



carmelngo

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"For many people, these issues [of environmental sustainability] are now a matter of life and death. Unless those who represent the nations of the world can see beyond ideology and the surface of issues in order to make the necessary changes or corrections, nothing will happen. The health and future of millions of people hangs in the balance."

Ecuemencial Patriarch
Bartholomew

Exactly 20 years after the first Earth Summit organized by the United Nations (UN) in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, about 130 heads of states and over 50,000 delegates from civil society, including women, youth, indigenous people, non-governmental organizations, local authorities, workers, trade unions, business and industry, farmers and member of the scientific and technological community from all over the world, gathered.

The conference was held in an exhibition mega-center in the midst of green-forested hills about 40km from downtown Rio. The location used 20 years ago, situated in the Flamengo Park close to the historical downtown of Rio, was offered by the Brazilian government to develop the Peoples' Summit that was a forum open to all. The Peoples' Summit, distinct from the UN's conference, was self-organized by global civil societies as an alternative conference.



June 20-22, 2012 RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL

RIO+20: Clear Results Lacking; Much Work Remains to be Done

The world now is very different from the world two decades ago. The international framework and the global balance have changed dramatically. China, Brazil and India are now emerging as future economic and political powers with major global influence. About one billion people suffer from starvation and over two billion live under the line of poverty (US\$2.00 a day). Many biological problems remain, or have worsened, after the biodiversity pact of 1992. CO² emissions are increasing at such a rate that it is now estimated that by 2017 we will reach the 2°C threshold for the ecosystems to develop resilient capacities. At the same time natural resources, such as petroleum, have become scarce commodities, which generates unprecedented competition among nations for raw materials.

Within this context, the two Summits were impressive for how different they were. They both offered a global expression of the human diversity, both being massive and multicultural. Each Summit itself expressed the global desire to preserve our earth for the future. But at the core, each Summit's message was very different.

At one extreme we have those who want to preserve nature in order to maintain "business as usual," with the natural elements, such as water and air, now considered market commodities. Under the title "green economy" within the Rio+20 agenda, they represented a numerically small but powerful force at the Earth Summit. At the other extreme are those who want to pre-



Carmelites at Rio+20: Eduardo Scarel, O. Carm., of Argentina and Airie Kuil, O. Carm., of the Netherlands at an entrance to the conference. (Photo courtesy of Airie Kuil)

serve nature because the earth itself has rights to exist. Referred to as “Mother Earth,” they also represent a small but deeply committed party of the Peoples’ Summit. In the middle is a large spectrum of farsighted positions that are represented by diverse civil societies, heads of states and business organizations. All the voices could be heard in both Summits. We Carmelites, as well as other religious orders, have spoken with a prophetic voice of the Order, thanks to our active presence and visibility in such a global mega event.

Entitled “Rio+20 the Future We Want,” the conference focused on sustainable development, the same as every year since 1992. But this conference was subtitled “Green economy Within the Framework of Sustainable Development and Eradication of Poverty”. Since the first conference in Rio, the integration between economic prosperity, social inclusion and environmental protection have supported the metaphor of “sustainable development.” Such integration is still far from being reached with concerns that politics have seen environmental protection as a tool for increasing economic competitiveness and job security, thereby creating prosperity. This is the well-known or old story of capitalism. Thus failure is guaranteed if Rio+20 negotiations are just based on a *greed* economy but now *greened* by new “natural” commodities. The kind of economy is far from pursuing the eradication of social injustice that it itself generates. It was not a coincidence that government leaders from the USA, UK and Germany were not present at the Rio+20 conference opening session.

The motto of the Peoples’ Summit in Rio+20 was “For the Social and Environmental Justice.” An essential aspect of the alternative peoples’ voice is an ecological sensitivity which is common to many religious expressions worldwide. All religions present in the mega-event look toward the same finality: the preservation of creation for it is sustained by the Creator’s love. To some degree, we can think of the current ecological movement as one of the many ways the Creator comes to visit us and to sustain and support creation in our day. The ecological sensitivity of our spiritual tradition and Christian roots could be our Carmelite prophetic voice among the people. That is why we feel the urgent need to develop a “green economy” concept, within an ethical framework, in order to open negotiations that include the common good, the social and human integral development within the reality of limited earth resources, and to overwhelm the voracity. We need to overcome the current *greed* economy by means of social progressive policies that include spiritual ethics or values that are deeply and essentially human.

The image that best describes the message of the alternative voice is that of guide-rails. The metaphor bring to our attention that the whole biosphere is nearing tipping points towards

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Religious Resources for Understanding RIO+20:

Action and Advocacy for Climate Change: A Resource Guide for Religious Communities

religionsforpeace.org/assets/action-and-advocacy-for.pdf

EcoJesuit: Connecting Jesuits, People and Ecology

ecojesuit.com

Caritas Internationalis

Rio+20: Solidarity Economics

blog.caritas.org/2012/06/21/rio20-solidarity-economics/

Rio+20: Faith Based Organizations Keep the Hope Alive

blog.caritas.org/2012/06/23/rio20-faith-based-organisations-keep-the-hope-alive/

Rio+20: Round Up

blog.caritas.org/2012/06/19/rio20-round-up/

Rio+20: Dark Clouds Gather Over Rio

blog.caritas.org/2012/06/21/dark-clouds-gather-over-rio20/

Rio+20: Conference Reflections

blog.caritas.org/2012/06/22/rio20-conference-reflections/

The Orthodoxy of Catholic Ecology

www.catholicworldreport.com/Item/1434/the_orthodoxy_of_catholic_ecology.aspx

For more detailed information about the content of these Side Events, check the Carmelite NGO website: carmelitengo.org or www.uncsd2012.org/meetings_sidevents.html



The Pluses and Minuses of Rio+20

To better appreciate Rio + 20 it's useful to go back to 2009 and the UN Conference on Climate Change held in Copenhagen where the seeds of a green economy were first planted. The effects of the global financial crisis were being felt by 27 million people who were out of work and 80% of the world population experiencing a rise in inequality. Despite the scale of the ecological crisis, the UN climate change negotiations' failure to make any meaningful progress on mitigation targets. However, out of a toxic environment a new vision emerged – one of greener, fairer

and more inclusive economies.

After three years of debate since Copenhagen, the final text of Rio+20 is finished, but it is lacking in many ways; for example, the failure to reference ecological limits, the lack of clarity on natural resource management or social protection measures, the insipid language on the role of government regulation for spurring the transition, and the lack of timelines and urgency are all marked failures. But there are also outcomes to celebrate. Good outcomes from Rio + 20 include: Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and it's implementation; recognition of the nexus between environment and poverty; recognition that Sustainable Development requires the respect for, protection, promotion and fulfillment of human rights; upholding the principles and process for Sustainable Development, and their integration into the post 2015 development framework; commitment to a global mandate to put Sustainable Development at the heart of the successor framework for the current Millennium Development Goals; agreement that a post 2015 framework for development should be an urgent priority

“ Out of a toxic environment a new vision emerged-- one of greener, fairer and more inclusive economies. ”

for the international community; agreement on a single process within the UN to develop a global development framework post

2015, leading to fully elaborated goals that encompass the environmental, economic and social dimensions of sustainable development, with targets and support structures; agreement that the process for developing a post 2015 development framework be transparent, participatory and engage people living in poverty, particularly marginalized groups such as women, disabled people and indigenous people; a clear timeframe for the follow-up process; the UN Statistical Commission will launch a program of work on alternative metrics to GDP; governments have committed to promoting sustainable modern energy services for all through national and sub-national efforts; governments have reaffirmed their commitment to eliminate subsidies that contribute to illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, and to phase out subsidies that support inefficient fossil fuels. They have stressed the need for more coherent and integrated planning and decision-making that involve all relevant stakeholders.

Perhaps the most beneficial outcome is the transition from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs still need to be articulated and targets set, but they will address the following:

- ✓ combating poverty
- ✓ hanging consumption patterns
- ✓ promote sustainable human settlement development
- ✓ biodiversity and forests
- ✓ oceans
- ✓ water resources
- ✓ advancing food security
- ✓ energy, including renewable sources

Rio+20 underscored the need for multi-stakeholder involvement at all levels for moving forward. Rio + 20 provides civil society with a mandate to ensure that all conversations and strategies on a green economy will involve the relevant constituents from indigenous groups, local communities, informal and small businesses, farmers, and non-governmental organizations.



Foreigners Cry Foul: Unsustainable Prices at Rio+20

In an article in *BrazzilMag*, Vladimir Platonow wrote that many attendees, especially from the poorer countries found the prices at Rio unsustainable. He cited something more than a quick snack is hard to come by at less than 30 reais (US\$15). A visitor from Finland found the 20 reais for a hamburger and fruit juice unfriendly. A cup of coffee was triple what one would pay in Tel Aviv. Water and colas were running 5 reais. The official t-shirt, made of organic cotton and recycled PET bottles, came in at 127 reais (US\$64).



The Youth and Rio+20: Some of the Reactions to the Final Document

According to reports in *AlertNet*, self-appointed as the world's humanitarian news site, the young participants in the recent Rio+20 were not satisfied.

“These consultations with us, the youth, were completely superficial as virtually all our suggestions were deleted from the outcome document,” said one.

During preparatory meetings young people pushed for the inclusion of a variety of progressive positions. As a result, some countries changed their positions from “flexible” to “retain” with regard to that language in the text.

Some saw it only as a step. “Rio+20 doesn't mean the end. Actions will continue and we will just use this as a platform to become stronger,” said another.



The Largest Peaceful Gathering of People in History

Having 50,000 people gather to discuss the world situation and to develop solutions is quite a feat. Add to that the number the complications from having over 130 world leaders in the same area. But what is considered the largest peaceful gathering of humanity in history?

According to *Bukisa*, the largest gathering was in Ardh Kumbh Mela, India (2007) with 70 million people in attendance for a Hindu religious festival.



Indigenous people from Brazil were among the 50,000 delegates from civil society. Some 130 heads of governments also attended. (Photo courtesy of Arie Kuil, O. Carm.)

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no return caused by current production and consumption patterns. The guide rails metaphor reserves space for economic activities to be subsidiary to human beings and nature, however the space is constrained by earth's limited resources and its capacity to regenerate. Currently the regeneration of natural resources we consume in a year requires a year and half. That is to say, we are devouring the planet. We must become aware that unlimited economic growth at the cost of nature and the poor is no longer possible. On the other side of the guide rail we have social justice as the cornerstone. This includes everyone's right to food, health, education, water, clean air, and participation in the political sphere. The implementation of human rights, overcoming poverty, collective participation and fighting against a "greened" greed economy will absolutely be a major element to achieve sustainable development in the new era strengthened now by Rio+20.

Nonetheless, we are aware that such post-Rio+20 goals will become reality only if they are accompanied by a profound change in the *selfish* human being paradigm (funded by

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homo economics, as the one being whose supreme longing is to have more and to gain more at any cost as fostered by the greed economy archetype. Such a process definitely requires recovering essential and universal values of the well-living (and overcoming the simple concept of well-being), such as intimate peace, inner happiness, and respect for the other, as part of the religious and the so human experience of human being. It is only then that we can grow in awareness of our poverty and the vulnerability manifested in the suffering of God's creation today, namely, in the suffering of many men and women in the world and of nature. In the end such a challenge will allow us to become or recuperate our being as *homo solidarius*, that is to say, our essential capacity to be solidary humans. As such, we are convinced that, after Rio+20, we communities of faith have a lot of work ahead to be done together.

by Eduardo Scarel, O. Carm.

Building on years of work by many around the world, the question is what needs to happen post Rio for the world to transition toward an authentically sustainable future? Several areas of concern stand out. First, the recognition that the official process was largely disregarding issues of equity as they pertained to the poor and disenfranchised. Second, that the focus on the green economy was almost entirely centered on global economic or political actors (corporations and governments) and disregarding the significance of localism (anchored in communities, both rural and urban). Third, the recognition that democracy was being taken farther away from ordinary people.

Out of this concern came a citizen's movement, *A Global Citizens Movement*, representing a collective response towards transitioning to a sustainable world and linking the local to the global. The Movement encourages all sectors of society to identify common ground for collective action that can bring about the transformation required to ensure planetary wellbeing for all, humans as well as nature.

by Jane Remson, O. Carm. - Main Representative

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