

9<sup>th</sup> June 2020

To Olivier De Schutter, UN Special Rapporteur for extreme poverty.

### **"Just transition" - people in poverty and sustainable development.**

Biblical scriptures, for both Jewish and Christian faiths, and the sacred texts of most world religions, uphold principles that provide ethical principles and values that would bring about the just transition of people in poverty and the necessary care and protection of the planet if we are to bring about the sustainable development we seek.

For the urgent and immediate ending of poverty, I believe it is essential to implement BIG, the Basic Income Grant, or also called USD, the Universal Social Dividend.

There are sufficient resources to do this if world leaders work together to stop corruption, bribery and illicit tax havens and implement a Tobin tax (as an example for raising money).

It is also imperative that we recognise that Life is about Life, not money. Our goals in Life should be the wellbeing of people and planet. Money is only a resource, a means of exchange. Wealth should not be the goal of life.

So in all our endeavours, in our “developments”, the goal and purpose should be for the benefit and betterment of the planet and the wellbeing of people, not that that this proposal or project can make lots of money, without considering the environmental and social impact.

It is also crucial that we recognise that we are integrally part of nature, of the web of life, and that our wellbeing is dependent on the wellbeing of the planet – on its biodiversity, its atmosphere and climate, its water, its forests, its soil, its marine resources.

Covid-19 is a harsh wake-up call that we must respect nature and care for and protect it. This virus seems to have originated because we humans crossed the boundaries and abused both Pangolins and bats. A Universal Social Dividend would end the desperation of impoverished people resorting to poaching as an only means of income.

Having the wellbeing of Life as the goal instead of money would also end the drive and motive of international wildlife traders. Biodiversity is at the core of survival. We must end wildlife trade, uphold the sanctity of all life – not only human – and preserve biodiversity.

If we don't change as a matter of urgency, environmental destruction and climate change is going to have far greater negative impact than this virus, and dramatically increase global poverty.

Responding directly to your four areas of concern:

**Energy:** In rural Africa mini-grid and off-grid renewable energy systems, deployed in a decentralised manner in collaboration with local communities, are far more promising and economically viable than centralised large scale energy production, particularly coal and nuclear. Already in South Africa renewable energy is less costly than fossil fuel, but the fossil fuel industry, particularly coal, is determined to continue to make money from this “asset”. Globally, the oil industry continues to hold the wellbeing of people and planet hostage to their economic interests. This is a clear example of the need to move away from economic domination and take the health of people and planet into account.

The fossil fuel industries should be enticed to use their considerable assets to invest in renewable energy and the retraining of support workers.

**Housing:** There are many examples globally of traditional insulation and building material which would be far less costly than the present domination of concrete.

Housing policies should be based on housing that benefits people and is not environmentally damaging, rather than being motivated by the profit to be made from housing.

**Planned obsolescence and life cycle of products:** The cost to the natural environment must be included in the production costs, as well as the fact that this is a finite planet with finite resources. We cannot continue to mine minerals as if there is an endless supply and no future generations.

Again, just because a product can be produced at less cost should not be the dominant factor. The dominant factor should be the responsible use of scarce resources to produce a product that can endure. (An example could be an electric toaster. It is almost impossible to get them repaired. A new one has to be purchased, so the retailing industry is supported but natural resources are wasted.)

We also know that plastic can be used for many products at a competitive price, but the life of plastic is limited. It is also proving to be highly destructive in terms of waste and pollution. Plastic is extensively used for convenience and cost effectiveness, but it is now found to be so damaging, to poor communities and nature, it needs to be strictly controlled and even banned. This applies particularly to plastic packaging, notably in supermarkets and the retail industry, where in some instances two or even three layers of plastic is used. There are some instances, such as insulation for electrical wiring, where it serves an essential purpose. Generally, it needs to be prohibited.

**The impacts of the transition on employment:**

Payments for ecosystem services (PES) schemes certainly need to be implemented.

It also needs to be recognised that machines do people out of jobs! With large scale unemployment in many countries, and the need to stop burning fossil fuels because of climate change, vast employment opportunities would be opened up in, for example, organic agro ecology, employing people instead of machines. We are entering a new era of no longer relying on the huge energy provided by fossil fuels. Our present industrial agriculture is highly destructive, unethical and brings about increased unemployment and poverty. Labour intensive agriculture may not make the same profits as large scale industrial agriculture, but many more will benefit instead of a privileged minority.

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