

# Paris 1991 Agenda Ya Wananchi

*Zur Vorbereitung der UN Konferenz über Umwelt und Entwicklung 1992 in Rio (UNCED) fanden sich vom 17. bis zum 23. Dezember 1991 über Vertreter der Zivilgesellschaft und von Nichtregierungsorganisationen in Paris zusammen. Sie wollten ihren eigenen Konferenzinput formulieren. Der sollte freilich nicht als abgeschlossen gelten, sondern vor und in Rio weiterentwickelt werden. Die Ergebnisse der verschiedenen Arbeitsgruppen und Plenarsitzungen flossen in den "Aktionsplan der Bürgerbewegungen für die 90er Jahre" ein mit dem Swahili-Titel 'Agenda Ya Wananchi'. Er formuliert die Erwartungen in eine zukunftsfähige globale Entwicklung mit Schwerpunkt auf Umwelt und Gerechtigkeitsfragen. Zentraler Einstieg ist das Verlangen nach Demokratisierung von Entscheidungsprozessen sowohl in den nationalen Gesellschaftssystemen wie im System der Vereinten Nationen. Die 'Agenda Ya Wananchi' ist aktionsorientiert und enthält einen Analyseteil sowie Prinzipienklärungen mit fünf Punkten, einen Abschnitt mit Aktionsvorschlägen und Selbstverpflichtungen mit 13 Unterthemen und einen Absatz mit Erwartungen an die Regierungen (21 Anliegen) und außerdem Anforderungen an die Privatwirtschaft.*

*Auf diesen Internetseiten ist die englische Fassung auszugsweise dokumentiert unter "Paris 1991" .*

## Agenda Ya Wananchi - An Appeal to Governments

### Excerpts

1. We call upon all governments to enhance and promote participatory democracy in all issues and at all levels, in other words to guarantee the political rights of individuals, urban and rural communities and citizen's groups to reinhabit their home places: protecting, restoring and sustaining their environment and themselves, and enhancing their lives and cultures.

A prerequisite for ecologically sustainable and socially just development is people's participation in the decision-making on the use of environmental resources. Only when they feel that it is also 'their' decision, will these decisions and the concomitant obligations be upheld by the people. Such power cannot be left to governments and industries alone. It is the natural, and thus universal right of people to partake in decision-making that affects their lives, whether these decisions are taken inside or outside their national boundaries.

Citizen's groups, local communities and individuals ought to have the right - which in certain countries they already have - to intervene in decisions on industrial siting,

transport and energy infrastructure and the use of natural resources. This is the ultimate guarantee that governments and industries observe environmental prudence and undertake ecologically sound and socially responsible production. Local communities, and especially communities of indigenous people, must have unquestionable rights to their forests, rivers and other natural resources and be allowed to harvest and manage them in their traditional and sustainable ways. Attempts by international agencies or multinational companies to control forests and other natural resources, be it in the tropics or in the temperate zones, should be resisted and rejected, as this would threaten local autonomy over the control of these resources.

Access to government information, the right to bring governments to courts, and accountability of governments are essential conditions for a meaningful exercise of the rights of participation.

## **2.**

We call upon all governments to ensure that citizens and citizens, groups have unrestricted access to any information about products, processes and projects that are likely to affect the environment or human health, regardless of whether the activity is controlled by the state or the private sector for civilian or military purposes, and this right should be a global right applicable also to any transnational activity or agent. Governments should put strong restrictions on commercial advertisement promoting technologies, products, etc. leading to the destruction of the environment.

Information is power. Thus an important guarantee that the environment will be protected in the interest of local communities and also world-wide is for all relevant information to be freely and generally available. For example, governments should disseminate information about the suitability of building materials, the availability of sustainable technology for human settlement development and agriculture, and the toxicity of waste products.

All governments should enact Community Right to Know Laws, requiring all business corporations to file publicly available reports on the toxic and hazardous chemicals and other substances they use and release to the environment. Such laws will help foster citizen based corporate accountability.

Specific Recommendations: To tell their societies which recommendations of the 1972 Stockholm Action Plan were really instrumented, and why most of those compromises remained "frozen" for almost 2 decades, bringing environmental tragedies to worst parameters.

To study and to publicize periodically the impacts of the environmental problems on public health, agriculture, air quality, wildlife, water resources and the mental welfare of the people. To set up monitoring systems in big cities, so as to establish control measures of emissions in order to protect the citizen's right to a safe environment.

## **3.**

We call upon all governments to develop a powerful and effective United Nations with a clear and defined role for citizen's groups.

Given the alarming rate of global environmental degradation and the need for people's participation to halt this degradation, a more democratically governed UN system has to be developed in which citizens groups have a clear role to play. Through better representation of these and other concerned groups, a holistic perspective of development instead of the sectoral and economical view, can be promoted. The moral authority of the UN, necessary for it to play an effective role in global sustainable development, is seriously hampered by the fact that its most powerful organ, the Security Council, is dominated by the five "official" nuclear powers of the world. If their veto power is not abolished, participatory democracy on the global level will never be achieved.

In a "new style" UN, management and monitoring of the environment by UNEP and the other relevant programmes and agencies will involve citizen's groups as a matter of principle. How can one, for example, monitor the global biodiversity without consulting the indigenous communities? Parallel to the UN system, governments could establish an Auditor for Sustainable Livelihood, composed of independent experts and representatives from citizens' groups and NGOs, which would constantly evaluate whether sustainability is indeed being promoted and whether this is done in a just and efficient way.

Contrary to a world-wide authority for the environment as proposed by some, such an auditor would not have the power of sanctions, but would just rely upon the moral and publicity power of its reports.

To monitor the implementation of international instruments at a global level, a Commission on Sustainable Development should be established, which should have a tripartite structure for governance, being composed of representatives of Southern and Northern governments, transnational corporations and NGOs. This commission should have three sub-commissions: (1) a sub-commission which should monitor financial and technological transfers and control these transfers on basic principles of sustainability; (2) a sub-commission to monitor the implementation of a UN International Code of Conduct for Transnational Corporations and other basic principles of sustainability and (3) a sub-commission to monitor the implementation of binding international instruments relevant for sustainable development, which should consist of 26 independent experts. The sub-commissions should have the authority to request an advisory opinion from an International Court.

Apart from this global commission, regional monitoring mechanisms must be established.

There is a need for an International Court which could adequately deal with sustainability matters. For this reason, this court should have compulsory jurisdiction on cases about sustainability and non-state actors should have legal standing and an equal opportunity to sue. The Commission on Sustainable Development should fulfil the role of a public prosecutor.

Specific Recommendations: To set up in every country an open process of public debates on the need to transform the United Nations organization, so as to make it

more representative of the peoples of the planet, considering the existent proposal for a tri-cameral constituency.

To prepare and distribute widely on a national basis a "Report to the People" much more explicit than the mostly technical "national reports" drafted for UNCED. Such a "state of the environment" document should constitute a very clear statement, reinforced by local reports on local environmental problems, plus the description of the measures provided for their solution.

#### **4.**

We call upon all governments and the UN to further develop international law and systems to monitor and ensure the observance of human rights.

More than four decades ago, the human community proclaimed a bold and revolutionary vision of the future. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights asserted that every person on the face of the planet has certain fundamental rights, including a decent standard of living with adequate food and shelter, productive work - fairly compensated -, proper education and a healthy environment. The Universal Declaration also asserted fundamental rights of all to democratic participation in the workplace, community and country and the maintenance of cultural identity.

The dramatic disruption of the global ecosystem and the rate of disappearance of many species other than human, make it necessary to also include a right of future generations to a healthy environment and to include the whole community of life in the definition of what constitutes the environment. Nowhere in the world are these rights enjoyed by all -persons. Yet they are the normative standards against which the performance of economic, social and political institutions - both -within nations and across nations - ought to be judged. They have achieved broad international acceptance as the goals towards which we must continue to strive in our efforts to build a more just and sustainable future. These rights should be the basis for the urgently needed further development of international environmental law, which can only be effective if social and economic equity exists throughout the world.

Equity now is an essential condition for the new environmental conventions and for the implementation of the existing ones. Strong and effective environmental law is an essential condition for equity towards future generations and for respect for the community of life as a whole. Broad participation by Citizen's groups in the formulation, implementation and verification of international environmental law, is essential to make this law effective. Their experience should be used in the creation of a model for monitoring and compliance of national and international environmental law.

Citizens' groups should not only have standing in national courts for national, but also for international environmental law, if they observe that their country is violating international conventions. At the same time, they should be able to bring environmental grievances before regional and international courts, since, rather than governments caught by short-term economic compromises, they may claim to be the voice of the future and of nature.

## **5.**

We call upon all governments to ratify and implement the Convention for Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women; and to implement the Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies and to take action on those recommendations specified for government in the Women's Action Agenda 21 adopted at the World's Women's Congress for a Healthy Planet; and the Participants Findings and Action Points adopted at the Global Assembly of Women and the Environment: Partners in Life.

## **8.**

We call upon Northern governments to reduce the debt burden of the Central and Eastern European and Southern countries.

The current debt burden and the fact that this has resulted in a net transfer of financial resources from the poor to the rich is both morally shameful and financially and ecologically unsustainable. It can only drive these countries into a vicious cycle of loans following loans steadily pushing them into a financial abyss.

Debt relief is today a basic prerequisite for the South and the East to move towards sustainability but we must realize that the debt relief does not automatically lead us to a sustainable development path - it is only a first step. Ecologically sustainable development demands adequate "financial space" to secure the present and then to safeguard the future. Unless industrialized countries take strong steps to mitigate the debt crisis, such steps will not be taken in developing countries. Pollution control equipment alone will constitute a multi-billion dollar annual market in these countries. Serious efforts by the industrialized countries to deal with the debt crisis will create a sense of trust and confidence in developing countries and improve the negotiating environment at UNCED.

## **12.**

We call upon all nations, UN, UNEP and UNDP to recognize that our cities are the nexus of human life and we must develop strategies for creating Ecocities based on the broadly accepted principles of ecological sustainability. We must re-build our cities in balance with nature, so as to meet there all basic human needs.

## **13.**

We call upon all governments to establish a system for reducing greenhouse gas emissions based on a principle of equitable rights to permissible emissions without destabilising Earth's atmosphere.

It is vital to prevent the destabilisation of the earth's climatic systems. The emissions of greenhouse gases should be reduced by 75% by the year 2030 to be below the critical level of affecting the climate on the globe. This reduction should be done by the industrial countries keeping in mind the principle of emission per capita.

A system should be established to allow countries which do not use their quota to trade them with those who exceed theirs. This tradeable emission system should however not develop into an easy way for the rich countries to pay their way out of the need of controlling pollution. It should therefore only be open to industrial countries which have implemented reduction goals for greenhouse gases pointing towards the critical level per capita, and which accept international surveillance.

We call especially upon the government of the US to stop jeopardizing the international climate convention and endorse a national reduction goal. We also resist the nuclear lobby trying to use the climate debate to strengthen the nuclear power industry. It should form no part of the sustainable energy strategy.

The hope, however, is that such development can employ state-of-the-art energy conservation technology, and renewable sources of energy. Thus the South may leap over the North's obsolete profligacy with fossil fuels and the dangerous romance with nuclear power. Especially the North, supporting development of public transport, alternative fuel and electric/solar automobiles, state-of-art engine, motor, lighting, and building design will arrest energy waste and diminish the greenhouse effect. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), set up by the UN, stated in its final report in 1990 that based on current trends, we could expect an increase in global temperature between 1.5 - 4.5 degrees by the end of the next century. This would mean in relation to methane emissions (CH<sub>4</sub>), it should be noted that all its sources such as wetlands, warming permafrost lands, garbage landfill, natural gas and oil industry leakages, and coal mining have not been well evaluated. It is clear that these emissions from Northern sources provide a greater percentage of methane emissions than what can rightly be attributed to deforestations, cattle grazing or rice cultivation in the South.

We recommend in the North taxation of fossil energy, large hydroelectric power plants as well as of nuclear energy as long as this highly unacceptable and unsustainable source of energy is not phased out. These taxes should be used for efficient use and conservation of energy and renewables. Transitional help should be given to those who cannot cope with the additional costs. This can be a first step towards shifting the base of taxation from income on labour to energy.

All governments should establish laws protecting other countries against transboundary pollution, and other forms of ecological aggression.

## **15.**

We call upon all governments to prevent the extension of patent protection onto life forms and to establish a system of royalties and compensation for the use of traditional biological knowledge and genetic material, and preferential access of Southern nations to modern biotechnology.

Plants and animals are the basis upon which all human life depends and are therefore the most important natural resource. Control over plants, animals and their genetic material as well as over biological processes must remain in the hands of the public.

Genetic material should be preserved in the country of origin and these countries should receive proper compensation for the benefits that these genes bring to other countries.

Mechanisms other than monopoly control must be developed to reward innovators - especially indigenous peoples and local communities - for their contributions. Peasant rights must be protected in the same manner as those of plant breeders.

Present Intellectual Property Regimes favour established interests. A very comprehensive protection of intellectual property is being forced through the GATT negotiations by means of political trade-offs. It is imperative that UNCED insists that no decisions be taken in the GATT or other fora which promote further loss of biodiversity.

If genetic material is allowed to become private property, control over the diversity and quality of plants and animals will lie in the hands of a few.

While private and corporate knowledge is today patented and has a financial value, community knowledge about biological products remains a free commodity. The South provides all kinds of plants, seeds, herbs and various biological resources for genetic variability, including traditional knowledge about their uses, which have transformed the world's pharmaceutical and food industry. Genes collected from the South will continue to play a major role in the North's agriculture. The North pays nothing to the South in return for these genes collected and nurtured by Southern farmers for centuries or for the knowledge provided by indigenous communities and traditional herbalists while most technical knowledge emanating from the North is protected by patents. Has any entrepreneur paid any royalties to the American Indians for the knowledge they have given the world about rubber, quinine, curare (without which modern surgery would have been impossible), potatoes, tomatoes, avocados, tobacco and corn ? What royalties has Ethiopia received for its coffee and Madagascar for its vanilla ? It is a matter of global justice that the use of all knowledge, not merely private and corporate knowledge, is suitably compensated. The North must learn to respect the intellectual property rights of the South. And to observe and emulate the traditional sustainable indigenous food system and to preserve their locally - adapted and diverse crop varieties.

In future, genetic material should be preserved in the country of origin and these countries should receive proper compensation for the benefits that these genes bring to other countries.

Governments should immediately recognize the true value of biodiversity, and take it into account in all decision-making.

Governments should renounce the manipulation of genes, which encompass a high degree of risk'. In all probability genetically altered organisms will fundamentally interfere with natural ecological cycle thus bearing consequences not yet foreseen. Moreover initiatives under way to map the human genome raise very fundamental questions about human rights, values and privacy. We commit ourselves to fostering an evolution in human culture that will preserve Earth's biodiversity throughout the coming millenia, while at the same time fostering diversity of culture, and alliances of

local communities that will permit them to regain control over their resources and our ways of life.

## **17.**

We call upon Southern governments to undertake land reforms.

Equitable redistribution of appropriate use of land is a key measure for introducing equity into development programmes in the South and an important prerequisite for moving towards sustainable land use systems and reinhabitory societies.

Land distribution programs should respect customary tenure assistance and take full account of the productive potential of different ecosystems.

Without access to land and security of tenure on it, people will not support programmes for sustainable development. For millions of people in developing countries, the concept of sustainability will seem to be a threat if it denies them the wherewithal for adequate shelter and a livelihood. Access to land is a basic necessity for everyone and if people know they have a clear right to their own plot and commons, they will more easily accept the need to look after it and not degrade or pollute it.

Resettled communities should be provided with food subsidies' for six months until they harvest their first crops, be advised on sustainable agricultural practices such as permaculture, and on house-building and other activities in an ecological and sustainable fashion.

## **20.**

We call upon all governments to stop new nuclear research, testing, development, production and proliferation of nuclear technologies, to halt uranium mining and to phase out nuclear power production, replacing it progressively by environment-friendly energy sources.

Governments should also stop the dumping, siting, or placement of environmental hazardous facilities in vicinity to communities anywhere, and to halt the export of radioactive wastes to other countries: nations responsible for generation of such wastes should be responsible for cleaning them up.

We call for a ban on food irradiation and urge support for research of alternative medical diagnosing and healing methods which do not involve the use of radiation, and of on site above ground storage of nuclear wastes safely monitored.

We demand an immediate stop to nuclear testing of any sort and for any purpose, especially the French nuclear testing programme in the Pacific.

## **21.**



We call upon all governments to recognize that conventions, treaties, programs and projects that affect the life of a society must be drawn up with prior consultations with the people who should be able to monitor the fulfilment of such agreements.

The exchange of information, research and technology should be appropriate, ecologically sound and socially just. It should be basically free, - and therefore not restricted by intellectual property rights or high costs; it should not cause unemployment and it should take into account the interests, ideas and technologies of indigenous peoples, local communities and women.

The lack of implementation of international instruments is a major obstacle towards effective global policies for ecologically sound and socially just development. NGOs should have the right and commit themselves to participate in the development, monitoring and verification of international law on local, national, regional and international levels. Full, meaningful and intelligible information on environmental problems, environmental law and its implementation is essential for people's participating in sustainability policies.

Citizen's Action Plan for the 1990s

*Adopted at: Roots of the Future  
A Global NGO Conference in relation to the 1992 Earth Summit  
Paris, 17 to 20 December 1991 (Final Version: 27 January 1992)*

Source: Agenda Ya Wananchi  
International Environmental Liaison Center  
PO Box 72461, Nairobi, Kenya  
Tel.: +254/2/56 20 15, Fax: +254/2/56 21 75