Manuscript of the Peoples’ Sustainability Treaties: Towards advancing a global citizens movement

Uchita de Zoysa
Global Sustainability Solutions (GLOSS)

Hundreds of civil society organisations from around the world who, with commitment, evolved fourteen Peoples’ Sustainability Treaties prior to Rio+20, have declared that another world is possible after the Summit and pledged their commitment to a transition towards an increasingly sustainable future on Earth.

Humankind faces multiple and daunting crises that are more than likely to confront and impact billions of people in the decades to come. In addition, research has shown that our actions are very likely going to cause us to transgress multiple planetary thresholds and boundaries. Despite this, governments at Rio+20 are missing yet another opportunity to formulate an effective response to these crises. Indeed, since 1992, there has been a retrogression in the consensus that was reached at the Earth Summit – and reflected in such principles as burden sharing, articulation of rights, mobilisation of support, and protection of the vulnerable. Repeated attempts to revive this consensus – at Johannesburg in 2002, Bali in 2007, Copenhagen in 2009, and now Rio de Janeiro in 2012—have come up empty handed, thus thwarting efforts to build upon it. Despite unprecedented growth in the global economy since 1992, governments are trapped into making insatiable demands for still more unsustainable growth and increasing inequity to remedy problems that economic globalisation itself has caused.

The signatories to this Manifesto, refuse to sit idly by in the face of another failure of governments to provide hope for a sustainable future for all. We announce our responsibility for undertaking actions, inviting and encouraging similar actions and commitments by other rights holders and stakeholders, communicating a vision for healthy communities, sustainable and equitable human wellbeing and its associated strategies, and coming together in the form of a global citizen’s movement to shepherd the transition to a sustainable, equitable, and democratic future. These would come together in the form of a global citizen’s movement to shepherd the transition to a sustainable, equitable, and democratic future, one in which ethics is both a right and a responsibility—at the level of the individual, the community and the planet.

The signatories have pledged that:

Equity is the overarching demand from the civil society world, and must be the foundation of the collective global response. We call for equity within generations, equity across generations, and equity between humans and nature. For this we need to revert back to making individual and societal decisions based on equity and ecological factors and not merely on monetary factors. A different sort of economics, a new approach to learning and education as a process, a revised understanding of ethics and of spirituality then become the ways in which we can work toward a more Equitable society; one that recognises our integral relationship with the natural world.

Localising our systems of economies, decentralising governance, and advancing sustainable lifestyles and livelihoods becomes the new social order of sustainable societies. Localism is the theme emerging across the board which is linked to the principles of devolution, of decentralisation and of subsidiarity, turning localism into a world-wide movement becomes the key to unpacking many of the complexities we face, whether in the case of sustainable consumption and production or in the case of radical ecological democracy. Protecting the rights of Mother Earth and of humans, transforming our governance systems through radical ecological democracy, respecting cultural diversity, and strengthening sustainable economies is the way towards sustainable futures for all. It is thus essential that we create a more effective, responsible and democratic system of global governance.

A Global Citizens Movement is the collective response towards transitioning to a sustainable world. All sections of society must strive to converge upon their visions and convictions and find common ground for collective action that can bring about the transformation required to ensure the wellbeing of all on the planet – humans as well as nature. Such a global citizens movement would catalyse a peaceful and prosperous new world that generates widespread happiness and contentment – thus propagating widespread practices of mindful intentional action. For this, a new sense of ethics, values and spirituality must be seeded within current and future generations through a redesigned system of learning, education and enlightenment.

This manifesto calls for action that helps move simultaneously toward a more localised socio-economic structure and toward a supra-national mindset that helps us transcend the parochial concerns of a corporate-capitalistic globalisation to activate a global citizens movement.

MORE INFO
Please contact Mr. Uchita de Zoysa at uchita@sltnet.lk
The official Rio+20 outcome was - somewhat predictably - a bit of a disappointment. However, the real seeds of progress were sown on the sidelines. A number of events at the People’s Summit held the promise of effective citizens’ action towards sustainability and equity, building on the past and carrying on into the future. One of these was the initiation of a host of Peoples’ Sustainability Treaties, dealing with a range of issues and actions, starting from the very local, going all the way up to the global.

The low expectations for the outcomes from formal process suggested that an alternative centre of energy needed to be created. Uchita de Zoysa, a sustainability activist with a history of engagement pre-dating the original Earth Summit in 1992, conceived the idea to develop a set of Peoples’ Sustainability Treaties, with the hope to coalesce the thinking of civil society organisations (CSOs) in the direction of a strong social movement towards an alternative and desirable future.

The basic idea was to establish a network of Treaties, with each Treaty being driven by a collaboration of partners, and with all the Treaty circles being linked together through a loose coalition structure. Uchita reached out to a handful of individuals, who were themselves part of existing networks, to seed the Treaty process. The process was then thrown open to CSOs. By the time Rio+20 commenced, 14 Treaties were already established and a Synthesis Report had been created.

During Rio+20, a series of side events were organised, both for the overall process and for specific Treaties. From these a common Manifesto emerged, encompassing both a set of broad principles and a framework for action that CSOs could converge around, even while retaining their own diverse objectives and strategies. The Manifesto was then opened up for endorsement by both CSOs and individuals.

The objective of the Treaties, from the very start, was to focus on the post-Rio+20 process while building on many years of work done across the world. The question we asked: what needed to happen, post-Rio, for the world to transition toward an authentically sustainable future? What would we, as engaged though somewhat disenfranchised partners in the process, like to see happen over the next few years? The answers began to emerge quite clearly.

Three areas of concern stood out strongly. Firstly, the recognition that the official process was largely disregarding issues of equity as they pertained to the poor and disenfranchised. Secondly, that the focus on the green economy was almost entirely centred on global economic or political actors (corporations and governments) and disregarding the significance of localism (anchored in communities, both rural and urban). Thirdly, the recognition that democracy, already stunted by an almost exclusive focus on representative politics, was being taken even further away from everyday people.

Our Manifesto points to three sets of solutions and actions to overcome these problems:

Equity and sustainability for all are the overarching demands from the world of civil society, and must be the foundation of any collective global response. We call for equity within generations, equity across generations, and equity between humans and nature, respecting the rights of both.

Localising our economic systems, decentralising governance, and advancing sustainable lifestyles and livelihoods must become the new social order of sustainable societies. Localism is the theme emerging across the board, linked to the principles of devolution, of decentralisation and of subsidiarity, turning localism into a world-wide movement which must be the key to unpacking many of the complexities we face.

A Global Citizens’ Movement is the collective response towards transitioning to a sustainable world and linking the local to the global. All sections of society must converge upon their visions and convictions, finding common ground for collective action that can bring about the transformation required to ensure planetary wellbeing for all, humans as well as nature, and the envisioning of a new global governance order.

In conclusion, this much has emerged from the Rio+20 process so far: we need a Global Citizens Movement focused on equity and the linkages between localism and globalism. And all of this can, indeed must, happen independently of actions by nation-states engaged in the official Rio+20 process.
MEDIA RELEASE
22nd June 2012, Rio de Janeiro

PEOPLES SUSTAINABILITY MANIFESTO
For Action Beyond RIO+20, June 2012
Released for Endorsement and Support

The fourteen Peoples’ Sustainability Treaties, evolved through a consultative process with hundred of civil society organizations, converged at the Rio+20 to launch a Manifesto on the final day of the summit. They have declared that another world is possible after Rio+20 and pledged their commitment to a transition toward increasingly sustainable futures on earth.

The signatories to this Manifesto refuse to sit idly by in the face of another failure of governments to provide hope for a sustainable future for all. They announced their own responsibility for undertaking actions, inviting and encourage similar actions and commitments by other rightsholders and stakeholders, communicating a vision for healthy communities, sustainable and equitable human well-being and its associated strategies, and coming together in the form of a global citizen’s movement to shepherd the transition to a sustainable, equitable, and democratic future. These would come together in the form of a global citizen’s movement to shepherd the transition to a sustainable, equitable, and democratic future, one in which ethics is both a right and a responsibility—at the level of the individual, the community and the planet.

Humankind faces multiple and daunting crises that are more than likely to confront and impact billions of people in the decades to come. In addition, research is showing us that our actions are very likely going to cause us to transgress multiple planetary thresholds and boundaries. Despite this, governments at Rio+20 are missing yet another opportunity to formulate an effective response to these crises. Indeed, since 1992, there has been a retrogression in the consensus that was reached at the Earth Summit—and reflected in such principles as burden sharing, articulation of rights, mobilization of support, and protection of the vulnerable. Repeated attempts to revive this consensus—at Johannesburg in 2002, Bali in 2007, Copenhagen in 2009, and now Rio de Janeiro in 2012—have come up empty handed, thus thwarting efforts to build upon it. Despite unprecedented growth in the global economy since 1992, governments are trapped in making insatiable demands for still more unsustainable growth and rising inequity to remedy problems that economic globalization itself has caused.

The signatories have pledged to:

Equity is the overarching demand from the civil society world, and must be the foundation of the collective global response. We call for equity within generations, equity across generations, and equity between humans and nature. For this we need to revert back to making individual and societal decisions based on equity and ecological factors and not merely on monetary factors. A different sort of economics, a new approach to learning and education as a process, a revised understanding of ethics and of spirituality then become the ways in which we can work
toward a more Equitable society; one that recognizes our integral relationship with the natural world

**Localizing** our systems of economies, decentralizing governance, and advancing sustainable lifestyles and livelihoods becomes the new social order of sustainable societies. Localism is the theme emerging across the board which is linked to the principles of devolution, of decentralization and of subsidiarity, turning localism into a world-wide movement becomes the key to unpacking many of the complexities we face, whether in the case of sustainable consumption and production or in the case of radical ecological democracy. Protecting the rights of Mother Earth and of humans, transforming our governance systems through radical ecological democracy, respecting cultural diversity, and strengthening sustainable economies is the way towards sustainable futures for all. It is thus essential that we create a more effective, responsible and democratic system of global governance

A **Global Citizens Movement** is the collective response towards transitioning to a sustainable world. All sections of society must thrive to converge upon their visions and convictions and find common ground for collective action that can bring about the transformation required to ensure the wellbeing of all on the planet—humans as well as nature. Such a global citizens movement would catalyze for a peaceful and prosperous new world that generates widespread happiness and contentment – thus propagating widespread practices of mindful intentional action. For this, a new sense of ethics, values and spirituality must be seeded within current and future generations through a redesigned system of learning, education and enlightenment.

This manifesto calls for action that helps move simultaneously toward a more localized socio-economic structure and toward a supra-national mindset that helps us transcend the parochial concerns of a corporate-capitalistic globalization to activate a global citizens movement.

The Peoples’ Sustainability Treaties is an initiative by global civil society organizations to come together to develop an independent, collective outcome for a sustainable future beyond Rio+20. The treaties are essentially a forward looking process and targets a future beyond Rio+20 and will become a living document towards the transition to a sustainable world order.

More information on the Peoples’ Treaties process, the outcome documents and on the Manifesto of post-Rio+20 action can be found at: [http://sustainabilitytreaties.org/](http://sustainabilitytreaties.org/). All civil society organizations and citizens of the world are invited to commit themselves by endorsing the Manifesto at: [http://www.ipetitions.com/petition/peoples-sustainability-manifesto/](http://www.ipetitions.com/petition/peoples-sustainability-manifesto/)

For any Rio+20 follow-up action please contact Mr. Uchita de Zoysa at uchita@slt.net.lk

END