and that reformulate indicators and measures of 'progress' and 'development' to consider social and ecological well-being not just economic well-being (e.g. Human Development Index, Gross National Happiness).

### **How can science and technology be used in the service of eco-justice?**

We believe that science and technology (S&T) should start from "being" and not from "having." It ought to be deployed in service of all life, not against it. S&T is for every community to use according to their cultural contexts and specific needs. Nurturing all creation, not growing the economy, should be the aim. Moreover, S&T should be engaged in healing our planet and reducing the damage that has already been caused to our ecosystems by using fair and conscious methods to reduce waste and eliminate unnecessary production and consumption. All of this entails de-constructing and even dismantling Western conceptualizations of S&T.

What can we do so that S&T supports eco-justice? We must teach and learn S&T from every ethnicity and culture. Our skills and knowledge must be put to the service of the common good and the protection and renewal of the ecological commons. We ought to revive our ancestors' good practices – technologies and production methods that do not harm people and ecology – instead of using S&T to promote consumerist lifestyles and to inflict terrible violence. We must advocate for changing global rules about intellectual property so as to promote democratic access to scientific research, discoveries and advances. We must push our governments to focus scientific research on technological solutions to achieving an eco-sustainable way of living.

### **How can theological and spiritual paradigms uphold eco-justice?**

Most world faiths and indigenous spiritualities perceive the Earth as a sacred gift, a manifestation of divine love and providential care, as well as teach us to take great care of our only home. Indigenous cosmologies in particular have a deep sense of and appreciation for an inclusive and harmonious community – a community where humans form part of and do not dominate over the rest of the created order. Therefore we emphasize the importance of deepening interfaith dialogue towards strengthening solidarity and developing collaborations to promote eco-justice among various faith and spiritual communities.

Through our faiths and spiritualities, we must instil values that promote a culture of humility, sharing and contentment and that combat a culture of egotism, materialism, and greed. Our churches, mosques, synagogues and temples ought to challenge injustices against people and Earth as well as be models of how to share resources equitably and how to live simply. The eco-just path is not an easy one, but it is the only way towards a common future. We call upon our religious and spiritual leaders to help build movements for eco-justice and to stimulate discussions among various stakeholders on how to equitably distribute the risks, costs as well as benefits of transitioning to a post-growth society.

### **What changes are needed in our lifestyles and mentalities to promote eco-justice?**

Transformation can and must start with us. We, as a global community, have to change our individual lifestyles if we are to pursue eco-justice. Endless consumption is no longer an option because it is not, nor has it ever been, a sustainable activity. Therefore we must be free to choose among possibilities which sustain life on an individual level, on the level of communities and also on a global scale. We must support goods and services produced and delivered in an ecologically- and socially-just way as well as call for external assessments and reviews by independent organizations in order to ensure that such products are made widely available at affordable prices. We must share with those who do not have enough. And we must, at the same time, work tirelessly for changes in macro structures that constrict these individual choices and actions.

Finally, we each have to ask ourselves some very fundamental questions: What is it really that I value? What makes me feel genuinely happy and fulfilled? Critical self-reflection could lead us to redirect our energies towards nurturing our relational, emotional, artistic and spiritual needs rather than centering our personal goals on money, things, and excessive lifestyles. Perhaps, then, we might begin to see ourselves as citizens of a symbiotic Earth community with loving responsibilities to one another.