

Alternative Globalization Addressing People and Earth - AGAPE

A Call to Love and Action

This document is the result of work on economic globalization from Harare to Porto Alegre. It was prepared by the commission for Justice, Peace and Creation under the direction of the central committee. Its final version was received by the executive committee in September 2005 which also approved the use of the document in the economic justice plenary.

Introduction

We, representatives of churches gathered at the ninth assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC), emphasize that a world without poverty is not only possible but is in keeping with the grace of God for the world. This conviction builds on the rich tradition of ecumenical social thought and action, which is centred on God's option for the poor as an imperative of our faith. It captures the results of a seven-year global study process of the churches' responses to economic globalization with contributions from all regions of the world and involvement of a number of Christian world communions, particularly through the 2003 assembly of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and the 2004 general council of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) (see appendix).

This process has examined the project of economic globalization that is led by the ideology of unfettered market forces and serves the dominant political and economic interests. The international financial institutions and the World Trade Organization among other such institutions promote economic globalization. The participants in the AGAPE process shared their concerns about the growing inequality, the concentration of wealth and power in the hands of a few and

the destruction of the earth - all aggravating the scandal of poverty in the South and increasingly in the North. In recent years the escalating role of political and military power have strongly surfaced. People all over the world experience the impact of imperial forms of power on their communities.

Meeting in Porto Alegre, Brazil, the home of the World Social Forum (WSF), we are encouraged by the constructive and positive message of the movements gathering in the WSF that alternatives are possible. We affirm that we can and must make a difference by becoming transformative communities caring for people and the earth.

We recognize that the divisions of the world are present among us. Since we are called to be one in Christ, we are called to be transformed by God's grace for the sake of all life on earth, overcoming the world's division. Challenged to monitor and transform economic globalization, we call ourselves to action as churches working alongside people of faith communities and movements.

AGAPE Call - for love and action

God, Creator, endowing your creation with integrity and human beings with dignity;

God, Redeemer and Liberator, freeing us from slavery and death;

God, Holy Spirit, transforming and energizing us.

Father, Son and Holy Spirit let us witness to your love, life and transforming grace.

All: God, in your grace, transform the world.

We have become apathetic to suffering and injustice. Among us are many who suffer the consequences of economic globalization; women, abused and yet caring for life; children

who are denied their rights; youth living in economic insecurity and unemployment; those labouring under exploitative conditions; the many caught in unjust trade relationships and debt slavery. There are people with disabilities and those living at the margins of society, people of colour often the first and most painfully hit by poverty, those pushed away and alienated from the land, the earth - battered, depleted and exploited. Denied of their sustenance, these people are often the most vulnerable to diseases such as HIV/AIDS. We confess that many of us have failed to respond in solidarity.

All: God, in your grace, transform the world.

We are tempted to give in to comfort and its empty promises when we ought to choose costly discipleship and change. We are driven to accept oppression and suffering as a given, when we should keep our hope and advocate for justice and liberation.

We confess that many of us have failed to take a stand in our faith and act against economic injustice and its destructive consequences on people and the earth. We are tempted to give in to materialism and the reign of money. We play to the rules of greed and conform to political and military power when we should align ourselves with the poor and excluded people.

All: God, in your grace, transform the world.

God, we ask your forgiveness.

All: God, in your grace, transform the world.

God, let our economic structures be inspired by the rules of your household of life, governed by love, justice and grace.

Let us not be afraid of change, or to seek alternatives.
Let us work for justice by resisting destructive economic
structures,
Proclaiming with hope the jubilee year of the Lord, the
cancellation of debt, the release of the captives and rest for
the land,
let us work for an agape economy of solidarity.

All: God, in your grace, transform the world.

God, you send us out,
to care for the earth and to share all what is necessary for
life in community;
to resist and to denounce all that denies life,
to love our neighbours and to do what is just,
so that where there was death, there will be life.

We call each other
to respond to your love for all people and for the earth
in our own actions and in the witness and service of our
churches;
to work for the eradication of poverty and the unconditional
cancellation of debts;
to care for land, water, air - the entire web of life;
to build just and sustainable relationships with the earth.
In the world of labour, trade and finance to study and engage
power in its different forms and manifestations, remembering
that all power is accountable to you, God. God in your grace,
help us to be agents of your transformation and to hear your
call to act with courage.

*All: Creator God, may the power of your grace transform us,
Christ, give us courage and hope to share our life with each
other and the world,
Holy Spirit, empower us to work for justice for people and the
earth.*

God, in your grace, transform the world. Amen.

In the spirit of this uniting prayer, we challenge ourselves to have the courage to take action. The AGAPE call invites us to act together for transformation of economic injustice and to continue analyzing and reflecting on challenges of economic globalization and the link between wealth and poverty.

1. Poverty eradication

We recommit ourselves to work for the eradication of poverty and inequality through developing economies of solidarity and sustainable communities. We will hold our governments and the international institutions accountable to implement their commitments on poverty eradication and sustainability.

2. Trade

We recommit ourselves to work for justice in international trade relations through critical analyses on free trade and trade negotiations, and to collaborate closely with social movements in making those agreements just, equitable and democratic.

3. Finance

We recommit ourselves to campaign for responsible lending; unconditional debt cancellation and for the control and regulation of global financial markets. Investments should be redirected towards businesses that respect social and ecological justice, or in banks and institutions that do not engage in speculation, nor encourage tax evasion.

4. Sustainable use of land and natural resources

We recommit ourselves to engage in actions for sustainable and just patterns of extraction and use of natural resources, in solidarity with Indigenous peoples, who seek to protect their land, water and their communities.

We recommit ourselves to challenge the excessive consumption of affluent societies so that they will shift towards self-restraint and simplicity in lifestyles.

5. Public goods and services

We recommit ourselves to join the global struggle against the imposed privatization of public goods and services; and to actively defend the rights of countries and peoples to define and manage their own commons.

We recommit ourselves to support movements, groups and international initiatives defending vital elements of life such as bio-diversity, water and the atmosphere.

6. Life-giving agriculture

We recommit ourselves to work for land reforms in solidarity with landless agricultural labourers and small farm holders; to advocate in various ways for self-determination over food concerns. To oppose the production of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) as well as trade liberalization as the sole directive. We commit ourselves to promote ecological farming practices and to stand in solidarity with peasant communities.

7. Decent jobs, emancipated work and people's livelihoods

We commit ourselves to build alliances with social movements and trade unions that advocate decent jobs and just wages. We commit ourselves to advocate for those workers and bonded labourers who work under exploitative conditions and are deprived of their rights to form trade unions.

8. Churches and the power of empire

We recommit ourselves to reflect on the question of power and empire from a biblical and theological perspective, and take a firm faith stance against hegemonic powers because all power is accountable to God.

We acknowledge that the process of transformation requires that we as churches make ourselves accountable to the victims of the project of economic globalization. Their voices and experiences must determine how we analyze and judge this project, in keeping with the gospel. This implies that we as churches from different regions make ourselves accountable to each other, and that those of us closer to the centres of power live out our first loyalty to our sisters and brothers who experience the negative impacts of global economic injustice everyday of their lives.

This AGAPE call is a prayer for strength to transform unjust economic structures. It will guide our reflections and actions in the next phase of the ecumenical journey. Our engagement will build on the findings, proposals and recommendations to the churches from the AGAPE process as outlined in the AGAPE background document.