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Pre-Congress, 17th World Congress

# **A civilisational wake-up call – and an ecosocialist response**

- Fourth International resolutions - World Congresses - 17th World Congress - 2018 - 17th World Congress discussion -

Publication date: Saturday 16 December 2017

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### **This resolution proposed to the World Congress as an alternative to the Ecology Commission's text** – [The capitalist destruction of the environment and the ecosocialist alternative](#).

The world is approaching a climate cliff. Sixteen of the 17 warmest years in the 136-year record have all occurred since 2001. The year 2016 ranks as the warmest on record. Scientists have long argued that an increase in the global average surface temperature of 2°C above the preindustrial level – we are already at 0.99°C and rising – will trigger irreversible feedbacks that could spin the global climate system beyond human control. The Paris COP regarded the 2°C limit as inadequate and adopted a more stringent target of a 1.5°C limit. Even this is sufficient to melt a major portion of the world's ice sheets and set the course towards an ice-free world. As a result, the sea level will rise sharply and many thousands of islands will be submerged, along with coastal areas around the globe. The destabilisation of the Western Antarctic ice sheet threatens an even greater rise in seas levels up to six or seven metres. Extreme weather events (droughts, storms, floods, and wild fires) would become ever more frequent and severe. The poorest people will suffer the most.

The oceans are now 30% more acidic than in pre-industrial times, due (mainly) to carbon absorption from the atmosphere. One third of all CO<sub>2</sub> emissions into the atmosphere are absorbed into the oceans. Coral reefs are dying off. Marine invertebrates that rely on calcification for their shell structures face a bleak future as does the breeding cycle of many of the fish species central to the human diet.

Species are going extinct 1,000 times faster than the historic or 'back ground' rate. The World Wildlife Fund's 2016 Living Planet Report – that monitored over 10,000 species of mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians and fish, in both tropical and temperate regions – concluded that in the last fifty years human impact has done more damage to natural habitats than in any previous period in the history of the planet. The report recognised – along with a predominant weight of scientific opinion – that we are currently witnessing the 'sixth great extinction' event: i.e. the biggest extinction of species since that which destroyed the dinosaurs 65 million years ago.

At the same time we are treating the planet like a gigantic rubbish dump. The World Bank (no less) has calculated that the per capita production of garbage from urban residents in the world is now 2.6 pounds per person per day, and is projected to increase rapidly, with most of the increase in the developing countries. When you add to this is the waste produced by energy production, manufacturing and agriculture the volume of waste created every day weighs more than the combined weight the 7 billion inhabitants of the planet!

There will soon be more plastic in the oceans than fish. 90% of all sea birds have plastic in their bodies. The first global analysis of all mass-produced plastics – Production, use, and fate of all plastics ever made – was produced by the University of California and published in July 2017. It found that a total of 8.3bn tonnes of none-biodegradable plastic has been produced since plastic production began in the 1950s – with the majority ending up in landfill or in the oceans. Of the nearly seven billion tonnes of plastic waste generated during 2015, only 9% was recycled and 12% incinerated. The rest went into the environment (mostly the oceans) and will last for hundreds, perhaps thousands, of years in one form or another.

The message is clear and relentless. Modern humans, 'homo sapiens' – ourselves – are set to determine, during the course of the present (21st) century, whether or not the planet we live on, with millions of other species, will continue to be a habitable space.

We, as a species, cannot continue living in the destructive way we have for most of our existence—and since the industrial revolution in particular. Wars and conflict over energy resources have become more frequent. People fleeing desertification, floods, or fires fall foul of national immigration controls and face the wrath of the police and the immigration service. The UN estimates that approximately 50 million people are ‘environmental refugees’, forced to leave their regions of origin in the wake of drought, floods, soil erosion, and the extension of export oriented agriculture. The transition to this new reality is endangering the lives of hundreds of millions of poor people, especially women, children and the elderly, and could contribute to a complete collapse of our species.

# Capitalism, modern humans, and the planet

We can agree, as revolutionary socialists, that the capitalist system, with its insatiable drive for profit and growth, is the most environmentally destructive system of society the planet has ever faced. It alienates human beings from their environment as well as from the results of their labour. It is the most socially divisive system the world has ever seen in terms of the denial of human and civil rights and economic exploitation. There is no dispute on the left about this. As socialists, we struggle against capitalism every day of our lives.

The question that arises, however, and which remains controversial, is not whether capitalism is ecologically destructive but whether the environmental and climate crisis can be reduced to the role of capitalism—as is often implied in the writing of Marxists and socialist environmentalists. The answer to this question is no. In the end, capitalism is a human construct. It is one of the forms of social organisation adopted by modern humans in the course of their/our evolution on this planet—and hopefully it will not be the final one. It is not ‘speciesism’, or anti-Marxist to say this—it is objective reality. The fact that it is based on exploitation and divided by class does not make any less of a human construct.

In any case (as the Commission’s text points out) when major parts of the world were removed from the capitalist sphere of influence for much of the 20th century in the form of the Stalinist dictatorships ecological destruction was arguable even worse.

It is, therefore, time to accept, uncomfortable as it might be, that despite its unparalleled destructive capacity, capitalism is not the only environmental challenge to the planet. Modern humans, ‘homo sapiens’ i.e. ourselves, have also played and continue to play a major destructive role as well. In fact the two factors are ultimately indivisible, since in the end capitalism is itself a human construct. It is just one of the constructs (or forms of social organisation) devised by modern humans in the course of their/our evolution on the planet.

The impact of human beings on the planet has now been brought into sharp focus by the decision of the scientific community, globally, to propose a change to the definition of the current geological epoch from the Holocene (the period since the last ice age) to the epoch of the Anthropocene—an epoch defined by the impact of modern humans on the planet and its biosphere. It is important that we fully support this development that can help to clarify the situation and help to develop the struggle.

Modern humans are unique, and our influence on the ecology of the planet predates the advent of capitalism and will postdate it as well. Since they (we) emerged from Africa some 180,000 years ago we have always had a disproportionate impact on other species given our intellectual capacity, hunting skills, organisational and linguistic abilities and drive to explore. We are the only species that has invaded every habitat on earth and is capable of destroying the planet and its biosphere many times over—by ecological degradation or nuclear war—unless we consciously decide (or manage) not to do so. We are the only species capable of acting consciously (rather than by instinct) and of understanding our own existence and the consequences of our own actions. We cannot ignore this

situation and the impact this has on the planet and the other species that live on it.

Modern humans have been responsible for the demise of many of the large mammals that had no other predators but were vulnerable to modern humans. With the expansion of maritime capability sailors hunted to extinction isolated and vulnerable species such as the dodo, the great auk, the giant tortoise, and flighted birds that had evolved with no fear of predation. Such species went from abundance to extinction in very short periods of time. The large and slow-moving Steller's sea cow, from around the Commander Islands in the Bering Sea, was hunted to extinction within 27 years of its discovery by human beings. We invented farming 12,000 years ago, which facilitated a further leap in food production and population growth.

How can we ignore this situation when we confront the ecological crisis? Nor can we refuse to take any responsibility for it. It is true that the richest in society bare the greatest responsibility, but in the end it is our planet and the only one available.

## The problems of the radical left

The radical left had a disastrous 20th century as far as the ecology of the planet was concerned – and therefore some humility should be exercised in terms of the rest of the movement. The mainstream organisations regarding themselves as Marxist – whether from the Stalinist, Maoist, or Trotskyist traditions – were not only absent from the ecological struggle most of that time but went on to embrace the worse aspects of capitalist logic in the shape of growth and productivism. There were very important individuals from the radical left or Trotskyist tradition, in the Global North, and indeed small currents, both before and soon after the WW2, that opposed this but were unable to reverse the overall direction of travel. We can mention in terms of the USA pioneers such as Rachel Carson, Roderick Frazier Nash, Scott Nearing, and Barry Commoner all of whom made major contributions and came from socialist or ecosocialist backgrounds.

In the Global South, where the ecological crisis had its greatest impact and there was already a much stronger ecosocialist dynamic, particularly in the indigenous and peasant movements. There were socialists such as Chico Mendes in Brazil, and Vandana Shiva, the socialist, feminist and ecological activist in India. There were also important mass movements like the peasant's movement in Peru, led by Hugo Blanco, that rejected this framework.

Despite these outstanding contributions, however, the vast bulk of organisations defining themselves as Marxist or socialist were not involved. They regarded the ecological struggle at best a middle-class diversion and stood aside from the struggle from the 1930 until the 1990s. It will get us nowhere today to act as if, now that we are waking up, that we have all the answers. This would not represent the kind of deep and critical re-evaluation of our approach to the ecology of the planet and the forces of growth and productivism that is needed to reequip Marxism and socialism for the 21st century.

## Ecosocialism

Reequipping ourselves for the 21st century means deepening our understanding of the concept of ecosocialism – to which we committed ourselves at the last World Congress. Ecosocialism involves nothing less than the survival of planet earth as a liveable space for ourselves and the millions of other species which we share it and the time scale in which to do this is down to a few decades. It means that the ecological struggle can no longer be treated as an add-on to all other aspects of the struggle we are engaged in since it the most important and the most fundamental of

all.

It means basing ourselves on the ecological conceptions of classical Marxism itself – as developed and elaborated by Marx, Engels, and William Morris in the second half of the 19th century. There's was an approach that brought together a strong ecological understanding with the revolutionary process itself. It is a heritage that was lost in the first part of the 20th century but has been re-established in recent decades not least by the work of John Bellamy Foster, in *Marx's Ecology – materialism and nature* published in 2000, and Paul Burkett, in *Marx and Nature* published in 2014.

It means that the models of a post-capitalist socialist/ecosocialist society discussed during the 20th century are inadequate to the task today, even if we discount the Stalinist monstrosities. Even the models discussed by Trotskyists and others who had rejected Stalinism, did not start to address the problem. It means understanding that whilst a post capitalist/ecosocialist society would put us in a far better position to tackle the ecological crisis it would not resolve it automatically. It means accepting that the struggle for environmental sustainability will have to continue after the socialist revolution has taken place.

It means developing a model of a post-capitalist ecosocialist society that is not only based on economic and social justice but ecological sustainability and the ability to remain so. This means an end to the use of fossil fuels and a complete changeover to renewables. It means an end to productivism and built-in obsolescence and production for use values and not exchange values. It means an end to factory farming and a big reduction in the consumption of meat. It means taking the demography of the planet into account and moving to a population size and structure that is compatible with the biosphere of the only planet. It means developing a relationship with nature based on being a part of nature rather than in conflict with it and existing as its expense.

## Economic growth and population growth

It is increasingly recognised on the environmental radical left that endless growth and productivism, whether generated by capitalism, or in the last century by the Stalinist states, is completely unsustainable, and will destroy the biosphere of the planet if it continues. Either a natural resource becomes over-exploited to the point of exhaustion, or because more waste is dumped into the ecosystem than can be safely absorbed, leading to dysfunction or collapse. The current global rate of growth of 3 per cent per year would grow the world economy by a factor of 16 in the course of this century and by a factor of 250 over the course of this century and the next.

We can no longer avoid the demographic issue: i.e. population growth, which is indivisible from economic growth since it is one of the main drivers of economic growth.

The human population of the planet has almost tripled in the last 60 years – from 2.5 billion in 1952, when I left school – to 7.2 billion today. Although the rate of growth has fallen, the increase continues in absolute terms by between 70 and 80 million a year. This has been the case for the past 50 years, and shows no signs of reducing. It is the equivalent of adding the population of Germany to the planet every year.

According to the UN the population of Africa could more than double by mid-century, increasing from 1.1 billion today to 2.4 billion in 2050, and potentially reaching 4.2 billion by 2100. Nigeria's population is expected to surpass that of the United States before the middle of the century. Nigeria could start to rival China as the second most populous country in the world. By 2100 several other countries could have populations over 200 million, namely Indonesia, the United Republic of Tanzania, Pakistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Uganda and Niger. During the same period, the population of developed regions will remain largely unchanged at around 1.3 billion people.

The key to stabilising the demography of the planet is the empowerment of women to control their own bodies and the rejection of any and all forms of coercive population control. Empowerment means giving women the means to control their own fertility by making contraception and abortion freely available to women, giving them access to education, and lifting them out of poverty. It means challenging the influence of religion, patriarchy or communal pressure, which denies them the right to choose.

Both the highest birth rates and lowest carbon footprints are to be found in the impoverished countries of the Global South. More than 220 million women are denied basic reproductive services – which can be (and often are) the difference between life and death. There are 80m unintended pregnancies a year globally – which equals the global population increase. 74,000 women die every year as a result of failed back-street abortions – a disproportionate number of these in the Global South. Every year, around 288,000 women die from preventable causes related to pregnancy and childbirth – and 99% of them occur in developing countries. It is a policy that helps the women of the Global South and helps the planet at the same time – it is win-win again.

In any case the proposition that most women in the Global South, given genuine choice, would choose to have the large families many of them have today (or allow their husbands to insist on such families) is unconvincing. Some would but most would not. Multiple pregnancies with little space between them, wreak havoc in terms of the health and life expectancy of the mothers concerned.

## Food production

The question posed, in terms of food, is not just whether enough food can be produced to sustain the existing human population of 7.2 billion, or indeed the 9 or 10 billion people projected by mid-century. The question is whether such numbers can be fed without destroying the biosphere of the planet: i.e. without a further extension intensified agriculture and by the ever-increasing use of chemical fertilisers, pesticides, hormones, antibiotics and mono-cropping techniques.

Agriculture is by far the biggest global user of fresh water which is becoming increasingly scarce. The demand for fresh water globally has long outpaced the available renewable sources that are replenished by rainfall or snow melt. Ancient sources (in the form of aquifers) are in trouble. Either do not renew at all or renew at rates far short of the replacement. The distribution is uneven. Some regions are relatively well supplied while others face drought and increasing salinisation through the rising sea level. In much of the developing world, clean water is either desperately hard to come by or requires laborious work or big investment to obtain. According to the UN, the demand for water has grown at more than twice the rate of the population during the last century. By 2025, an estimated 1.8 billion people will live in areas plagued by water scarcity, with two-thirds of the world's population living in water-stressed regions.

The question posed, in terms of food production, therefore, is not just whether enough food can be produced to feed the existing human population of 7 billion, or indeed the 9 or 10 billion people projected by mid-century. The question is whether such populations can be fed without destroying the biosphere of the planet and depleting its fresh water supplies? Whether it can be done without a major extension intensified agriculture with the ever-increasing use of chemical fertilisers, pesticides, hormones, antibiotics and mono-cropping techniques?

Some of the demands we should pose in this regard are as follows:

– The abolition of the private ownership of natural resources – land, water, forests, wind, solar, geothermal energy, and tidal systems.

â€¢ The socialization of the credit sector to provide long-term investment for renewable energy and adaptation to climate changes that are already inevitable and for aid to those who have been denied climate justice

â€¢ To defend the rights of first nations/indigenous peoples and to recognise the need to learn from the relationship they have developed with nature and with Mother Earth.

â€¢ End industrialised agriculture that dominates our global food system. A small handful of large corporations control much of the production, processing, distribution, marketing and retailing of food. This enables big businesses to wipe out competition and dictate tough terms to their suppliers. It forces farmers and consumers into poverty and hunger.

â€¢ A big reduction in global meat production and consumption.

â€¢ A big reduction in food waste.

â€¢ Promote food sovereignty that asserts the right of those who produce, distribute, and consume the food to control the mechanisms and policies of food production and distribution.

â€¢ Protect the biodiversity of the planet in the production of food by ending the use of pesticides and herbicides and ban GMO foods.

## The state of the movement

### 1) The indigenous struggle

According to the UN there are an estimated 370 million indigenous peoples on the planet in 90 countries and speaking roughly 7,000 languages. They have long been the most effect defenders of the ecology of the planet and its wildernesses and the best guardians of its integrity and biodiversity. Their struggle often combines with that of peasants and rural communities, but with a direct, more specific, relationship with nature and naturally assumes an ecosocialist framework. This goes alongside their own struggles for sovereignty over their own lands, territories, resources and for self-determination.

Many indigenous peoples live on resource-rich territory, partly because they have protected and preserved it for generations. This makes them prime targets for both extractive industries and land grabs. They have struggled against colonisation for more than 500 years and continue to struggle against all forms of colonisation and racism. Aboriginal peoples from Canada and the northern United States have been in the forefront the struggle against the construction of pipe lines to service the extraction of the Alberta tar sands. Fifty indigenous organisations signed a treaty to oppose the treaty in 2016 including the Standing Rock Sioux tribe, which opposes the North Dakota pipeline.

The Indigenous Peoples Global Summit was held in Anchorage Alaska in April 2009 â€”in advance of the Copenhagen COP to the held in December. It was the largest gathering of indigenous people ever held to discuss climate change. It was attended by 500 people representing 80 nations: from the Arctic, North America, Latin America Africa, the Caribbean and Russia.

Following the defeat of the climate movement at the Copenhagen climate summit (COP15) the Bolivian president

Evo Morales called a Peoples' Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth, in Cochabamba Bolivia, in April 2010, in order to make the voices of the peoples, including the indigenous peoples. Over 35,000 people attended the conference despite international travel being disrupted by a volcanic eruption in Iceland (volcano Eyjafjallajökull) which prevented many thousands more from attending.

### 2) The wider struggle

The struggle to defend the planet and against global warming and climate change requires the broadest possible coalition involving not just the power of the indigenous movements and the labour movement but also the social movements that have strengthened and radicalised in recent years and have played an increasing role in the climate movement in particular. Organisations such as Plane Stupid, Take the Power, and the Ende Gelände movements in Germany have led important direct-action campaigns. La Via Campesina is one of the largest social movements in the world, and brings together more than 200 million small and medium-scale farmers, landless people, women farmers, indigenous peoples, migrants and agricultural workers from 70 countries. The Brazilian Landless Workers Movement (MST) is one of the biggest components of Via Campesina, with 1.5 million members, which campaigns for access to land by the poor and for land redistribution. It has led land occupations by the rural poor forcing the Brazilian Government to resettle hundreds of thousands of families. Both the NGOs and the Greens have also made important contributions to the struggle. Longstanding organisations such as Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace have grown and radicalised in recent years and new groupings have come on the scene such as Avaaz and 38 degrees that have radicalised, particularly in the run up to Paris, and have an impressive mobilising ability.

The Paris COP 21 with all its weaknesses (and there are many) was a gain for the movement in that it recognised for the first time the anthropogenic nature of the climate crisis (in sharp contrast to Copenhagen) and it set a target containing the increase in the average surface temperature of the planet below 1.5°C which is a target with transitional implications. It was not won without a struggle, however. It was the direct result of a determined battle, throughout the conference, by those countries that will disappear under the waves as a result of a temperature rise in excess of 1.5°C. A coalition of a hundred vulnerable countries, led by the Marshall Islands, organised what they called a 'High Ambition Coalition' to coordinate their campaign. Many of them have long campaigned around the slogan '1.5 to stay alive' but no one had listened. This struggle needs to go alongside a world-wide policy which satisfies real human needs, which are not determined by the market but by a democratic discussion allowing the people to take their destiny in their own hands, liberated from market alienation. The task now is to build on the gains i.e. the new targets and objectives established in Paris whilst fighting to ensure that the individual countries meet the commitments to which they have agreed in terms of carbon reduction.

The involvement of the trade unions in the climate struggle is ultimately crucial, though it remains difficult in such a defensive period. Progress has never-the-less been by initiatives such as the campaign for a million green jobs in Britain which has the support of most major trade unions and the TUC. At the international level the 'just transition' campaign by the ITUC (i.e. a socially just transition from fossil fuel to green jobs) is very important, although it takes place in a reformist framework of course like the vast majority of trade union campaigns and actions. Campaigns such as 'Trade Unions for Energy Democracy' and the 'Labor Network for Sustainability'. These initiatives have credibility in the unions because they address the issue of job-losses as a result of the changeover to green energy.

### 3) The FI

The FI declared itself ecosocialist at the last World Congress in 2010. In doing so it became the only international current of the radical left to do so. It was an important decision but it was only a first step on which to build. The strongest advocates of it were its sections from the impoverished countries of the Global South that are the most impacted by extreme weather events, have contributed least in terms of carbon emissions, and are most deprived when it comes to climate justice. Some of these sections were already in effect ecosocialist.



The FI section in Mindanao in the Philippines, for example, a region facing ever more frequent and powerful typhoons, has long been involved in the defence of their communities against extreme weather events. They are also involved in the development of agricultural methods based on food sovereignty and the exclusion of genetically modified seeds from multi-nationals like Monsanto. Instead they are harvesting their own seeds and producing organic food for the local communities.

In Bangladesh, one of the most vulnerable, low-lying, and most impacted countries in the world in terms of climate change, is already suffering from rising sea levels and the salinification of vast areas of the country, the FI section is deeply involved in the struggle against climate change and rising sea level. The FI section is centrally involved major peasant movements campaigning both against climate change and for land redistribution along the lines of the MST in Brazil. Along with La Via Campesina and other organisations they are campaigning for food sovereignty, the rights of peasant producers and for land redistribution. They have been heavily involved in organising climate caravans since 2011, which have campaigned throughout Bangladesh and into Nepal and India against climate change and global warming.

In Pakistan, FI comrades have also been on the sharpest end the climate struggle. In 2010 devastating floods submerged a fifth of the country, and left millions homeless. Twenty million people were affected and 2,000 lost their lives, 12m people had their homes damaged or destroyed. Half a million livestock were lost, and 10,000 schools destroyed.

Five comrades were jailed for defending villagers after a landslide blocked the Hunza River in the Gilgit–Baltistan region of Pakistan, sweeping homes away and killing 19 people. The slide forming a 23km long lake that submerged three villages leaving 500 people homeless and 25,000 stranded. They are still in jail today seven years later and campaigns are still continuing for their release.

In Brazil FI comrades have been involved in defence of the Amazon and against the disastrous REDDs treaty. In Latin America, the organisations of the FI have been involved in mobilisations around the People's Summit at Cochabamba.

In Europe and North America FI comrades have been increasingly involved in climate mobilisations – whether around COPs in Copenhagen and Paris, or around more localised struggles – against fracking in Britain, against the tar sands in the Canadian state or against the Keystone Pipeline in the US and Canadian state.

Some radical left parties, Europe-wide, have defined themselves ecosocialist including the Red-Green Alliance in Denmark, the Left Bloc in Portugal, the Socialist Left Party in Norway and, formally at least, the Parti de Gauche in France.

## Transitional method

A transitional approach is crucial that we conduct the struggle to defend the ecology of the planet as an integral part of our overall struggle to end capitalism and establish an ecosocialist society that is economically and socially just as well as ecologically sustainable.

This does not mean, however – which is the logic of the Commission's text – along with much of the wider Radical left – that the solution to the ecological crisis today is the overthrow and replacement of capitalism world-wide in the next two or three decades. This is what I call the 'credibility gap'. Whilst ecological catastrophe is indeed just

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around the corner there are few signs that this is the case in terms of global ecosocialist revolution. In fact, in practical terms, if global ecosocialist revolution, in the next two or three decades, is the solution to global warming then there is no solution to global warming.

It is equally problematic to conclude or imply that nothing significant can be done to defend the environment whilst capitalism exists, since it would by then be too late. The working class would inherit a dead or a semi-dead planet, and there is no ecosocialism (or jobs) on a dead planet.

The reality is that a successful defence of the ecology of the planet means a struggle, here and now, to force capitalism to make serious changes here and now. And it is not impossible. It is against the logic of capitalism and the governments that are based on it, but significant change has already happened and it has been against this logic. Advances range from the reversal of the destruction of the ozone layer, to the defeat of nuclear power in Germany to the advances made in green energy, even though they remain inadequate to the task.

We have to advance demands that give people hope rather than despair – and there is little hope in a policy of one solution revolution.

What is required, therefore, is not a maximalist approach but a transitional approach. In other words, a struggle to end capitalism in the context of a struggle to force capitalism to take the steps necessary to defend the ecology of the planet – for example the full implementation of the commitments to the Paris agreement. It is a process that is described very well in the conclusion of The Commission's text – which was drafted by Michael Lowy – and which in my view is out of line with the rest of the text. It says the following, with which I strongly agree:

“To dream and to fight for green socialism or as some say, for solar communism, does not mean that we do not to fight for concrete and urgent reforms. Without any illusion in “green capitalism”, we must try to win time and impose on the powers in place, concrete measures against the ongoing catastrophe, starting with a radical reduction of the emission of greenhouse gases.

These urgent ecological demands can favour a process of radicalisation on the condition that we refuse to limit their objectives by obeying to the capitalist market or ‘competitiveness’.

Each small victory, each partial advance can immediately bring us to a higher and more radical demand. These struggles on concrete problems are important, not only because partial victories in themselves are welcome, but also because they contribute to the growth of an ecological and socialist consciousness and promote autonomy and self-organisation from below. This autonomy and this self-organisation are the necessary and decisive preconditions for a radical transformation of the world, this means, a revolutionary transformation which is only possible by the self-emancipation of the oppressed and the exploited: workers and peasants, women, indigenous communities, and also all persons prosecuted because of their race, religion or nationality.

The leading elites of the system, retrenched behind their barricades, are incredibly powerful and the forces of the radical opposition are small. But their development into a mass movement, unprecedented in its numbers, is the only hope to stop the catastrophic course of capitalist ‘growth’ and to invent a desirable form of life, more-rich in human qualities, a new society based on the values of human dignity, solidarity, freedom and respect for ‘Mother Nature’.

The changes we need today in order move in the direction of ecosocialism and reverse the climate crisis are not complex, though it will mean a big struggle to achieve them. We should call for the following:

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A complete and urgent break from fossil energy. Keep the oil in the soil and the coal in the hole. Ban the use of lignite coal, tar sands, fracking for gas and all other forms of extreme energy production. We should call for disinvestment in the fossil fuel sector and the end of subsidies for the development of projects based on fossil fuel energy.

A crash programme to convert to renewables as a part of a socialised energy system. We need at the same time a big reduction in energy use at every level of society including through the insulation of both our private and public buildings since renewables will not be enough to replace out current profligate consumption.

An end to nuclear energy.

We should call for strongly progressive tariffs when it comes to energy and water: tariffs that start at zero and increase as usage increases. This would both help the poorest people and cut the use of energy and water.

An end to the throwaway society, designed to generate vast quantities of unnecessary commodities to feed the capitalist obsession with profit and growth and the growing scandal of plastic waste. We should end the practice of planned obsolescence. We should end the production of single use plastic commodities and control the disposal of plastic where it is used. Over the last ten years we have produced more plastic than during the whole of the last century. It takes 500-1,000 years for plastic to degrade. Virtually every piece of plastic that was ever made still exists in some shape or form (except the small amount that has been incinerated). The effects of this on biodiversity is already catastrophic.

A big reduction in the use of the car, particularly for individual use. Meanwhile we need the elimination of the internal combustion (most urgently diesel), and changeover to electric cars with big investment in the necessary technology. We need a big reduction in air travel, the ending of short-haul flights (in favour of rail) and an end to airport expansion.

A big reduction in individual carbon and ecological foot prints, particularly in the Global North.

The use of progressive taxation to reduce the use of fossil fuels with the imposition of tax on air and maritime fuel an urgent necessity.

A big reduction of working time without loss of pay and a socially just transition to green jobs for workers in the fossil fuel industry. The ITUC has made an important start in this regard and should be supported.

Give refugee status to the victims of ecological/climate disasters; Full respect for the democratic rights of refugees in general.

An end to end the carnage against the natural world. Elephants are still being hunted to extinction for their tusks, rhinos are hunted to extinction for their horns, tigers the same to use their bones in Chinese medicine and sharks are being killed in vast numbers just their fins and whales for the illegal meat trade. At the same time the bush meat trade is still flourishing, alongside the trapping of live wild animals for the pet trade, in Africa and South America in particular. Hunting for sport should be ended.

## An exit strategy from fossil fuel

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Whilst the above demands are crucially important, the unavoidable reality is that as long as fossil fuels are the cheapest form of energy available they are going to be used. There is an urgent need, therefore, for an exit strategy that can bring about a very big reduction in carbon emissions in the two or three decades we have available. The most effective way to do this is by making fossil fuels much more expensive by a method that is socially just, economically redistributive, and capable of commanding mass popular support.

The best proposal on the table in this regard is James Hansen's cap and dividend proposition – or something along similar lines. It provides an effective framework for a very big reduction in fossil fuel emissions, here and now whilst capitalism exists, in a decade or two, and on the basis of a major transfer of wealth from the poor to the rich as an incentive to drive it forward. No other proposal does that. Nor is Hansen's proposal dependent on an international agreement, but can be fought for through the national political arena in every country.

It would need, as Hansen recognises, to go alongside many other measures such as changeover to renewable energy, a major programme of energy conservation, an end to waste and obsolescent production, plus many of the demands listed above.

I am not proposing that the FI adopts Hansen's proposal here and now but we should give serious consideration to adopting either Hansen's proposal or something on similar lines.

*PS:*

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