

# PEOPLES' SUSTAINABILITY TREATY ON CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION: Transforming Livelihoods and Lifestyles for Wellbeing of All

(Zero Draft for public comments – Comments required by 21.05.2012 latest)

## 1. PREAMBLE

*Twenty years ago in Rio the UNCED Agenda 21 alarmed us: 'the major cause of the continued deterioration of the global environment is the unsustainable pattern of consumption and production, particularly in industrialized countries, which is a matter of grave concern, aggravating poverty and imbalances'. Ten years ago, in the 'Johannesburg Plan of Implementation' governments decided to develop a '10 Year Framework of Programmes to support sustainable consumption and production. Now, ten years later this framework is still undeveloped and poorly represented in the Rio+20 document 'The future we want'. In various regions of the world national action plans or programs were developed; and none of them made a significant difference towards changing unsustainable consumption and production patterns. No country can demonstrate that it absolutely decoupled economic growth from environmental pressure. Social conditions have improved among some of the poorer countries but deteriorated in some cases. The world is struggling to find a way out of the financial crises; among several of the industrialised countries and in developing countries dissatisfaction is growing, some of it registered in through public riots and radical political and social movements. All of this in a world where economic growth is been promoted further and levels of consumerism rising; or when austerity is imposed this has disastrous consequences both for wellbeing and sustainability. Still one of the major elements of the western dominated sustainable consumption and production discourse is to encourage consumers to play their roles as active market actors and to take responsibility to buy green or more sustainable products. This is what a so called green growth would be built of. Such a perception - if at all - reflects a weak sustainable consumption concept.*

*The future WE, the global civil society, want is different! It is overdue by now to approach and change the systemic causes of unsustainable consumption and production that are keeping poverty alive on earth and are e.g. triggering climate change. Therefore, the envisioned greening of the economy will only become more than a buzz word when such a Green Economy will be a Sustainable Economic System. Therefore, the core idea of Sustainable Economies should be to implement sustainability as in wellbeing of all people and to create economic systems that ensure social equity, protect the ecological balance and create economic sufficiency; thus enabling the flourishing of sustainable lifestyles and livelihoods on earth based on sustainable consumption and production patterns. In such a systemic transformation sustainable technologies and policies are equally necessary, but cannot be enough; changes in lifestyles and values are just as necessary, which also includes deep reforms in media and advertising. Much of that envisioned change could be lead by social movements; while small-scale experiments, and higher order learning are just as important as innovation and top-down policies. More and more people – whether organized or just as engaged individuals – have started to develop new ways to experiencing and experimenting with sustainable lifestyles based on strong sustainable consumption. The fate of future generations and their wellbeing relies on the mindfulness of current generations who will irrespective of north or south, rich or poor, powerful or weak; we the people in a world of global rights and responsibilities will have emerge prosperous together towards ensuring a good life for all. We now in addition raise our voice and call all levels of governance to seriously support what is flourishing on the grassroots level so it can diffuse widely.*

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## 2. PRINCIPLES

*We emphasize our commitment to already evolved principles that promote sustainable lifestyles such as the 'Mother Earth Principle' including the 'Planetary Boundaries Principle', the principles for societies and social rights which includes the 'Dignity Principle' as well as the 'Justice Principle', and the principle of ethics in governance including the 'Precautionary Principle', the 'Resilience Principle', and the principle of 'Equal and Differentiated Responsibility'*

*We further propose the following principles for strong sustainable consumption and production governance:*

### **Principle #1: Equitable Consumption**

*The economy serving the lifestyles we aim for– has to follow the principles of sustainable economies, which aims at a fair but limited share of resources for everyone on earth and at a fair and just distribution of wealth. Both are based on a limited scale of the economy which needs to remain within ecological boundaries.*

*Up to now mainly more efficient use of resources is promoted in a strategic approach to changing wasteful consumerist behavior. This approach attempts to green the consumption habits of the consumerist society, especially in the industrialized rich countries. Of course, it is a necessary contribution that consumers strive for commodities and services produced according to efficient ecological and adequate social requirements. However, it is an insufficient first step for the start to make the jump from today's unsustainable consumption towards global wide sustainable societies. Efficient consumption does not provide hope for half of the world's poor who lack adequate access to resources, goods and services. They need equitable opportunities to consume at least their basic needs before consuming smartly.*

### **Principle #2: Well-being**

*Governments should provide the conditions for fulfilling basic needs, which is necessary (but not sufficient) for a **good life**. For the different consumption patterns we like to see, people have to be enabled through changes in infrastructure and choice opportunities which should be mainly engineered by government actions and investments. Based on this, conscious consumption would allow enjoying more quality of life and less environmental cost, through a better way of 'choosing and using' from the part of confident and educated consumers. Finally we also have to consider an appropriate consumption which means accepting how each person's well-being is influenced by civic, cultural and religious aspects. This often means more energy consuming activities like commuting make people less happy while experiences like being with family dancing, laughing chatting with people and contributing to the flowering of your community are most joyful and less energy consuming. And indeed, as human beings we know this is true it by heard. The call is to accordingly acting on that.*

### **Principle #3: Sufficiency**

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*To complement the emphasis on the efficient use of resources, sufficiency is key which could be achieved through mindfulness, sharing, and local sourcing. While efficiency is important in a transition towards a sustainable system of consumption and production, it is sufficiency which needs to be the broader goal. Sufficiency extends to a sharing and caring society which thus transcends into holistic approach towards sustainable living . It brings in critical elements of living sustainably on earth: adequacy, self-reliance and contentment. Living according to the principle of sufficiency means to understand how to live within the resource limits of our own environment and the carrying capacity, commit to it and become content and happy with life by being mindful of those around. Living in the context of sufficiency means search for a natural freedom and integrity – to engage in life from a sense of personal wholeness rather than a desperate longing to be completed by greed of material comforts and accumulation of wealth.*

## **Principle #4: Sustainable Societies**

*The approach towards creating a sustainable economy should be the replacement of the current economic order of inequity, destruction and greed that has kept half of the global people in poverty and created a potential climate catastrophe. A true sustainable economy is integrated in a concept of sustainable societies which ensures social equity, protects the ecological balance and creates sufficiency. In other words, the core idea of a sustainable economy should be to promote sustainability, conceived of as the wellbeing of all people and the diverse arrays of non-human life. The growth-and-accumulation approach therefore needs to be replaced by distribution and sharing to ensure equitable consumption and production opportunities.*

## **Principle #5: Decentralized Governance**

*Governance of sustainable development essentially needs to be viewed as a decentralized process of action. While policy can be made and rule of law be established at the international, regional and national levels, the implementation of sustainability will remain a make-or break reality at the community levels. While global economies and national economies define themselves in terms of “growth” or “green”, communities that are not in the compulsion of consumerism will determine sustainability. Sustainable consumption and production governance essentially needs to be viewed from a locally or nationally driven exercise, rather than a mechanism of control at the international level; as it appears to be in the focus of the international governance frameworks and mechanisms.*

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## 3. COMMITMENTS

We propose that **Civil Society Organizations** make clear commitment to mobilize civil society to claim their rights as citizens for restructuring economies towards sustainable ones. These commitments are:

- to promote sustainable lifestyles by setting examples, for instance in transportation, food supply, housing, leisuring, and financial management
- to campaign for sustainable lifestyles, and to criticize the existing advertising for wasteful living
- to be actively engaged in politics and policies at all levels of governance
- to influence business to behave more sustainably, through buyers actions, promoting policies, and through direct actions and influencing campaigns.

We urge that **Governments** make clear commitment and to establish the effective regulative and economic incentives to ensure that the necessary systemic changes are pushed. This includes budget reforms raising tax on resource use, capital, and financial transactions. On the practically oriented respectively local and regional level initiatives have to be taken for

- more and better public transport and bicycle infrastructure,
- local food availability, more vegetables and fruits (instead of meat) and
- more energy efficient buildings (esp. heating and cooling).

To make the difference better visible demands clear content related targets, timetables and benchmarking procedures towards equitable consumption.

We call on the **Scientific Community** to develop such targets and to strive for adequate mechanisms to adopt them. More research is required to especially address

- systemic issues
- conditions for successful upscaling of socio-technical experiments
- empirical research on what works and what not

in order to reach a deeper understanding of the interconnecting issues of technology, culture, lifestyles, habits, economics, and psychology. In addition, sharpening a southern perspective is needed to avoid solution directions that are biased through dominant northern framings (such as the 'green economy'). Finally, the interface between disciplines as well as between research and practices needs to be further developed and investigated.

From the UN System and other International Governmental Organisations we demand make SCP Governance the cornerstone of the institutional framework for sustainable development. This is not to simply reform the UN agencies to manage global sustainability projects and programmes, but to reform the institutional approaches that are failing to address the worsening conditions on earth. This includes

- establishing a Global Forum on SCP (as a Stakeholder Mechanism) with a mandate to select representation on the Global SCP Mechanism
- including into the Global Forum an Intergovernmental SCP Committee (operated within the annual CSD member states and Bureau mechanism) to lead and oversee the global SCP governance process
- establishing an Intergovernmental SCP Committee
- establishing an International Secretariat for SCP Governance
- establishing a coordination office for the 10YFP on SCP.

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*In this context national governments are called to establish National Committees on SCP (operated within the National Council for Sustainable Development) with a mandate to advise all national agencies working on SCP and national representatives on the Intergovernmental SCP Mechanisms.*

*We anticipate from **Business** to alter investment policies away from production processes which are environmental harmful and socially unacceptable and to stop throwing on the market unsustainable products. This starts from products with hazardous effects on people and on the environment and reaches out to products with planned obsolescence.*

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## 4. ACTION PLAN

*A countless number of people have started on their path towards sustainable consumption and production getting engaged in food co-operatives or public gardening, the provision of services with explicit sustainable character, neighborhood centers, and alternative, local currencies. These are the social innovations where the important incentives for strong sustainable consumption are coming from. They are development projects for the sustainable global future. Doing so they inspire a new narrative where a satisfied feeling of contentment builds the mental and emotionally basis of experiencing a good life for everyone where caring and taking responsibility are the underlying values instead of claiming rights. We as the NGO community are taking up the task to support their further development with all our power. Depending on the respective strength of each organization this support actually covers a broad range of activities.*

### *Short Term (2012-2015)*

*(The following are a idea for action were received from participating treaty circle members. These and other proposals to be received will be developed as actionable projects with clearly defined objectives, goals, strategies, timelines, and commitments.)*

- *Promote sufficiency based national policies and programmes to enhance wellbeing and prosperity of all*
- *Designing and implementing sustainable livelihood projects to eradicate all forms of poverty*
- *Shape activities and projects consequently towards strong sustainability*
- *Actively support civil society organisations in the south in their fights for sustainable lifestyles and livelihoods*
- *Engage deeper with research for science based actions*
- *Developing tools for CSO to start the systemic change in a more holistic way than the predominant issue approach*
- *Consequently embedding system thinking in our approaches and projects to overcome the limitations of issue based approaches*
- *Actively develop a new narrative of sustainable lifestyles and livelihoods and how we can properly act within it*
- *Actively develop new models how CSOs can support the seeds of sustainable economies, e.g. through the raise of shearing economies*
- *lobby government on green budget reform*
- *promote green public procurement*
- *support and promote fair trade in practical consumer decisions as well as a political approach for trade in general*

### *Medium Term (2016-2025)*

- *Action #1*

### *Long Term (post 2026)*

- *Action #1*

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*(Note: The action plan should be for those civil society groups who plan to work post Rio+20 with clear targets. For example we should aim at the next three years in the run-up to the Millennium Summit on 2015 so there is tangible period for us to plan some action immediately after Rio and not keep these to long term targets that we can avoid implementing).*

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## 5. SIGNITARIES

*(Note: those who are endorsing and joining the treaty are listed below with a pledge.)*

*We, civil society organizations pledge to honour the agreed principles, commitments and action plans;*

- 1. Sylvia Lorek, Germany, Sustainable Europe Research Institute*
- 2. Lewis Akenji, Japan, Institute for Global Environmental Strategies*
- 3. Katalin Ujhelyi, Hungary, Association of Conscious Consumers*
- 4. Janis Brizga, Latvia, Green Liberty*
- 5. Anna Golubovska-Onisimova, Ukraine, Mama-86*
- 6. Uchita de Zoysa, Sri Lanka, Centre for Environment & Development*
- 7. Jeffrey Barber, US, Integrative Strategies Forum*
- 8. Philip Vergragt, US, Sustainable Consumption Research and Action Initiative*
- 9. Leida Rijnhout, Belgium, The Northern Alliance for Sustainability*
- 10. Faiz Shah, Thailand, Asian Institute for Technology – Extension*
- 11. Ashvani Vasishth, Ramapo College*
- 12. Vanessa Timmer, Canada, OneEarth*
- 13. Luis Flores, Brazil, Consumers International*