A joint submission by APRODEV and ACT Alliance

APRODEV is the network of European development agencies related to the World Council of Churches. This paper expresses the views of the APRODEV Working Group on Climate Change Advocacy. Over the last five years this group has worked with ecumenical organizations like the World Council of Churches and partners in the South to advocate an ambitious, equitable and legally binding climate regime. Being a European network our focus is first and foremost to influence the European Union and Norway.

The ACT Alliance is an alliance of more than 125 churches and church-related organisations that work together in development, humanitarian and advocacy, operating in 140 countries around the world. Eighty per cent of members are from the global south. The alliance has over 33,000 people working globally and mobilises US$1.6 billion annually to enable and empower poor and vulnerable women and men to have sustainable livelihoods, attain economic development and enjoy their human rights. As part of its global climate advocacy strategy, the alliance urges States to take action since climate change is threatening development and affects poor and vulnerable people the most.

Overview

This submission covers issues of:

- A fair green economy: a justice perspective
- Alignment of international agencies and finance
- Political will for raised action on climate change
- Political will for raised action on biodiversity
- Post-MDG framework
- Development finance and tax
- Finance, technology and capacity building to implement Rio+20 outcomes
- Trade and investment regime
- Changes of consumption patterns and life styles
- Access to sustainable energy
- Supporting sustainable agriculture and food systems
As ecumenical development and humanitarian organisations we have a broad network of partners throughout the world. We appreciate the opportunity to provide input to the important process leading up to Rio +20 in June next year.

In this submission we will highlight a number of concerns on green economy and global governance in relation to sustainable development, as these are the two themes of the conference. However, we will also address the broader debate about sustainable development by providing inputs to the debate about a possible continuation of the current Millennium Development Goals.

**A fair green economy: a justice perspective**

Global environmental, social and economic crises are forcing us to recognise that we must become better at generating economic activity from resources that are limited. As population and consumption grow, and pressure on limited resources increases, it is necessary to move towards a low carbon and resource efficient green economy that limits consumption to the bio-capacity of the planet.

In meeting the challenges, a pillar of greening the economy must be to eradicate poverty. However, achieving this aim will depend on how the vision of ‘green economy’ is understood and pursued. There is a wide variation in interpretations of the term, from a focus on green growth: perceived by many southern civil society organisations (CSOs) to risk neglecting poverty and equity; by some private sector actors to be a business model to expand the green market potential; and by many as a vision that puts social equity at the heart of the definition. This diversity of views risks undermining progress towards achieving desired outcomes.

A green economy needs to deliver three main outcomes to win international buy-in: ensuring mankind’s ecological footprint is sustainable; maintaining and enhancing natural capital, biodiversity and ecosystem services; poverty reduction and improving human well-being and social equity.

The UNEP definition of a green economy as one that “results in improved human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities” is a vision we support. However, it is essential that, in the implementation and monitoring of the green economy model, the objectives of social equity are central, not sidelined as a secondary aspiration.

The current dominant economic model will increase extremes of poverty and disparity between rich and poor if it is allowed to continue unchecked: attempts to shift our economies to a more sustainable and fairer footing are of fundamental importance if efforts tackle poverty, now and in the future, are to have any chance of success.

Our fear now is that developed countries, faced by the current economic crisis and fiscal constraints, will be tempted to ‘go for the low hanging fruit’ and develop systems that favour middle income countries as a green economy might be well received in these countries. Many of the least developed countries need an economy, green or otherwise, and it would be in the long-term interest of governments, donors, and the world as a whole to develop green economies in those countries.
Recommendations:

At Rio+20 governments need to agree to practical steps at the local, national and global level that:

- Ensure that fairness and equity – based on the original 1992 Rio Earth Summit declaration of ‘common but differentiated responsibilities’ (CBDR) principles – are central to sustainable development.
- Move beyond GDP as the main means to define and measure progress in development to indicators that focus on well-being, human rights and equality, on building social, human and economic wealth, and preserving natural resources.
- Make a fundamental change in economic policies, (i.e. financial markets, trade and investment) from liberalisation to a regulations based policy aiming not just at economic growth but at social equity and respecting the ecological limits.
- Make changes in decision-making structures – recognising that a minority of powerful actors benefits from the status quo while our current economic models don’t adequately benefit the vast majority.
- Back a vision of green economy, that makes poverty-eradication, equity and resilience central - not supplementary. This should lay a foundation for the development of a post-MDG framework.
- Commitment of all States to set up low carbon action plans (for industrialised countries zero carbon action plans) until 2050 (milestones for 2020 2030 2040) as a key tool.
- Commitment of all States to reach the biodiversity targets agreed upon at CBD COP-10 in Nagoya, Japan, in October 2010
- Make sustainable agriculture and food core issues in Rio. Give the UN Committee on World Food Security (CFS) a mandate to develop a work plan to implement the IAASTD findings and call for all countries to establish their own structures for following up.

Alignment of international agencies and finance

International governance for sustainable development needs to be reformed if we are to make progress on international targets for biodiversity, climate change, poverty eradication and social equity. It is beyond the capacity of agencies charged with achieving development and environment objectives, acting alone, to address these challenges effectively. The impact of trade agreements and instruments; the exercise of power and rights at local and national levels; access to and use of natural resources and land; the functioning of markets; and many other factors must also be recognised and addressed. Reforming institutions, rules and processes is vital, since ‘unsustainability’ is largely a result of weak or inconsistent governance at all levels (global, regional, national and local).

Governance and economic policies regarding finance, trade and investment are inseparable - we need improved governance of the World Bank and other finance bodies in order for these institutions to be in a position to contribute to a transition to a fair green economy and to sustainable development. The multilateral financing mechanisms should be obliged to contribute to social equity by respecting human rights and the biocapacity of the planet. Investment policies and bilateral investment treaties should be reshaped in a way that investors have clear duties regarding human rights, social equity, protection of natural resources, climate protection and biodiversity conservation. International trade rules, as agreed in the WTO and numerous bilateral trade
agreements, have to be reshaped in order to give policy space to national governments to make trade work for sustainable development.

**Recommendations:**

At Rio+20 governments should:

- Work towards enacting a step-change in global institutional co-ordination and coherence – in particular to mitigate, and respond to, resource-related crises and risks, such as the food crisis and climate shocks.
- Press for strong operational principles for sustainable development in the work of multilateral financial institutions including the World Bank and IMF, of the World Trade Organisation and bilateral treaties and agreements.

**Political will for raised action on climate change**

With political leaders in Rio, this is a key opportunity to raise the overall political will for greater action on climate change, to be fed into the current climate talks under the UNFCCC.

As a first step, developed countries need to acknowledge promptly their responsibility for and capability to deal with the climate crisis and urgently commit to providing the required support for climate action in developing countries.

At Rio+20, governments must raise their ambition regarding increased emissions reduction targets and financial commitments, equitable effort sharing, and robust implementation. All countries should acknowledge and commit to the climate talks under UNFCCC, and agree on an intensified cooperation within this framework to fight for climate justice.

**Recommendations:**

At Rio+20 governments should be prepared to:

- Assess 20 years of process since Rio '92 and take stock of existing greenhouse gas reduction commitments and adaptation efforts and raise their ambition respecting CBDR.
- Elaborate national and sub national action plans that substantially improve governance – overseeing progress and supporting implementation – of sustainable development objectives.

**Political will for raised action on biodiversity**

The presence of political leaders in Rio will be a key opportunity to raise the overall political will for greater action on the protection of biodiversity.

As a first step, Governments - especially those of developed countries - need to acknowledge their responsibility for and ability to deal with the crisis of biodiversity and urgently commit to providing the required support for biodiversity protection in developing countries.

At Rio, governments must raise their ambition regarding biodiversity protection and financial commitments, sustainable use and benefit sharing, including robust implementation.

**Recommendations:**

At Rio+20 governments should be prepared to:
- Assess 20 years of process since Rio ’92 and take stock of the efforts and results regarding the protection of biological diversity, its sustainable use and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the use of genetic resources and related traditional knowledge. They should raise their ambition regarding these targets of the Convention on Biological Diversity by respecting the principles of CBDR and the precautionary principle.

- Recommit the obligations agreed to in the Strategic Plan approved at the 10th COP to the Convention on Biological Diversity in Nagoya, Japan, in October 2010.

- Take concrete actions regarding the sustainable use of biodiversity.

- Recommit their respect for the rights of Indigenous Peoples as proclaimed in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

- Sign and ratify the Nagoya Protocol.

Post-MDG framework

It is essential that the new Post-Millennium Development Goals (post-MDGs) poverty reduction framework, to be developed over the coming years, builds on the sustainable development objectives as a fundamental aspect of long term poverty reduction, environment protection and human rights. But history shows that governments may fail to meet the internationally agreed goals. In order to provide an incentive for every government to meet its goals, sustainable development goals (SDGs) should not only refer to the global level, but at the same time be complemented and mirrored by national sustainable development goals for all countries, so that the political will and the real contribution of every country to make sustainability a reality becomes transparent and measurable. This will require the new post-MDGs framework to include indicators of sustainable development, and to recognise the impact which consumption pattern of the wealthy can have on access to and exploitation of natural resources and increased poverty.

Recommendations:

At Rio+20 governments should:

- Support the establishment of sustainable development goals reflecting the key areas of sustainable development on a global level.

- Support the establishment of national sustainable goals with a clear contribution to global sustainable development.

- Ensure social and transparent monitoring mechanisms so that governments can be held accountable by their citizens.

- The post-MDG goals need to reflect the responsibility of developed countries regarding the impacts of their actions on the rights to natural resources for poor people.

- Recognise that to achieve the goals in a sustainable manner means that States must address natural hazard risk and vulnerability into development plans.
Development finance and tax

G8 countries should keep to their Gleneagles commitments of giving 0.7% of GNI to development. However, even if this were to be achieved, the financing gap is still significant. The Monterrey Consensus committed to mobilising domestic resources for development. By raising the tax to GDP ratio to 15%, developing countries could raise an additional $198bn. Governments have a responsibility to raise domestic revenue in a progressive and equitable manner, implementing tax policies which reflect environmental externalities and encourage investment in sustainable development.

Illicit capital flows including tax evasion undermine development efforts. Financial secrecy provided by offshore financial centres not only undermines efforts to mobilise domestic revenues, but facilitates corruption. By challenging tax abuse by multinational companies, an additional $160bn could become available for development.

Recommendations:

At Rio+20 governments should reaffirm commitments made in the Monterrey Consensus, the Doha review summit and the UN MDG review summit to:

- “Enhancing and strengthening domestic resource mobilisation and fiscal space, including, where appropriate, through modernized tax systems, more efficient tax collection, broadening the tax base and effectively combating tax evasion and capital flight.”

- “Implementing measures to curtail illicit financial flows at all levels, enhancing disclosure practices and promoting transparency in financial information. In this regard, strengthening national and multinational efforts to address this issue is crucial, including support to developing countries and technical assistance to enhance their capacities.”

In addition governments at Rio+20 should

- Recommend a strengthening of the institutional arrangements supporting the UN committee of experts on international tax cooperation.

- Promote automatic information exchange between tax jurisdictions in an effort to curtail illicit financial flows (particularly offshore financial centres).

- Recommend Country by Country reporting disclosure of financial information by Multinational Enterprises to increase accountability and curb tax abuse.

---


4 Ibid.
Finance, technology and capacity building to implement Rio+20 outcomes

An agreement from Rio +20 will only be implemented if there is sufficient financial and technological support, as well as related capacity building. For some countries these resources will be found within domestic budgets, but for the vast majority of developing countries support from other countries will be needed. Finance and technological support should be given in light of the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, and capabilities, acknowledging the historic responsibility related to the current ecological, climate and environmental situation.

Finance for sustainable development is addressed in various fora. Rio +20 should acknowledge that climate finance is addressed within UNFCCC, as an additional source to official development assistance. However, while acknowledging existing sources Rio +20 should also address the additional need for support in relation to the agreements made during the conference. It will therefore be important to also address new and innovative sources of finance such a Financial Transition Tax as well as the role of taxation (stated above).

We have noted that the pre Rio+20 debates in several countries focus on private finance. While we acknowledge that private sector may have an important role to play, we also think it is vital to note existing experiences related to private investments and sustainable development. A good investment will lead to positive spill over effects in the local community, encourage new companies and support capacity building and transfer of skills and knowledge. However, investments may also lead to the opposite, i.e. crowding out of local companies, violations of human, labour and land rights and creating emissions and other negative environmental effects.

Recommendations:

At Rio+20 governments should:

- Agree on an ambitious work program to operationalise supplementary and innovative sources of long-term finance and reach agreement on a further set of public sources needed to meet the financing requirements for sustainable development.
- Champion a financial transactions tax for this purpose.
- Confirm the formation of a dedicated funding window for poor countries to access finance for clean energy and low carbon development (a ‘leapfrog’ fund – see below).
- To create a framework for private finance, hindering negative effects of investments and supporting the positive effects, including local stakeholder dialogues.

Trade and investment regime

The global trade and investment regime is still focussed on a fossil, growth oriented and unsustainable development path. It needs to be re-oriented in order to make it a facilitator rather than a barrier to sustainable development.

Recommendations:

At Rio+20 governments should:

- Affirm that human rights, the protection of natural resources and nature conservation may never be undermined by trade and investment rules. At the same time safeguards that such a system cannot be used by developed countries for justifying protectionist measures against developing countries shall be introduced.
• Affirm that investors have an obligation to meet human rights and contribute to the protection of resources regardless of investors’ rights as now agreed in numerous bilateral investment treaties. In this respect, the participation of the local population on an investment and the conditions for an investment have to be respected and supported by governments and investors.

• Acknowledge that national policy space is essential for meeting sustainable development goals.

• Establish an international mechanism within the UN system to survey and monitor the contribution of international trade and investment to sustainable development and to suggest the necessary amendment of rules that exist inside and outside the UN system.

Changes of consumption patterns and life styles
The global consumption class, which is still predominantly located in developed countries and mid-classes of middle income countries, is largely responsible for the overall unsustainable state of the world. Changing consumption patterns and life styles is less an individual responsibility than governments’ obligation to provide a framework that sets incentives to make sustainable life styles attractive.

In particular, At Rio+20 governments should:

• Agree to open policy space to discriminate between sustainable and non sustainable products while establishing safeguards that this could not be misused as a tool for economic protection against products vital for the economies and livelihoods of people in developing countries.

• Agree to establish and implement national action plans to strengthen sustainable consumption patterns, including to monitor the impacts and to adapt necessary measures for improvement.

• Agree to initiate an accelerated transition from an economy dependent on growth to a sustainable economy aiming at human well-being, sound use of environmental resources and nature protection.

• Support policies that promote healthy consumption, and reduce its environmental footprint. In most OECD countries this means reducing meat and dairy consumption.

• Pioneer new approaches and technologies to reduce waste in the food system, increase recycling and efficiency of energy and water use.

Access to sustainable energy
About 1.4 billion people globally live without access to electricity and 2.7 billion people cook on open wood, dung or charcoal fires. It is widely recognised that without access to modern energy services, such as electricity and modern fuels, it is highly unlikely that any of the MDG objectives will be achieved. Many developing countries have an abundance of renewable energy sources and have huge scope for improving energy efficiency. In short, they can be supported to leapfrog fossil fuel based economies towards low-carbon sustainable energy.
Access to energy for the poorest parts of the poorest countries will require large amounts of financial transfers in form of grants. Providing rural areas with decentralized grid systems powered by energy from solar, biomass or small scale hydro might not attract private investments as the return is highly questionable. Nevertheless, such projects must be core business of a partnership aiming at energy access for all. Hence, while supporting joint public-private investments to a certain degree and for certain countries, this financial model will have to be supplemented with a grant based system if not the poorest people are to be left behind again.

Recommendations:

- As 2012 is the UN year of access to sustainable energy, agreeing new energy goals to expand energy access to the poorest, shift to renewable, and increase energy efficiency must be a priority for Rio +20.
- The target should be the one set by the United Nations of having universal access to modern energy services by 2030: clean, reliable and affordable energy services for cooking and heating, lighting, communications and productive uses.
- Commit to a ‘leapfrog fund’ to finance access to sustainable energy initiatives.

Agriculture and the global food system

Agriculture and the global food system are presently causing dramatic environmental problems while failing to feed almost one seventh of humankind. However, this can, and must be turned from a major problem into a part of the solution, contributing to sustainable development. The transition to sustainable agriculture and food systems therefore need to be a core issue at Rio.

Transition from an unsustainable to a sustainable food system

Our current food system is both ecologically and socially unsustainable. It is failing, both in ensuring rights to food and to preserve the ecosystems on which future food production depends. This situation is exacerbated by climate change and other forms of environmental degradation which threaten food production and expose people to new shocks and stresses that deepen poverty.

At Rio+20 governments should commit to

- Implement policies that address the externalities of agriculture and implement the polluter pays principle.
- Implement competition policies to decrease the current concentration of power in food and input markets which is marginalising smallholders and accelerating the loss of biodiversity as well as diversity of agricultural practices.
- Reform agricultural policies so that they promote sustainable agricultural practices and do not undermine food security in developing countries. In the European context this would imply for example a decreased dependency on soy import, which is today putting a heavy ecological footprint on exporting countries while at the same time fuelling unsustainable meat production within the EU.
Supporting sustainable agriculture and food systems

Policies must be adopted that give strong and increasing support to small scale farmers and agro ecological and other sustainable and resilient forms of food production that promote poverty reduction and climate change adaptation while preserving ecosystem services for future generations.

At Rio+20 governments should commit to:

- Support the organisation of small scale food producers.
- Secure rights to land and resources of those who depend on them for their livelihood, in particular advance the rights of women food producers.
- Prioritise participatory and farmer-led research, extension and dissemination of agro ecological innovations including locally adapted ('in situ') agricultural technologies and conservation strategies, and the breeding and production of underutilised crops.
- Adopt policies that reduce soil degradation to protect long term food security.
- Strengthen urban and peri-urban food systems.

Institutional frameworks

The International Assessment of Agricultural Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD) was initiated Rio+10 in Johannesburg. The findings of IAASTD need to be affirmed at Rio+20, and actions to implement them need to be decided:

- Give the UN Committee on World Food Security (CFS) a mandate to develop a work plan specifying benchmarks/indicators for progress towards the objectives to implement the IAASTD findings and call for all countries to establish their own structures with active inclusion of civil society and mechanism for following up.
- Encourage the establishment of a participatory regular multi-stakeholder panel on agriculture with the mandate to consider the impact of agricultural knowledge, science and technology and IPR on sustainable development.
- Examine and monitor impact of different ways to tackle the climate change challenge (biofuel production, REDD+, CDM, soil carbon sequestration) on local community, food security, and sustainable development and seek out possible remedies.

The principle of common but differentiated responsibilities (CBDR) must be respected, which means that OECD countries have the responsibility to take a lead in the transition to sustainable food systems:

Conclusions

APRODEV and ACT Alliance call on the United Nations and the Brazilian government to conduct the negotiations at Rio+20 in an open and transparent way and allow for full participation from civil society.
The following organisations contributed to this draft:

- christian aid
- Brot für alle
- Pain pour le prochain
- Bread for all
- Brot für die Welt
- DanChurchAid
- AID for all
- Denmark
- Finn Church Aid
- actalliance
- Norwegian Church Aid
- actalliance
- eed
- Church Development Service
- An association of the Protestant Churches in Germany
- Diakonia
- Människor som förändrar världen
- Church of Sweden