

Brief Background:

*This living document is a result of an extensive process led by the **Social Movements for an Alternative Asia (SMAA), Gerak Lawan, La Via Campesina and the supporters of the #EndWTO Campaign**. A draft document was written and circulated online before the #EndWTO Week of Action parallel to the 9th Ministerial of the World Trade Organization in Bali, Indonesia last December 2013. Many proposals summarized in this **Economy for Life** document are based on concrete alternatives and experiences that at different levels and in different regions are being built, such as the Buen Vivir, defending the commons, Just Transition, respecting Indigenous territories and community conserved areas, the rights of Mother Earth/rights of Nature, food sovereignty, prosperity without growth, de-globalization, the happiness index, the duties to and rights of future generations, the Peoples Agreement of Cochabamba and others. The draft document was then presented, discussed in depth and debated at length by 700 representatives of social movements from around the world at the **Economic Justice Assembly at the #EndWTO Week of Action** last December 2013. **This living document is a result of all those debates and contributions** from a whole array of sectors – youth, peasants, workers, fisherfolk, migrants, water warriors, climate justice activists, economic justice activists, women, and several others from around the world. For a full list of who are part of the Social Movements for an Alternative Asia, Gerak Lawan and the #EndWTO Campaign can be found here: <http://smaa.asia/announcement-registration-is-now-open-for-endwto-bali-week-of-action/>*

Economy for Life in our Earth community

THE NIGHTMARE

The capitalist system is drowning humanity and nature in chaos and despair. In the last century this system based on endless growth and accumulation of capital for a few has surpassed the carrying capacity of the Earth system. Today humanity uses the equivalent of 1.5 planets each year, but in reality only 0.7% of the world's adult population control 41% of the world's wealth while 68.7% have only 3%.

Extreme inequality at all levels and destruction of our home are the two main impacts of this system that is driven by the logic of capital. Capitalists seek to maximize their profits by overexploiting other humans and nature, looking for places and ways to obtain more profit by trying to commodify and privatize everything, inventing new areas for speculative business, promoting the financialization of nature, betting with currencies exchange rates, gambling on food, looking for more free trade measures that can increase their gains, and so on. The concentration of wealth is not a problem only of the depravity of the rich but a result of the logic of capital.

The rules of “free trade” that dictate that each country has to specialize in what they can do best according to their “comparative advantages” is the expression of the logic of capital and has only created atrophied economies: export oriented economies that end up being monopolized by very few Transnational Corporations (TNCs) and that lead to the incubation of all sorts of crises. Exporters aim to cut costs, depress wages, undermine social benefits, grab natural resources and when they cannot continue with this, they move to another country leaving only desolation and destruction. This is the aim of free trade: to free TNCs from regulation in order to allow them to move freely across borders and increase their profits.

The expansion of capital creates new processes and new forms of colonization at different levels: through military interventions, violence, extermination of social and cultural groups, free trade rules, conditional loans, grabbing of resources, mass media, cultural alienation and others. Today the world is being reshaped by imperialist powers and emerging sub-imperialisms that use their military and/or economic strength to dominate other countries and regions.

There is no possibility to fix the capitalist system to serve humanity and nature. A “sustainable capitalism” or “sustainable development” under the logic of capital is a mirage. The later we are able to achieve the transformation of this system the more painful it will be. One key step in this process of social mobilizations and organization is to deepen our understanding of the alternatives to the capitalist system. With this aim, representatives of social movements of Asia and different parts of the world held an Economic Justice Assembly in Bali, Indonesia, in December 2013, during the #EndWTO week of action, adopting this living document that reflects our debates and a contribution to the building of an alternative that can get us out of this nightmare.

THE VISION

Our vision is to build an eco-society that seeks equity within humanity and a balance with nature. We envision an economy that is grounded on the recognition that humans are part of [and not above] Mother Earth. The future depends on our capacity to recover our humanity and preserve the vital cycles of the Earth system.

To achieve this goal, humanity needs a new kind of system and economy that has human rights and rights of nature at its heart. An *Economy for Life in our Earth community* that overcomes the capitalist, patriarchal, productivist and extractivist system that treats nature and humans as only material for exploitation.

People are custodians and not owners of Mother Earth. The rivers, the glaciers, the mountains, the sea, the forests, the biodiversity have the right to live, to exist, to regenerate, to be free from pollution, to interact and preserve their integrity. For our subsistence, humans need and can serve from Mother Nature, but this has to be done while respecting the vital cycles of nature. We can cut a tree but not destroy an entire forest; we can feed ourselves with plants and animals without exterminating the species; we can use technologies to facilitate our life without affecting the integrity of nature. In other words, **human economic activity should never go beyond the limits, the capacity to regenerate and the vital cycles of nature.** This is the essence of the rights of nature.

Humanity can only flourish with the full implementation of human rights for all: economic, social and cultural rights; civil and political rights; women’s rights; children and elder rights; indigenous people, peasants, workers, migrants, fishers, artists and the rights of all communities.

The *Economy for Life* is an economy where the fundamental needs of every being and Mother Earth are guaranteed to promote the creativity, humanity and happiness of life. Where solidarity, complementarity, diversity, peace and the well-being of the Earth community as a whole have replaced the greed, ambition, competition, individualism, discrimination, violence and destruction of our Mother Earth generated by the logic of capital.

THE TRANSITION

To achieve an *Economy for Life* we need to take several measures at different levels:

Redistribution and complementarity

Replace the paradigm of development with the paradigm of redistribution and equity. To address the basic needs of more than half of the world’s population and end the disruption of the vital cycles of the Earth system, global and national economies have to redistribute wealth to reduce asymmetries under the limits of nature. Some sectors and countries still need to improve their well-being while others need to reduce their overconsumption and waste. Well-being for all will only be sustainable when we share what is possible and available. The real challenge is

not only to eliminate poverty but, more importantly, to eliminate the concentration of wealth and power and achieve economic and social justice based on rights.

Take control over, in a democratic and conscious way, the key means of production, finance and trade and establish mechanisms of complementarity, solidarity and redistribution penalizing the over-accumulation of wealth and the destruction of ecosystems.

Bring producers of goods, providers of services and people closer together, promoting self-management, self-emancipation, solidarity and social interaction in harmony with nature. The closer the relation between production and consumption, the more possible it is to **develop democratic control and participation of the people over the economy.** Therefore we need to promote local production and consumption of durable goods to satisfy the fundamental needs of the people and avoid the transport of goods that can be produced locally.

End the system of overconsumption, luxury and waste driven by large corporations. The *Economy for Life* will not seek to sell more to create addicted consumers but instead to satisfy the fundamental and quality needs of all with durable goods that use less natural resources and are reused or recycled, adopting zero waste approaches. Advertising has to be under the control of the society to stop overconsumption.

Transform trade into a vehicle for complementarity and not for competition and profit. Trade should be guided by the need of the people and not by the greed of TNCs, interchanging in the market what a community, region or country produces in excess, after satisfying its local needs or what they cannot produce locally. This involves giving priority to the value of use of all produced goods over their value of exchange. To achieve this **trade rules have to be asymmetric:** more beneficial for the weakest and more demanding for the strongest. The world today is extremely uneven. To apply even rules in this reality only benefits those that have more power. "Special and differential treatment" is not enough at all. Trade agreements should be asymmetric allowing the smallest and disadvantaged economies to use different trade measures to address the needs of their more marginalized population. Several measures can be applied like:

- re-introduction of tariffs and duties on imports of luxury goods and other goods already produced locally as a means of increasing the state's fiscal base, support local production and reduce the depletion of nature.
- export or import restrictions, export taxes, increased tariffs, subsidies and incentives for products produced locally, durable goods and low consumption.
- government procurement programs and local, regional and national policies are central to stimulate small and medium-sized local enterprises, cooperatives and social enterprises from different sectors.
- remove agriculture, water, education, health, communication, financing, intellectual property, government procurement, investment, Investor-State Dispute Settlement mechanisms and others from all trade agreements to recover the space that societies need, to define the best policies for the people and nature.

Markets have to serve to exchange what is needed for the common benefit of the Earth community.

Society has to own and democratically control the financial system. Establish international, permanent and binding mechanisms of control over capital flows. Implement an international monetary system based on a new system of reserves, including the creation of regional reserve currencies in order to end the current supremacy of the dollar and to ensure international financial stability. Socialize the money that currently is under the control of central banks that respond to private interests and not social demands. Implement a global mechanism of state and citizen control of banks and financial institutions. Prohibit hedge funds, derivatives and other toxic products. Create people-based banking institutions and strengthen existing popular forms of lending based on mutuality, cooperatives and solidarity. Institutionalize full transparency within the financial system through the opening of the books to the public. Prioritize lending, at

minimum rates of interest that are defined through democratic processes to meet social and environmental needs.

Establish progressive taxes as a means for redistribution and to end the concentration of wealth in a few hands. These measures should include taxes to high incomes, movements of capital, luxury goods and profits, financial transaction taxes, taxes on fossil fuels and other polluting activities and the elimination of tax havens.

Promote participatory budget processes at all levels and in all sectors to redistribute taxes and incomes of the state/society assuring that peoples needs are met.

Cancel the debt of countries that were imposed to the people to fulfill corporate and private interests. Establish systems of democratic, accountable, fair, sovereign borrowing and lending that serves the people and nature. Abolish credit and aid conditionalities supporting the sovereign right of the people to decide. Governments and States should no longer assume responsibility for the debts of big corporations and banks.

Equity

Dismantle Transnational Corporations' power in order to achieve equity and justice. To achieve a world without TNCs we need to put in place several measures to limit their power, stop their collusion with governments, and end their impunity. Transitional measures can include, to:

- reduce and eliminate their power: limit their size; increase taxes; measures against distorting prices; control of speculative and oligopolistic behavior; nationalization and socialization in order to place TNCs under the democratic control of the people and allow the emergence of medium and small sized players.
- end the collusion with governments: establishment of strong and independent mechanisms of regulation, transparency and accountability of state officials and corporate representatives; social participation in the regulation process; transformation of the state and the democracy to serve the people.
- end their impunity: inclusion of crimes of corporations in our judicial system; introduction of international binding codes; establishment of mechanisms such as international and regional courts to judge and punish environmental and human rights violations of TNCs.

Return to society the private property controlled by elites, TNCs, big banks', national corporations' and 'sub-national corporations'. Redirect public spending to guarantee basic incomes, social security and finance projects for people and nature. Stop bailouts and subsidies from governments to corporations and banks and support instead those that are losing their houses, land, workshops and small business.

Democratize the management of public state owned enterprises. Encourage public service managers, staff, unions and consumer/social organizations to collaborate to this end and to sanction corruption and nepotism practices.

Social Justice

Defend and guarantee the rights of those that are most marginalized by the current capitalist and neocolonial system: women, indigenous people, peasants, migrants, domestic workers, elderly, LGBT community, cultural minorities or even majorities that have been displaced by the powerful. Indigenous Peoples' rights are essential, including their rights to their land, territories and free prior and informed consent. The criminalization, exclusion and expulsion of migrants has to end. We are all human beings with the same universal human rights. In the majority of cases, boundaries between countries respond to the interests of former colonizers and emerging elites. We all share a common destiny in the Earth community and the

establishment of a fortress degrades the human condition. The main patrimony of humanity is its cultural diversity.

Reject the commodification, exploitation and sexual objectification of women. Respect all women's rights, the autonomy of women's bodies and abolish all forms of violence against women — sexual harassment, rape, prostitution, violence in intimate relationships, homophobia, female infanticide, dowry deaths, pornography and sex trafficking. Dismantle the gender division of labor. Equal opportunities for women in relation to men, equal pay for equal work. Men have to share the responsibility for children, for housework and for caring for the sick and the aging. Women's co-ownership and co-management of land and production should supersede the piece-meal micro-credits, which deepen women's indebtedness. Feminism and ecology are key components of the new society that we fight for.

Treat food and water as basic needs for our survival and not as simple commodities. Land grabbing and the privatization of natural resources through laws, investment contracts and intellectual property rights regimes should not be allowed. The use of agro toxics, genetically modified seeds and the use of food to feed cars should be banned. Small-scale and community farming should be promoted instead of big agri-business for export. Contract farming should be rejected because this encourages the vertical integration of agriculture and leaves small local farmers dependent on the agricultural corporations for seeds and the marketing of their farm products. Agroecology that is already being done in many countries should be further encouraged and expanded into a vibrant movement to counter the use of chemical fertilizers and corporate dominance. Fishing rights of fishers should be protected and fishing grounds should not be privatized. The strengthening of peasant and indigenous economies is key to guaranteeing the production of food, to meeting the nutritional and cultural needs of the local community, to reducing pollution and to cooling our planet. All forms of speculation on food and water should be banned and punished. People's problems include the presence of mining companies that are given land concessions, which further deprives local people of lands for food production, including hydro power plants that result in the displacement of people and communities.

Spread food sovereignty to guarantee the human right to food and water. Food sovereignty promotes food production by farmers, indigenous peoples and small agricultural producers; guarantees access to land, water, seeds, credit and other resources for family and community producers; develops social and public enterprises for food production, distribution, prevents hoarding and contributes to the stability of food prices in domestic markets; guarantees the right of citizens to define and to know what they consume, how their food is produced, and its origins; assures the right to healthy, varied and nutritious food; highlights the right to consume what is necessary and prioritize local production; promotes practices that contribute to reestablishing harmony with nature, avoiding greater desertification, deforestation, and destruction of biological diversity and supports the use of indigenous seeds and traditional knowledge.

Promote full employment, job security and dignified working conditions –ensuring no discrimination to women and LGBT community- by getting out of the logic of capital and profit. There is enough work and society has enough resources to pay decent wages if we end the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few. The ideology that employment is only possible through growth and “development” is a lie to keep the workers tied to the system. The introduction of new technology and machines can benefit workers reducing working hours if the economy produces goods for the people and not for competition and profit. Social security and social benefits can be strengthened if the aim is not to reduce costs of production to gain new markets. Cooperatives and small and genuine small and medium enterprises from communities should be strengthened. One way to promote full employment is to encourage the buying of local products from local producers and markets.

Stop and revert the emptying of rural areas and displacement of peasants and small fishers into the unmanageable metropolis. Implement a land use plan for better planning so that agricultural lands are not readily converted into commercial estates and housing subdivisions. Ensure access to land, especially for women. Capitalism promotes the displacement of peasants and small farmers in order to create more cheap labor, grabs their natural resources while transforming them into shallow consumers. Societies that have balance between urban and rural areas are more resilient and sustainable. Protect landless people and indigenous peasants to ensure sustainable livelihoods in the rural areas, expand fundamental services to rural areas under public and community control and spread food sovereignty.

Preserve health, education, drinking water, sanitation, transport and communication as essential public services and stop their privatization through modalities like Public Private Partnership or the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) provisions. These commons have to be under the control of society in order to guarantee good quality, accessible and affordable services. There should be no patents on medicines. Public transportation has to dominate over unsustainable private car transportation. Mass media monopolies should be dismantled in order to promote the access and participation of the most marginalized sectors. The democratization and social control of mass media is essential to revert consumerism, strengthen democracy and promote cultural diversity and creativity.

Earth Justice

Move away from the dirty fossil fuel economy and the extractivist model of production. Leave the oil in the soil, the coal in the hole and the tar sands in the land! More than two thirds of fossil fuel reserves have to be left under the soil, as well as beneath the ocean floor, in order to prevent catastrophic levels of climate change. All new exploration and exploitation of oil, tar sands, oil shale, coal, uranium, and natural gas should be banned. Nuclear energy is a dangerous option and existing plants should be dismantled.

Nationalization and control by society of the energy sector to dismantle its dirty component while promoting community based renewable forms of clean energy. Decentralization in the generation and distribution of energy under local community control to reduce energy waste, promote renewable sources of energy and end megaprojects that harm ecosystems. **Everyone must have access to sustainable clean energy and participate in its democratic governance. The nationalization of industries must lead to the diversification of production and not to perpetuate the vicious cycle of extraction for export, destroying Mother Earth.**

Use of diverse, agroecological production and harvesting methods that preserve ecosystem functions and improve resilience and adaptation, in the face of climate change. Reject energy-intensive industrialized methods, which damage the environment and contribute to global warming.

Establish regulations and sanctions against industries that destroy and pollute the environment without the threat of international disputes. The gifts that humans take from Mother Earth cannot be at a scale or through means of production, technology or commodification that destroy the ecosystem and erase biodiversity species. In our Mother Earth there is enough for all humanity if we respect its vital cycles and learn to live in harmony with nature.

Reject the commodification, financialization and privatization of the functions of nature through the so-called “green economy” which places a price on nature and creates new derivative markets that will only increase inequality and expedite the destruction of nature. REDD (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation), Climate Smart Agriculture, blue carbon, biodiversity offsetting and other environmental service mechanisms are being promoted only with the goal to create new markets for speculative financial capital. To

put a price on the vital functions of nature and to bring them into the market will only accelerate the destruction of the planet and the concentration of wealth.

Promote technologies that are socially, culturally, and environmentally appropriate.

Knowledge is universal and should not be subject to private ownership and private use for applications in the form of technology. In this regard, all intellectual property barriers should be removed. New technologies should seek to contribute to bring balance to the Earth community and not follow the suicidal path of trying to bring unending economic growth. Traditional knowledge should be recovered and preserved. Humanity has to learn from its roots. False technological solutions should be stopped because they are disrupting the Earth's system and deeply affecting the health of nature and all life. We therefore reject techno-fix "solutions" like geo-engineering, genetically modified organisms, agrofuels, industrial bioenergy, synthetic biology, nanotechnology, hydraulic fracturation (fracking), nuclear projects, waste-to-energy generation based on incineration, carbon capture and storage and others.

Foster diversity in all its relevant forms: diversity of foods, goods, knowledge, traditions, identity, creativity and others thinking first on the local needs of the people and the health of the ecosystem.

Establish new indicators to reflect the different aspects of life based on the fulfillment of human rights and Mother Earth rights, the development of creativity, freedom and happiness in life are needed. The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) indicator measures the goods that are commodified because that is essential for capital, it doesn't take into account the work of millions of peasants, indigenous people, domestic workers and many others because they don't produce for the market. Indicators for life have to be qualitative and not only quantitative taking into account the diversity of communities on the Earth.

Earth Community Democracy

Develop a participative and active democracy at community, national, regional and global level. The rule of the market and capital has to be replaced by the rule of the people's voice. The *Economy for Life* can only flourish in a revitalized democracy of the Earth community. Transparency, permanent process of consultation and decision-making, mechanism of accountability and sanctions of authorities, election of representatives in an environment free of patronage politics and bombarding propaganda are essential to guide the Economy for Life. Citizens have to know how their food, goods and services are produced, where it comes from, and what it contains. In workplaces, communities, public services, government institutions, the participation and democratic control of society is key to achieve the best results for all. New technologies combined with traditional forms of consultations can give decision-making power to the people. Local democracy needs to be complemented with global democracy. There has to be process of consultation at local, national and also international level for issues like climate change and others.

Fight and defeat all forms of imperialism, sub-imperialism, corporate power, neocolonialism and military or non-military impositions. The fate of all countries and regions are linked to the destiny of the rest of the countries and regions. Real democracy cannot be restricted to the limits of a nation. States have to be rebuilt.

Reduce military spending and dismantle the war industry and military infrastructure. The military complex is a key factor of the current capitalist economy. Wars are promoted to access natural resources, create demand for new weapons, grab public funds and develop a military presence to guarantee the interests of elites and TNCs. The global military and defense budget (an estimated \$1.5 trillion dollars) is more than enough to address the needs of drinking water, food, and renewable energy of the whole world.

Promote a real process of regional integration based on the people and not on trade of goods or capital. Nations have been created because of geopolitical interests without taking into account, in many cases, history, culture and the integrity of ecosystems. A real process of integration for the people will help to complement and manage our habitat in harmony with nature. The final aim of integration is to remove barriers that divide people and to have a united humanity based on solidarity that cares for all.

Dismantle the World Trade Organization (WTO), the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The domain and power that few governments and TNCs have in these organizations must be eradicated. New multilateral organizations to deal with the issues of finance, trade and credit have to be developed under a new multilateral scheme that looks for all aspects of our Earth community.

Reinvent the United Nations (UN) with no Security Council and 5 permanent members with veto power. Those countries and regions that have been marginalized should have more presence and the rules should be asymmetric to benefit them and seek genuine equity between all. A new UN that is free of corporate influence and that combines representation from governments and from the people is needed. All specialized multilateral bodies that deal with aspects of the economy and finance have to be under a reinvented UN that takes care of the Earth community as a whole.

POWER TO THE PEOPLE AND OUR DREAMS

As our Vision states, the ***Economy for Life*** is an economy where the fundamental needs of every being and Mother Earth are guaranteed to promote the creativity, humanity and happiness of life. Where solidarity, complementarity, diversity, peace and the well-being of the Earth community as a whole have replaced the greed, ambition, competition, individualism, discrimination, violence and destruction of our Mother Earth generated by the logic of capital.

We will achieve this vision by supporting each other's struggles at local, national, regional, and international levels, across sectors, across issues, across borders. The solutions are in our hands, the hope is in our hearts, and the power is in our solidarity. We will change the balance of forces, reclaim our future, change the system and realize an ***Economy for Life for Our Earth Community***.