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Ecosocialism:

Quito declaration on ecosocialism and 'buen vivir'

- News from around the world -

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On June 10-12, Ecuador's National Institute of Advanced Studies (IAEN, Spanish acronym) held an international symposium on Crisis of civilization, ecosocialism and 'buen vivir' . ("Buen Vivir" is usually translated as "living well," but its meaning is closer to "living appropriately.")

Over three days, the participants debated among themselves and discussed issues with the organizers and government representatives, focusing on the potentials, challenges, difficulties and ambiguities of the "citizens' revolution" that is being led by President Correa and his team.

The following declaration, adopted by the participants on the final day, has been translated from Spanish for Climate & Capitalism by Richard Fidler.

As militants, activists, teachers and professors in various American, African and European countries, we have met in Quito from June 10-12, 2013, in three intense days of debate and collective work on the theme: "Crisis of Civilization, Ecosocialism and 'Buen Vivir'." We express our appreciation to the Instituto de Altos Estudios Nacionales (an Ecuadorian institution that is in the midst of refounding itself in order to contribute more effectively to the transformations pursued by the Citizens' Revolution in Ecuador) for this opportunity to meet, which we have tried to use to share what we have learned and to deepen our understanding through mutual dialogue.

We appreciate very much the rapprochement between ecosocialist proposals and the developments linked to "Buen Vivir" (or similar notions). We are convinced that these are very closely if not directly related responses to the catastrophic ecological and social crisis of modern global capitalist civilization.

It is important that this international seminar was held in Latin America, a continent in which popular, indigenous, peasant, ecologist and women's resistance to the destructive expansion of the capitalist multinationals has greatly advanced. And a continent in which the ideas of Buen Vivir and ecosocialism have developed notably among many left-wing forces in the region, with the support and participation of the social movements.

We think it is also significant that this international seminar was held in Ecuador, a country that has adopted an exemplary world-scale initiative to illustrate the appropriate strategy for fighting greenhouse gas emissions and global warming: leave the oil and other fossil fuels in the ground out of respect for the local settlements while guiding the society toward the post-carbon era. We are referring to the Yasuní-ITT Initiative, which, we believe, should go further, be strengthened and imitated in other locations as an ecosocialist public policy.

We are fully aware of the huge obstacles that the social and ecological struggles in countries like Venezuela, Bolivia or Ecuador have had to overcome — through slow processes that have often been spread over several decades — and still have to overcome in order to modify the relationship of forces and ultimately reduce the power of the oligarchies linked to neoliberal capitalism, thereby arousing great hopes around the world.

We believe that in order to support and strengthen the ecosocialist initiatives of the left governments (sometimes more ambiguously termed "progressive") in Latin America, the key questions of course pertain to overcoming the post-colonial situations of poverty and exclusion.

However, we argue that confronting these huge social needs cannot justify an extractivist neodevelopmentalism that

ignores other fundamental challenges:

â€¢ Building a constructive relationship, respectful of their autonomy, with mass struggles and social movements demanding protection of the commons, the sphere of the public, survival and emancipation;

â€¢ Encouraging common and communitarian initiatives on a local, national and regional scale (some inspiring examples are the advances in the construction of the communal state in Venezuela, the Brazilian Environmental Justice Network, the Transition Towns movement in the British Isles or the ecovillages in Europe and elsewhere);

â€¢ Accepting the biophysical and ecosystemic limits to material production;

â€¢ Fighting against the commodification of nature, ecosystems and the commons;

â€¢ Protecting biodiversity and directly confronting the corporate mechanisms designed to appropriate it through genetic manipulation, patents and other forms of privatization of knowledge;

â€¢ Developing the strategy for overcoming predatory extractivism, with concrete plans to change the energy matrix based on fossil hydrocarbons and to reduce the wasting of resources;

â€¢ Achieving the regional integration of Latin America (with such initiatives as CELAC, UNASUR, the Banco del Sur, ALBA-TSP, Petrocaribe, etc.) for common insertion in the world economy within a veritable ecosocialist internationalism that promotes South-South cooperation and helps to alter the inequality of North-South relations;

â€¢ Recognizing and reinforcing the role of traditional knowledges; and

â€¢ The fight against consumerist models, the construction of antagonistic subjectivities, and the concretization of Buen Vivir in day-to-day practices.

We wish to reaffirm our commitment in support of the efforts being made worldwide, and especially in Latin America, to implement the principles of Buen Vivir, ecosocialism, ecofeminism, radical political ecology, environmental justice and the other emancipatory currents.

We call for respect for the self-determination of the peoples and the integrity of their territories, to achieve and strengthen the conditions for peace and harmony that ought to exist among associated peoples.

We recommend that a particular effort be made to create the conditions propitious for the exercise of long-term planning and foresight. And we reaffirm our determination to devise the international networks that will enable us to reinforce all of these efforts.

Quito, June 12, 2013

The participants in the international seminar on the crisis of civilization, ecosocialism and Buen Vivir

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Quito declaration on ecosocialism and ‘buen vivir’

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