

# We have faith campaign

Statement from members of the faith communities of southern Africa, meeting to discuss

***“A green economy for sustainable development and poverty eradication”*** in preparation for Rio+20 and beyond, in Johannesburg on 14 and 15 May 2012.



As people of faith, we must set an example and do what is right. We long for legally binding treaties that protect vulnerable People and Planet and strive for intergenerational equity for the community of all life on Earth. We call on world leaders and decision makers when they meet to deliberate on the *Green Economy* at Rio+20, to be guided by the spiritual and ethical principles of justice, equity, compassion and love for all life on the planet, and to treat the Earth with respect, resist disorder, co-operate and live in peace with one another.

- The Earth Charter reminds us that *“When basic needs have been met, human development is primarily about being more, not having more”*. In a world driven by short term greed and self-interest, we must promote the idea of sufficiency, provide ethical and responsible leadership and affect change in a world suffering from climate and ecological injustice. This must happen individually, in our families, in our communities, our countries, on our continent and globally.
- There are many ways of valuing our planetary life support systems which allow for the flourishing of human health and wellbeing. The *Green Economy* talks of *natural capital* but people of faith know that nature is beyond monetary value and it cannot be reduced to a commodity or only valued for its commercial worth.
- The human community is an intricate part of the web of life with which we share the planet. Legal rights should be applied to Mother Earth and the whole community of life, not just people.
- Sustainable Development can only be realised if human social and economic wellbeing is achieved within the limits of the earth’s natural systems. Spirituality must be at the core and underpin the principles of sustainable development in order to ensure that future decision making is ethical and not driven by short term vested financial interests.
- We inhabit a finite planet. Our economic system, based on growth and irresponsible consumption, measured by GDP, and couched in the language of the *Green Economy*, has created an immoral divide between the rich and poor and is unsustainable. An ethical Economy of Sustainability requires a paradigm shift in thinking, focussing on human development, environmental restitution and planetary wellbeing rather than financial profit.
- While recognising the key role technology has played in human progress, we need to acknowledge that over time, technological ‘solutions’ have also been the cause of ecological catastrophes. People of faith call on scientists, government institutions and business to respect and work with nature’s diversity, applying the precautionary principle when introducing human invented technological ingenuity to ‘solve’ problems.

- Community wellbeing and peaceful societies are the product of participatory democracy and accountable governance. People of faith must become integral role-players in building sustainable communities.
- We face a global climate catastrophe, which is likely to manifest some of its worst effects on the African continent. Leaders of nations that have benefited, or continue to benefit, from a development path based on high greenhouse gas emissions, need to acknowledge and repay ecological debt owed to vulnerable communities and the planet.
- We must not lose sight of the target of keeping the global average temperature rise below two degrees and preserving the Earth's vibrant cultural and natural diversity.

**The '*We have faith*' campaign from Africa and around the world calls communities of faith to rise up and take action to:**

- Demand greater public investment to promote energy efficiency and renewable energy so that it is accessible and affordable to all, not just those who can afford market related prices.
- Be a voice for the voiceless in a human-centred world where money and greed sanction the insatiable exploitation of Earth's bounty and vulnerable people.
- Safeguard nature's storehouse through ensuring the 'sustainable' use of our planetary life support systems, being guided by the principles of need, not want.
- Pressurise historic and current large greenhouse gas emitters to assume their historical responsibility and honour their ecological debt as a basis for a just transition to a sustainable and equitable economy.
- Acknowledge, respect and celebrate the incalculable value of cultural and biological diversity and in doing so, support the rights of indigenous communities and promote the recognition of sacred sites, sanctuaries and wilderness areas.
- Explore alternative and traditional faith based economic systems that would inform an ethical approach to greater equity and human and planetary wellbeing.
- Promote an alternative economic system based on solidarity economics, respect for nature and economics that serves the community of life not profit.
- Establish a more just and participatory democracy where communities are involved in decision-making processes and can influence decision makers in order to work for the good of the commons.
- Promote a culture and practice of zero waste which is modelled on nature where nothing is wasted. Polluters must be held accountable, by cleaning up and paying for their spoil.

Steering committee: [www.ejn.org.za](http://www.ejn.org.za) or [www.safcei.org.za](http://www.safcei.org.za) or [www.sacc.org.za](http://www.sacc.org.za)