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“THE EARTH IS WORRIED”

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**PROPOSAL FOR THE CREATION OF AN INTERNATIONAL TRIBUNAL TO JUDGE
CRIMES AGAINST THE FUTURE OF HUMANKIND**

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I – The Power of Economics

The last few decades have revealed two new facets of Economics. The power to transform the Planet and Humanity, inducing an Anthropocene Era. The economy became global as a result of the decisions of political and economic leaders.

It is no longer possible to turn a blind eye to the crimes committed against humanity through the greed of the economic and financial system.

In the same manner that the Vietnam war opened our eyes to the ethics of the bombardment by a military power of a poor populace, the World needs to open its eyes to the ethics of economic actions on all of Humanity and of life on the Planet. Economics today has the silent power of thousands of atomic bombs.

Ethics cannot be judged by the political or economic entities, it demands a Moral Tribunal, which judges crimes committed by Economics around the World, as was the case of the Russell Tribunal, sixty years ago, in the name of humanity, against military crimes in Vietnam.

As with that Tribunal, this one cannot intend to be legal or punitive, but rather moral and accusatory.

An observation of world events allows the identification of at least six crimes committed by Economics against humanity in the name of progress.

II – Types of Crimes

1 – Crimes that degrade nature and threaten future generations

Global warming is the result of a crime being committed slowly over the course of the past few decades by a consumerist economy, which uses natural resources beyond ecological limits, and science has shown that this stems from human decisions. It is no longer possible to advance the hypothesis of ignorance to explain the actions of the last few decades. These now need to be justified or condemned. The choice to either acquit or condemn is not technical, it is moral – economic and environmental crisis.

Apart from those crimes against life, economics has been appropriating humanity's heritage, destroying forests, biodiversity, and glaciers, polluting the oceans, and jeopardizing stratospheric space. Many economic projects, in their hunger for consumption and profit, irreparably destroy the heritage of the next generations. This "Generational Theft" is a crime committed by economic agents, who must be denounced as environmental crisis.

2 – Crimes that foment inequality

The concentration of income, production, and employment has caused a migratory shift of global proportions, as a crime against millions of refugees who are forced to leave their holy places, their families, their tribal customs, and migrate in search of employment or because of plans for hydroelectric dams, nuclear accidents, or other economic attitudes: Chernobyl, Bhopal, and Fukushima are only the most iconic. The unemployment that is caused all over the world by decisions made behind closed doors, the consequences of which were all too apparent since 1998 is a crime that demands demonstration and moral condemnation. Likewise, the dismantling of such public services as water

and sewage treatment, health, education, and transport have reached the level of real crimes against humanity – social crisis, on the persistence of poverty.

3 – Crimes that threaten the unity of the human species.

In order to enable the progress of consumerism, in a finite world, economics has already built a global society that is segregated, separating the inhabitants of an International First World of the Rich from the inhabitants of a World of Social Exclusion, a kind of Social Gulag of the Poor. These two parts make up a “Third World” World, in a global apartheid, separated by a “Golden Curtain” that snakes through the entire Planet, separating, in each country, those included and those excluded by modernity. This social apartheid has been fostering an inequality in the access to the goods and services of modernity that is so great that there is a noticeable march toward a division so radical that it threatens to destroy that feeling of sameness that until recently characterized human solidarity. The monetization of the new sciences in medicine and biotechnology to benefit those who are able to pay for their services begins to offer a greater lifespan and better health exclusively to those who can afford it. A crime against humanity is committed when science is used, propelled by economics, to render unequal those basic biological characteristics of human beings, to the point of causing a disruption in the resemblance among them – social crisis of growing inequality, and of science oriented to the service of a few.

4 – Crimes that manipulate information

Most crimes against humanity are committed because of the manipulation of perception, through the years, in order for that which

represents an evil to come to be regarded as positive, and to hide the negative impacts of the decisions made on a daily basis by economic agents, be they from the government or the private sector. Advertising has deformed humanity threading into the collective subconscious a feeling of progress, even as it strides toward catastrophe; and the communications media disguise the reality and hide the immediate consequences of economic decisions. This manipulation makes the people the cause of their own misfortune, preventing them from seeing that which is about to happen and supporting policies that lead humanity toward disaster. This crime against social awareness can be the cause of a civilization that is existentially empty, ideologically predatory, and socially divided.

5 – Crimes that disrespect cultural diversity

The march of progress walks over the corpses of cultures. Globalization imposes a single way of seeing, of thinking, of enjoying, a single form of beauty and of truth. This assassination of cultural diversity which murders languages, customs, and worldviews is a crime which the global economy has been committing.

These and other crimes demand the creation of a moral institution capable of speaking out against decisions which may come to negatively affect the future of humanity.

The World has already created a Tribunal for crimes against Humanity, the Hague Tribunal, with the legal power to judge and punish politicians and their military agents who commit atrocities in violation of human rights. And yet, crimes against humanity are committed in the name of Economics by politicians and economic agents.

It is not a court of law, capable of punishing those responsible, but rather a court that is able to issue an opinion that serves as a moral indictment of those considered responsible, personally or otherwise. To that end, the court requires the legitimacy arising from the standing of its members. As was the case with the Russell Tribunal, it needs individuals who can make moral pronouncements regarding plans and decisions made by the economic agents.

However, in today's world, 60 years after Russell and following the information revolution, legitimacy can also come from consulting the entire population with access to the internet. It would be as though everyone could issue a moral judgment on world events.

III – The Tribunal

The Tribunal would function on the following basis:

- a) A group of world leaders who would choose the case or project to be judged, and who would issue a preliminary finding;
- b) A query on a global scale to judge the finding issued by the leaders.

For decades Humanity has needed, hoped for, and been able to establish such a Tribunal. It is needed, because humanity continues to be the victim of these crimes, hoped for because it is needed; and feasible due to modern means of communication. All that was missing was a pretext, which now appears in the form of the "Rio+20". All the necessary circumstances have been provided plus one more: the risk of the "Rio+20" turning out to be a summit of no major consequence to the fate of humanity. All indications point to the debate being non-environmentally oriented, and the concept of

sustainability and the search for a new concept of progress being bypassed. Thus, one of the positive aspects of the “Rio+20” could be the establishment of this Tribunal by Civil Society, parallel to the debates among the Heads of State and Government, who are captive to the immediate and the local and who are committed to the present model of civilization.

Over the course of the last two centuries, economics has been a driving force for the advancement of civilization, but it has had negative effects, albeit mostly limited. However, in the last few decades, these effects have reached a scale comparable to the aerial bombardment of civilian populations. Regardless, it continues to be analyzed from a strictly technical standpoint, as if no other alternative existed, as if its leaders, in business or government, were mere impotent agents and not those causing the damage.

Modern times have revealed two novelties regarding the direction the economy is taking: the magnitude of the crisis on a global scale, comparable to, for example, the bombings, and the knowledge of how the agents choose to sate their own greed. The reviews of the crisis which began in 2008 show that those agents made decisions which were based on greed and were cognizant of the results and of the risks assumed through those decisions. And the global power of said decisions shows the need for an ethical dimension to judge the crimes committed by progress, development, and economic growth unchecked by humanity.

The human world is presently at risk of increased environmental degradations and rising social inequality. Social and environmental conflicts are on the rise, causing irreparable human losses, due to economic logic.

Our model of governmental management and system of solidarity is currently in check, insofar as they are unable to solve the problem of the degrading living conditions to which almost half the world's population is subjected.

The exclusion and discrimination to which large numbers of humans are subjected foments the forms of modern terrorism, violent and irrational expressions of a humiliated identity.

Global economic integration and the environmental crisis show that the most pertinent problems cannot be addressed solely on the national stage and, on the other hand, reveal the paucity of the forms of world governance.

We face an enormous challenge: around 120 million people, annually and globally, will enter the consumer market, demanding more food, decent clothing, decent housing, fitting transport, access to education, and modern goods. The economy has been run without taking into account this vital need, instead prioritizing the profit obtained from production geared to superfluous consumption and technology is unable to find solutions fast enough to amplify responsiveness given our limited natural resources. And those excluded have as much right to them as those included.

The underpinnings of the social, economic, and environmental crisis that we face are found imbedded in the economic model which we have implemented in western society and are now promoting all over the world. A model dissociated from ethics, with no government oversight, and which threatens us all. This crisis is, above all, an ethical one, because that is the only thing that can redeem the commitment of the economy and the government to the well-being (*buen vivir*) of their populations. These ethics can only take

root, progress, and cause change if they find fertile ground amid society. It is the citizens of the world who, aware of the risks arising from the irrationality of the model of production and consumption in which we live, can effectively produce changes.

But for this we must create instruments. The Tribunal to judge the crimes committed by the irrational economics which control us is one such instrument. It can produce a strong movement of citizens who are outraged at the irresponsibility of our political and economic leaders – those at the head of governments, multilateral entities, and corporations – and pressing for the enactment of new policies, new procedures, new forms of measurement, new ways of conceptualizing consumption, new production methods, and new lifestyles.

IV – The World that we want is Possible

The Russell Tribunal was not only an instrument of denunciation of crimes against humanity in Vietnam. It was also a political instrument that helped to build peace. The tribunal to judge crimes against the future of humanity should be an instrument to build the world that we want and that is possible.

There is still time. It is a tribunal driven by hope.