

The Political Declaration Needs to Include Much More Specific Means of Funding, Follow Thru & Implementation

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The Global Ecovillage Network has participated actively in the UN's sustainable development and climate processes for twenty some years now. During that time we have seen many excellent agreements and commitments made. While not being fully adequate for solving many of our most urgent and daunting local to global challenges, they would, if they were fully funded and implemented, take us much closer to what is truly needed. But unfortunately, the needed level of commitment, funding, implementation, and follow through is often not forthcoming my many if not most Member States, particularly when it is left to individual governments to act on their own.

We, as an international network and organization, can support the draft Political Declaration as written (before suggested amendments); but we would not like to see it be weakened in any way, shape or form. However we share a concern that this statement is not as actionable and committing as is really needed to ensure that there is sufficient follow through and implementation nor that either existing or intended and hoped for environmental legislation and law will be applied and carried out in the manner and to the extent needed.

With this in mind we suggest that more specific language needs to be included in the Declaration to ensure that the commitments and obligations included in this draft document will be fulfilled and that **an on-going process is put in place to ensure that such funding, implementation,**

and strengthening of environmental legislation and law does indeed take place.

For many years now, the UN Member States have focused on responding to our many global challenges with somewhat of a single sector approach; but **the many environmentally related problems we are facing are multiple, inter-connected, mutually reinforcing, and interlocking. And the responses to them need to be as well. Much more specific, ambitious, and detailed responses are also needed at the local to global level at the same time.**

It is for such reasons as this that it is essential that an ongoing process and framework be developed and carried out that is sufficient to respond across the board in a more fully integrated, coherent and totally responsive and fully adequate manner. Many times now it has been recognized and stated that we must integrate our responses using both a vertical and horizontal approach; but such integrated responses are still slow in coming and a major focus needs to be undertaken in order to respond adequately to this need and to ensure that integrated action is taken across all levels of sustainable development from the local to the global level and across all sectors of the economy, governance, and society.

The Secretary-General's GAP Report for Rio+20 reported that there was still very little integration between what was being done at and between the local and national levels to implement sustainable development; and unfortunately, this is still true to this day.

Remedying this must thus be an ongoing focus of our joint and common efforts to strengthen, fund and implement both national and international environmental legislation and law and should thus be a major part and focus of the on-going review and development process of such a global framework.

Thirty years ago the international community agreed to implement the Rio Conventions. During this time period these conventions have been

repeatedly and increasingly strengthened and improved upon, thank goodness, but yet they are still far from being fulfilled and implemented. We know from the recent COP 26 Climate Summit and from the Convention on Biological Diversity and Aichi Accords that the agreements that the international community has been able to agree on and then actually live up to are also still far from what is needed to deal responsibly with the many environmental challenges that humanity is facing.

It is thus again essential that we put in place the specific means and mechanisms needed to ensure that the things included in the draft Political Declaration will indeed be carried out. For example, **it is not enough to again commit to reducing and eliminating un-sustainable subsidies or to say that a certain amount of funding will be put in place. Instead specific programs, processes, and support must be established and provided to assist countries in doing these things** and to ensure that adequate means of implementation are undertaken as well. And this should be included and referred to in the Declaration.

Likewise, it is not enough to “invite the Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR) to collaborate with subsidiary bodies of the multilateral environmental agreements” to make “universal overarching environmental policy recommendations to UNEA”, though this is certainly a hopeful and helpful step in the right direction. However, **a specific and detailed process also needs to be established to actually do these things and to promote and coordinate collaboration; and either UNEP or some other committee or organization needs to be tasked with coordinating and leading the process.**

Similarly it is not enough to “Commit to developing and implementing effective international and national environmental legal frameworks” and to support “the development of model laws and member states’ capacity in developing and implementing environmental rule of law.” **Now a specific program and well resourced on-going processes need to be put in place, building from and on and supporting the Montevideo Programme, which will result in developing and**

instituting such model laws and capacity development along with the strengthening of both national and international environmental legislation and law.

If this is not done it will likely result once again in empty promises that are not up to what the world truly needs to prevent an increasing number and severity of environmental and climactic catastrophes.

The same is true for the ratification of the Multi-lateral Environmental Agreements or MEAs and their implementation. Typically during major conferences the UN encourages its Member States to ratify and establish such policies but then after that it is once again usually forgotten about, even often during review processes. An on-going campaign really ought to be developed to encourage the international community to do such things as this, in an on-going manner and including promotional campaigns, and to carry out their obligations in full until universal ratification and full implementation is forthcoming.

I will never forget when our Heads of State said repeatedly in the Millennium Declaration that they would “Spare no Efforts” to do the many things that were contained within it; but then continued to do well less than this never-the-less. We cannot let this happen once again. The results for hundreds of millions of people, as well as many countries, will just be too catastrophic and the costs for all of humanity way too much.

It is thus again essential that a full on program, on-going processes and full international support be provided to indeed “build and support the capacity of courts and tribunals at all levels to give full effect to principles of international environmental law” and to strengthen the “environmental rule of law”.

There are many other reasons as well that a Global Framework needs to be adopted and an on-going process developed to support countries in

strengthening and implementing environmental legislation and law. For example, it is well documented now that humanity is living well beyond the carrying capacity of the Earth and has crossed over 4 or the 9 primary planetary boundaries and is approaching tipping points beyond which it will either become much more difficult if not impossible for our planetary ecosystems, water cycles, and weather patterns to recover and stabilize etc.

Only if we proceed in a holistic systematic integrated fashion are we likely to be able to take the steps needed in the time still remaining to make the transformation required to ensure that all of life thrives and humanity continues to live well on our planet home. **We know now that we will have to take and apply a life cycle approach, that addresses the full value chain, and that transitions to a fully circular economy as rapidly as possible. In order to carry out such a broad-based transition and approach it would be best if we can develop an on-going integrated and cohesive process for doing so.**

The upcoming negotiations on developing a Global Treaty on Plastics will shine the spotlight on the need for such a holistic approach that brings together all of the relevant actors and stakeholder groups to participate fully in both the planning and transition processes. The same type of planning processes are being considered and will need to be developed and implemented at both the national and global levels in order to take effective action as a part of the strategy for implementing the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration.

Similarly, such types of planning processes and integrated approaches will be needed across the board, economy and society as we continue to shift to much more regenerative and sustainable farming practices; strive to eliminate illegal logging and invest in reforestation activities; sequester giga-tons of carbon in soil, plants and building materials; transition to renewable energy technologies and fossil free transportation systems; and protect and restore biological diversity; etc. And it would be best if we can

do all of these things in a fully integrated, cohesive and coherent manner at the same time.

Indeed we will need the participation and commitments from both the business and educational communities if we are going to make such a transformational shift in the time required; and the business community will need to know that sufficient policy decisions are being made in order to support this so that they can afford to make the financial and other resource commitments needed to invest in making such a transition.

In the Draft Building Blocks put forward by the Co-Facilitators in response to the R73/333 proceedings it was stated that the UN “adopted a comprehensive, far-reaching and people-centered set of universal and transformative Sustainable Development Goals and targets, its commitment to working tirelessly for the full implementation of the Agenda by 2030”. And it is this same type of dedicated and integrated approach that now needs to be implemented to address the environmental dimension through developing an ongoing process and global framework to support implementation.

We well remember the suggestions made by some member states earlier on in the R73/333 process that many of the gaps included in the Secretary-Generals Gap Report on the Global Environmental Pact were intentional, when in fact in many cases such gaps still remain today precisely because a handful of Member States intentionally blocked taking more ambitious action. **It should be remembered that the preamble to the UN Charter begins with the words quoted below and that our governments are indeed expected to be answerable to their people.**

“We the People of the United Nations determined to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained, and to promote social progress and

better standards of life”.... **“have resolved to combine our efforts to accomplish these aims.”**

“Accordingly, our respective Governments, through representatives assembled in the city of San Francisco, ... have agreed to the present Charter of the United Nations.”

In other words it was the representatives meeting in San Francisco, acting on behalf of We the People, who agreed to the UN system of governance and international law in order to advance everyone’s well being. It is thus essential that the UN Member States act on behalf of all of their people and take sufficient action to indeed solve our most urgent local to global challenges. Half measures will no longer do. The representatives of civil society, participating actively in UN processes, have repeatedly made it abundantly clear that we want more ambitious and responsible actions to be taken by our governments and to be implemented through these international processes.

In regards to funding, former Assistant Secretary-General Jeffrey Sachs recently suggested a means of “Fixing Climate Finance” and funding both mitigation and adaptation that provides an excellent example of the types of models and approaches that would likely work well, adequately reflect responsibility, and ought to be instituted. You can read the full article at: www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/fixing-climate-finance-requires-global-rules-by-jeffrey-d-sachs; but I include the main elements from it below.

To help fund the clean-energy transition (mitigation) and climate resilience (adaptation) in developing countries, each high-income country would be levied \$5 per ton of carbon dioxide emitted. Upper-middle-income countries would be levied \$2.50 per ton. These CO₂ levies would start as soon as possible and rise gradually, doubling in five years.

Countries could easily pay such modest sums from the proceeds of carbon taxes and auctions of emissions permits, both of which will have much a higher price per ton of CO₂ than the levy.

High-income countries currently emit around [12 billion tons](#) of CO₂ per year, and upper-middle-income countries are emitting around [16 billion tons](#) annually, so the carbon payments would add up to roughly \$100 billion at the start, and double after five years. The funds would be directed to low-income and lower-middle-income countries, as well as to particular countries with special climate vulnerabilities (such as small-island states facing rising sea levels and more intense tropical cyclones).

Suppose that half of the funds (initially \$50 billion) are distributed as outright grants, and the rest are injected into the world's multilateral development banks (MDBs), such as the World Bank and the African Development Bank, as new capital to back climate financing. The MDBs would use the new capital to raise funds in capital markets, leveraging the new \$50 billion into perhaps \$200 billion in green bonds, which they would on-lend to the developing countries for climate projects.

In this way, the modest carbon levy would raise around \$250 billion in new annual climate financing, and would double to around \$500 billion after five years.

To fund losses and damages, an additional levy would be applied, not to the current emissions but to the sum of past emissions, in order to align today's losses and damages with the historical responsibility for today's climate change. The US, for example, is responsible for [around 20% of all CO₂ emissions since 1850](#). If a new Global Losses and Damages Fund seeks to raise, say, \$50 billion per year, the annual US share would be \$10 billion.

Agreeing on such revenue principles will of course not be easy, but it will be far better to struggle over a new rules-based system than to bet the planet's future on voluntarism. A rules-based system, with fair and transparent burden sharing, is the way to secure the financing we need for planetary safety and fairness.

<https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/fixing-climate-finance-requires-global-rules-by-jeffrey-d-sachs-2021-11>