

# Climate Justice Charter

*Statement and Commitments on Climate Justice  
and Respect for the Biosphere*

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*Chêne Protestant Parish*



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**Statement and Commitments**  
**on Climate Justice**  
**and Respect for the Biosphere**



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## FOREWORD

The progressive deterioration of the environment is verified day after day on a global scale. Even though it is not an obvious sudden massive catastrophe, it should be taken seriously. Based on this reflection, members of the Chêne Parish worked together to produce a Climate Justice Charter and Statement, in the context of theme n°20 of the Geneva Protestant Church: “‘Fill the earth and subdue it’. What about when this domination threatens Earth?”

The latest news from our planet is threatening: climate change, pollution, forest loss, species extinctions... All these words are frightening and there is no sign of improvement. Within only 60 years, our planet warmed 0.6°C because of the effect of greenhouse gases generated by human activities in too large quantities. The contrast in precipitation is increasing between wet and dry regions and seasons. By 2025, two-thirds of the world population could be under water stress conditions. Biodiversity loss is happening so fast experts fear a new extinction crisis. Simple logic leads to the conclusion that humanity has to react, for its own survival. But at the scale of a human being, it is less obvious. When I drive my car, I cannot observe the effects of the pollution I am producing. Therefore, in order to choose to act in a way that preserves the environment, one first needs to access the necessary information. But this is not enough. Once informed, one needs a good reason to take action. Organizing one's daily life in order to preserve the environment implies self-questioning, changing habits, sacrificing some comfort. In one word, it is an effort. Then, what justifies such an effort?

The personal choice to act in order to preserve our environment is often made by simple altruism. This choice is based on our love for other human beings. We also need to understand the consequences of

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our actions and figure out how changing our behaviour will impact others' lives. Our moral values, our ethical reflections and our religious beliefs are the deep core of these choices.

*“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.” (John 15.12 NRSV)*

This *Charter* shows the moral and religious values that can help us react regarding the current environmental crisis. By “Climate Justice Charter”, we mean commitments that should be undertaken by each of us in order to address climate change problems. Anybody can realise these actions in their daily life, in order to contribute to the preservation of the Biosphere balance. It is also important to stand as an institution, because a parish community can have a significant impact at the civil society level. As a Charter, this small book proposes a framework broader than the simple individual responsibility and as a tool it should empower and transcend the ideas of effort and sacrifice in order to consider the respect of the shared house, in a prophetic fulfilment of the being.

Natacha à Porta, *Engineer in Environment and Geomatics*  
Ignace Haaz, *Ph. D.*

# 1

## STATEMENT AND COMMITMENTS

We, the undersigned, are grateful to God for the earth, the water, the air, the plants, the animals and all the creatures, manifestations of His Creation, which beauty and generosity amaze us;

We pay attention to the spirit of the great religions and global spirituality and faith as a crucial source of empowerment;

We are committed to an altruistic ethic, engaging human solidarity, and revealing the subjective motivations in each one of us, motivations that help to freely address the challenges of the changing world we live in;

We are attentive to scientific studies talking about the Earth as a Biosphere uniting living creatures, soils, oceans and atmosphere in an indivisible evolution process;

Like scientists Vernadski and Lovelock, we consider this Biosphere as a living organism in which human beings are hosts and members at the same time, this Biosphere representing the only place where human beings could really live; on a theological level, this Biosphere can be considered as the part of the Creation entrusted to the responsibility of humanity;<sup>1</sup>

We adopt an attitude of comprehension and acceptance of the scientific evidences that climate change is induced by human activity;

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<sup>1</sup> *“The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it.”* (Gen. 2.15)

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Considering that “the dose makes the poison”, we fear that the overload of greenhouse gases have a poisonous effect on the Biosphere ecosystems; we are especially concerned since these gases have the potential to harm each and every of us and of our offspring by perturbing the balance of the Biosphere and of its ecosystems;

We perceive the climatic issues and the threat upon the Biosphere balance as affecting a crucial faith foundation, that is the responsibility to others and to the Creation;

We notice that we allow ourselves to turn away from justice and reason; we deplore the damageable waste of a consumer and “consuming” society;<sup>2</sup>

We question ourselves on the credibility of emission markets for the trade of rights to emit greenhouse gases, rights that represent as many “indulgences” for often intolerable amounts of emissions;

We think that an economic system which supresses jobs to replace them by more productive jobs contains an illusion; it entails the exclusion of many people, while leading, at the planet level, to the collection of more resources and to the emission of more waste into the Biosphere;

We notice the difficulties in completely recycling the material flow created by a hyper industrialised economic system;

We feel human societies are devoted to the economy like they would be devoted to a divinity – Money which fools (Mammon)<sup>3</sup> – upon which they rely to such an extent they are forced to constantly make it grow; we are worried to see that this divinity requires each day a bigger tribute of human beings and of environmental damages;

We deplore the chronic incapacity of climate negotiations to go beyond the economic framework, while damages to come will probably be unacceptable, because of the global warming and of the acidification of the oceans.

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<sup>2</sup> “Consume” comes from Latin *consumere*, to consume, to destroy: meaning which marginalized the initial meaning of *consummare*, to sum up, to accomplish.

<sup>3</sup> Luke, 6, 13

We, the undersigned, take the commitments set out in the following parts 2 to 5, pp.12–33.

## COMMITMENT PRINCIPLES TOWARDS THE BIOSPHERE AND THE COMMON HOME

*Praise*

*“O LORD, our SOVEREIGN, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens.” (Ps. 8.1)*

*Principle of preserving the common home and its biodiversity, for political communities*

It is right to recognise the Biosphere as a common home, and not only as a collection of resources and services to share between us. The Biosphere is the life-support commons for mankind and works like a living organism with a metabolism, since flows of materials are exchanged within it<sup>4</sup>. We are made of the Biosphere material.

The Biosphere also shelters biodiversity of a great value: the value of its simple existence, and the value of edification and amazement of human beings. It is right to preserve the dynamic balance of the metabolism of this common home – life-support commons for mankind – as well as its biodiversity and its ecosystems.

Respect for the Biosphere is essential for proper functioning of political communities of the world. The term “Biosphere” helps talking about the concrete issues

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<sup>4</sup> The Biosphere has a metabolism since flows of materials, mainly nitrogen, oxygen, carbon and hydrogen, are exchanged within it.

and targets they are interested in.

- *WE COMMIT* to contribute to the preservation of this common home and of its biodiversity for our political community and for the political communities of the world.

*Scientific evidences of climate change*

It is right to adopt an attitude of comprehension and acceptance of the scientific evidences that climate change is induced by human activity.<sup>5</sup>

- *WE COMMIT* to open discussion with scientists in order to better understand the causes and effects of climate change, and to ask, at each occasion, sceptical people to adopt a constructive and open-minded attitude because a certain uncertainty degree should not prevent the implementation of reasonable and vigorous actions.

*Principle of limitation of materials flows perturbing the Biosphere*

It is necessary to limit the fossil fuels uptake and the greenhouse gas emissions, as well as the other material flows causing problems and leading to deforestation, overfishing and soil erosion. It is also necessary to limit the emission of synthetic materials in the Biosphere. All of that modifies the way the Biosphere and its ecosystems work. It is about stopping the biodiversity loss in a durable way, in Europe and everywhere else in the world.

- *WE COMMIT* to resist and fight against ideologies pretending that cutting down emissions costs too much, or that economic development balances biodiversity loss.

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<sup>5</sup> See bibliography.

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### *Principle of eco-efficient technologies*

Eco-efficient technologies should be apprehended in a broad context in order to be really understood, which is often not the case. Evaluating a technological innovation outside its context often leads to over-estimate its utility and to substitute an impact by another one. For example, the production of biofuels of first or second generation leads to land grabbing to the detriment of food production. In the same way, uranium extraction for the production of nuclear energy ruins the environment in entire regions.

Therefore, political communities should encourage the development of eco-efficient technologies that consider all relevant parameters.

- *WE COMMIT* to support the development of these technologies and to pay attention to evaluations integrating all relevant parameters.

### *Principle of emissions limitation*

In recent years, oceans and soils have sequestered 2.9 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> per person and per year from the atmosphere.<sup>6</sup> Maximum emissions should never be over this threshold. However, this threshold is largely exceeded.<sup>7</sup>

The correct emission amount is measured at the consumption level, integrating the emissions of all goods consumed, including goods produced abroad. The consumption is considered at first as a collective activity, at the scale of each community.

The above threshold might get lower in the coming

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<sup>6</sup> Carbon Dioxide Information Analysis Center, <http://cdiac.ornl.gov/GCP/>, accessed Jan. 2015 – see also, Pigué Frédéric-Paul, "Quelle justice climatique? Les droits et permis d'émission en question", *Futuribles*, n° 405, March-April 2015, pp 5-18.

<sup>7</sup> In many rich countries, and for rich classes in poor countries, this threshold can be exceeded by a factor of 5 at the consumption level (cf. [globalcarbonatlas.org](http://www.globalcarbonatlas.org/?q=en/emissions), <http://www.globalcarbonatlas.org/?q=en/emissions> )

years; it will be necessary to update this threshold on a regular basis in order to determine the maximum emission level.

- *WE COMMIT* to be interested in the update of this threshold, to consider it as the morally defensible (licit) threshold, and to compare our collective (and individual) emissions to this threshold. It is our responsibility to draw, from this comparison, the practical consequences, and implement some or all of the following commitments.

*Praise*

*“Do you not fear me? says the LORD; Do you not tremble before me? I placed the sand as a boundary for the sea, a perpetual barrier that it cannot pass; though the waves toss, they cannot prevail, though they roar, they cannot pass over it. But this people has a stubborn and rebellious heart; they have turned aside and gone away. They do not say in their hearts, “Let us fear the LORD our God, who gives the rain in its season, the autumn rain and the spring rain,<sup>8</sup> and keeps for us the weeks appointed for the harvest.” Your iniquities have turned these away, and your sins have deprived you of good.” (Jer. 5.22–25)*

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<sup>8</sup> Rain seasons are not the same in the different regions. If needed, the reader will adapt his or her understanding of this passage.

## PRINCIPLES OF JUSTICE

*The no harm  
principle  
and gross  
negligence*

Exceeding the emission threshold of 2.9 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> per person and per year is,<sup>9</sup> today already, equivalent to wronging others and their offspring by negligence. This action is different from lacking solidarity, or omitting to help. It involves physicochemical vectors – “poisons” – harmful for the common home, for the Biosphere ecosystems, and, as a consequence, for today’s mankind and its offspring.

The threshold to respect is somewhat obvious, but the way to judge the behaviour of individuals and of political communities regarding this threshold requires finesse. On the one hand, we live in life structures that prevent us from changing our habits in one day (no-fault). On the other hand, these life structures result from our decisions, at the individual level and at the political and economic level, hence the involvement of our causal responsibility in this “deadly” process. Highlighting this tension is necessary to faithfully report this situation.

The institution of emission *rights*, in too big quantities, repetitively *legitimizes* behaviours that wrong too many people and communities. This

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<sup>9</sup> See remark number 7

institution creates a big confusion, and should not be permanent and definitive. It is necessary to adopt the term of *provisional emission tolerance*, tolerance that can and must disappear.

Putting a price tag on emissions is a way to bend down the quantity of emissions, which is useful, but emission markets *legitimate* behaviours that cannot be justified. These rights are issued like *indulgences*.<sup>10</sup> They create a permanent justification, hence the need to consider changing the label of this type of incitation for “provisional tolerance”.

- *WE COMMIT* to contribute to diminish the flows taken from and rejected to the Biosphere, in order not to wrong others, their offspring and their political communities, as quickly as possible. In parallel, we commit to point out to those who take and reject bigger material flows than us, that they are wronging others. Symmetrically, we will accept the opinion of those who take and reject smaller material flows than us (political communities and individuals).

*Principles of equity, charity and social justice*

Socio-economical inequities, world hunger and difficulty of access to drinking water are emphasized by ecological imbalance. The latter is increased by inequality growth, mass consumption growth and unreasonable population growth.

It is necessary to bear in mind the respect of the Biosphere limits while conceiving the principles of equity, charity (love) and social justice. Social justice should lead those who contribute to it, because of their high incomes, to respect the Biosphere limits. It should

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<sup>10</sup> Like the ones sold by Pope Leo X, taking the risk to turn many Christians away from God.

equally help those who benefit from social transfers to respect the same limits.

Charity and equity help incorporate some humanity in justice.

- *WE COMMIT* to witness those links and develop equity and charity in order to humanise social justice, while insisting on taking into account the framework necessary to its expression (the no harm principle).

*Praise*

*“In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the Law and the Prophets.”  
(Matt. 7.12)*

## RESPONSIBILITY TOWARDS ONE'S NEIGHBOUR

### 4.1 Personal Responsibility and Responsibility of Communities

*Personal  
responsibility,  
responsibility  
of religious  
and political  
communities*

Personal responsibility will be more and more engaged, as will those of religious and political communities; this evolution is necessary in order to deeply modify the excess of the present economic system. All three levels of responsibility are inseparable.

We are aware of the determinant role of religious communities when they testimony the message of faith, charity and hope to thwart the exorbitance of consumerism and individualism in the world.

- *WE COMMIT* to exert our responsibility as human beings, members of a Christian community and members of a political community. We ask God, in His grace, to help us in these three functions (this grace exempts us from justifying our existence by ourselves). We commit to put forward faith, hope, charity, equity, positive responsibility (to take care of) and negative responsibility (to do no harm to others).

*Praise*                    “And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.” (1 Cor. 13.13)

                              “God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them.” (1 John 4.8, 16)

## 4.2 Personal Responsibility

*Lifestyles*

A *lifestyle ethics* is important for sensibility and for the construction of our values, but it is not enough.

We wish to change our lifestyles and drop certain consumption habits that are harmful on the long run. We wish to change, not to stick to the conformity of an external convention, which would be an empty shell instead of an action driven by an inner impulse, but motivated by an inner call specific to faith.

We realise the immodesty of certain life choices, especially as they are then copied in a *mimetic competition*<sup>11</sup>, leading to a vain and harmful excess.

Regarding climate and ocean acidification, we should reduce our emissions to respect the amount indicated earlier<sup>12</sup> in order not to wrong others and show our charity in a concrete way. We are conscious we cannot reach this target individually, but this lack of power does not make less right the personal commitment.

- *WE COMMIT:*

1° to be particularly careful to the way we feed by replacing most of the times meat and fish by legumes and other food;

2° to limit travels using fossil fuels;

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<sup>11</sup> Human beings copy one another and desire the same things some of their congener have, hence the rivalry to obtain them. The term “mimetic competition” represents this behaviour.

<sup>12</sup> See pages 14 and 16.

3° to limit housings space and furnish these housings accordingly;

4° to avoid objects which obsolescence is planned by its makers;

5° to encourage any action of happy sobriety (temperance), in a spirit of equity and charity. After a short process, emissions should not exceed the threshold of emissions sequestration by the Biosphere (and potential artificial processes).

*Commitment  
to biodiversity*

Biological diversity of the Biosphere suffers from our consumption habits. Not caring about this aspect is equivalent to threatening all those who depend on the ecosystems of the Biosphere to survive.

It is right to avoid the trade and consumption of fish not issued from ecosystems sustainably managed, and of wood issued from tropical and boreal forests which are overexploited, neglecting biodiversity. It is right to prefer organic products and avoid products issued from deforestation or soil acidifications (palm oil and pineapple especially).

It is right to take care of biological diversity by promoting local species, for the benefit of all the creatures of the ecosystem, avoiding uniform vegetation cover (for illustration: lawn, Thuja or Laurel hedge...)<sup>13</sup>.

- *WE COMMIT* to take care of biodiversity in our food habits, in the choice of our building materials, and in the management of green spaces. All these actions show our kindness towards others and contribute to testimony the beauty of the Creation.

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<sup>13</sup> Cf. *Gardens' Charter [Charte des jardins]*, [http://www.energie-environnement.ch/fichiers/charte\\_des\\_jardins/garden-charter.pdf](http://www.energie-environnement.ch/fichiers/charte_des_jardins/garden-charter.pdf)

*Persons in favour of peasant farming, small-scale economy and economy in solidarity with the South*

Today's economy is characterized by the search for productivity gain to constantly produce and sell more by minimizing the costs of production and distribution. This rationalization approach leads to environmental and social chaos, since it leads to jobs suppression. Only the very few best performing economies have – only in theory – the capacity to realize both aspects jointly, which is very insufficient<sup>14</sup>.

The only way to resist this method of chaos and injustice consists in recognizing a particular value to products elaborated regionally, to fix them when needed, to buy more from peasant and biological farmers, to promote fair trade, cooperatives and craft entrepreneurship who offer products with good environmental reports, in a spirit of share, gift and counter-gift.

- *WE COMMIT* to get more supply from cooperatives, craft entrepreneurship, sharing networks, peasant and organic economy, local economy or solidarity economy for products typically from the South.

*Persons in favour of responsible finance*

Today's economy is characterized by the search for outrageous financial gain obtained to the detriment of people, political communities and respect of the Biosphere limits.

Some financial institutions try to use money from savers in an environmentally sustainable way, promoting solidarity economy. They deserve to be encouraged.

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<sup>14</sup> As evidence, the raise of emissions corresponding to consumption in Switzerland (an economy at the forefront of environmental techniques) was 19% from 1990 to 2012 (according to numbers presented in <http://www.globalcarbonatlas.org/?q=en/emissions>).

*Responsibility  
of the person  
towards the  
political  
community*

- *WE COMMIT* to work more with them, giving them our money to manage, and taking it back from where it is used in a bad way.

As members of a political community, we are involved in its democratic and solidarity values. Politics is meant to solve profound conflicts, hence the difficulty to come to satisfying agreements. Perfection does not exist in this world, and conflict resides in the heart of politics. The politics task — modest and huge at the same time —, is to avoid a general state of war, and not to create a perfect community.

Therefore, we should not be discouraged by the potential contradictions in the political community, or by the potential dysfunction of a State.

Our political community owes a lot to Christianity, which puts the Bible at the centre of its reflections about public life, with requirements of love for the others, justice and truth.<sup>15</sup> This Christianity contribution to politics should continue today more than ever. Each human being owes a part of himself to his political community. The moral debt to the political community should be the cement uniting citizens together.

It is the duty of each citizen of the world to participate in debates and decisions about the main orientations of the political community.

- *WE COMMIT* to use, in the sense preconized in the present Statement, our rights of petition, initiative, referendum, vote and other democratic instruments, to get involved in civil society and in political and juridical authorities, and to advertise what motivates our orientations to any interested person or organisation,

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<sup>15</sup> See the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5–7) and the Golden Rule in Matthew 7.12.

everywhere.

*Responsibility  
of testimony  
and  
evangelisation*

Given the world globalisation, we should take into account the limits of a personal commitment for the Biosphere and for equity.

This commitment is however of a considerable importance since it shows that acting to respect the limits of the Biosphere mediates Christian ethics today. It brings back the desire of harmony with the Cosmos. The desire to step, even imperfectly, in the Christ's footsteps helps deepen this commitment.

- *WE COMMIT* to show respect to the limits of the Biosphere, and to tell charity and justice towards others, as well as hope, which are in the heart of our faith.

### **4.3 Responsibility of Christian Communities**

*Responsibility  
of Christian  
communities  
in transmitting  
the Word  
of God*

The gospel is the good news and Christians are trying to live this good news. It is their calling and their responsibility. They need to gain a certain visibility.

The worship is the best moment to thank God and address him demands of forgiveness and grace.

- *WE COMMIT* to thank God for his kindness where it is appropriate, to announce the good news and to testify our faith in an appropriate manner.

*Space for God  
in our lives*

Human beings did not see that the growth of their economy was an illusion of freedom, a divinity that would end up abandoning them, enslave them or destroy their common home.

This divinity's incapacity to provide employment and to preserve the Biosphere quality in all economies demonstrates the necessity of Churches testimony in a God really freeing human beings.

Sometimes, people abuse His name and become captive to some mentor. God promises however to appear really to those who look for Him and open their hearts to the poor ones, to the unbelievers and to the members of other religious families.

- *WE COMMIT* to thank God and his son Jesus-Christ for their help and the grace they offer us, and to tell how much we owe them in our lives. We commit to talk about the mystery and of the infinite grace of the thrice-Holy God, which is revealed in the Creation and in the history of salvation, of which Scriptures testimony.

*Fraternity  
demonstration*

Serving the truth and staying authentic forces to stay back and be reserved, or even to keep some distance in interpersonal relationships. This way of seeing things is widespread in individualist societies, which members escape in consumption behaviors and lose the ability to directly communicate with one another. We should stop being reserved and be more spontaneous.

Many wordings signaling Christians and expressing joy should be used again, and, if needed, adapted to our context: “God bless you”, “May God protect you”, etc.

- *WE COMMIT* to communicate with others without hiding the fact that we are Christians and to express our joy.

*Relationship  
with the  
Creation and  
the Biosphere*

When we talk about the Creation, we mean the whole reality (the entire Cosmos), as the artwork and property of God, the Creator. The Biosphere is a part of the Creation.

The Biosphere is the common home of humans and other beings. It is not the property of humans and it is not at their disposal. From the perspective of faith, it is a gift from God, which we are supposed to receive and

respect.

“Biosphere” is the scientific term that helps understand how the common home works, and to conceive it as a system with a metabolism that cannot be modified.<sup>16</sup> Disturbing the Biosphere can lead to serious and irreversible damages, and can harm many victims.

- *WE COMMIT* to use the word “Creation” as the religious term and the word “Biosphere” as the scientific term to refer to the common home.

*Ways to talk  
about justice  
and injustice*

Ecological imbalance accentuates inequalities and the latter accentuate ecological imbalance in return. The search, at all costs, for equality in the standards of leaving can lead to the destruction of the Biosphere qualities. The path to follow is rather the search for equality, while respecting the emissions threshold, in moderation and in happy sobriety.

Knowing that the level of greenhouse gases emitted by the most privileged ones is high enough to harm others by negligence, Christian communities should recognize it as a collective guilt, then and when necessary.

We cannot efficiently contribute to social justice without respecting the limits of the Biosphere.

- *WE COMMIT* to respect the Biosphere balance, knowing that this is the condition for charity and equity to contribute to justice.

*Identification  
of a false god*

When markets rise, people rejoice and trust again in the future; when markets crash, people panic. It really seems that economic growth works like a pagan

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<sup>16</sup> See footnote 4.

divinity, and that today, this divinity, this Mammon, masks the real God, and leads to chaos since it is never fundamentally reformed.

Maybe people find it very difficult to live without intermediate divinities, or without fetish.<sup>17</sup> Then, they should choose them very carefully and gradually reduce their influence when start to do more harm than good.

- *WE COMMIT* to reveal this divinity, to tell why it needs a tribute of human beings and environmental damages, and to tell why it became particularly dangerous.

*Responsible  
finance*

Today's economy is characterized by financial excessiveness and by too many investments in activity areas that are harmful for the Biosphere and its inhabitants.

- *WE COMMIT* to give the money of our Parish and of our community for management to financial institutions that try and support an ecologic solidarity economy. We commit to tell the excessiveness of the financial industry, to disinvest from fossil fuels and to encourage any initiative reinforcing ecological sustainability.

*Real estate  
management*

Many Christian communities manage real estate. They should undertake the modifications that will limit the use of fossil fuels.<sup>18</sup> Regarding green spaces and gardens, they should maintain biological diversity by promoting local species. They should undertake all measures that will preserve small wild animals (birds, reptiles, batrachians, etc.), which are as many

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<sup>17</sup> Cf. Latour Bruno, *Sur le culte moderne des dieux faitiches*, La Découverte, 2009 (1996), 204 p.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Kurt Aufderreggen (éd.): *Paroisses vertes. Guide écologique à l'attention des Églises*. Genève, Labor et Fides, 2010, 143 p. Document of the Swiss association "oeku – church and environment".

testimonies of the beauty and of the diversity of the Creation.<sup>19</sup>

- *WE COMMIT* to pay attention to measures reducing the buildings climatic impact (to lower the heating if necessary, to use local construction materials, etc.) and to preserve the local biological diversity.

*Responsibility  
of Christian  
communities  
towards  
political  
communities*

Our political community owes a part of its radiance to its Christian heritage. In its environmental choices, it has made mistakes and it continues to do so, despite the general rise of awareness about the important and sometimes irreversible damages the Biosphere suffers from since the industrialisation. As demonstrated in numerous reports since the 70's, it is urgent to fundamentally review the priorities of the social and economical development. It is essential to avoid that political and economical decisions continue to protect predator behaviours at local, national and international levels.

We think that the Christian message, like the message of other religions and spiritualities, should support and strengthen the pleas of scientists, the actions of social groups and political parties in favour of a real change regarding our relation with the environment and the Biosphere. We hope that the Churches will provide the essential vision to renew the sense of political community, questioning the priorities regarding rationalisation and international competition, and rejecting any form of condescendence towards disadvantaged populations.

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<sup>19</sup> Cf. Hans Schmid et al. (éd.): *Les oiseaux, le verre et la lumière dans la construction*. Sempach, Station ornithologique suisse, 2012, 57 p.

- *WE COMMIT* to share the message from the gospel about God, his will about his Creation, and his call for people to live in this Creation in a responsible, grateful and loving way. We hope to carry this message in political debates and in dialogues respectful towards different approaches, but always keeping the objective of transforming consciousness and commitments. We would like to collaborate with other Christian communities, with movements specialised in these subjects and with the authorities in charge of our Church, of Western Switzerland Churches, of the Federation of Protestant Churches and of other religious communities.

*Praise*

*“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being.”  
(John 1.1–3)*

## **4.4 Responsibility of Political Communities**

*Principles  
of political  
responsibility*

The current threat on the Biosphere metabolism is due to a wrong orientation of political communities regarding development. Despite the warnings raised since the beginning of the 70's, political communities dedicated themselves mostly to the worship of the economic divinity.

Political communities, at least in the developed countries, should be concerned firstly by the respect of the Biosphere limits, before the economical growth. By looking for not wronging others, and by putting this requirement at the centre of the concerns in the States international society, it is possible to rethink the issues of sharing and of social justice.

The objectives of emissions reduction are difficult to reach for each person individually. The commitment of political communities to change their collective habits regarding individual purchases is therefore essential for citizen's personal commitment, and vice versa.

- *WE COMMIT* to raise our fellow citizen's awareness about the political responsibility regarding the rules that guide our collective consumption habits and about the threat these habits represent for others, insisting on the fact that this is a global issue.

*Energetic transition*

We support and call for the implementation of an energetic transition that could rapidly allow the downsizing of greenhouse gases. However, we should not consider substitution technologies that could represent a threat for human health or for the Biosphere balance.

At the global scale, the costs of this transition should be supported by developed economies and by those who consume and produce within these economies, both North and South.

This energetic transition calls for more fraternity and intercultural dialogue. It is deeply linked with the development of a local economy, with an extra raise of solidarity and with a better quality of life, especially at the community level. It should be implemented while letting everybody find his or her place, and while making the economy a synonym for "living well together", rather than "accumulating".

- *WE*, as citizens, *COMMIT* to take the opportunity of an energetic transition for our political community to develop solidarity, while respecting the Biosphere balance.

*Development  
of a small-  
scale economy*

In general, political communities should build legal conditions contributing to the organisation of a local economy: repair workshops, stronger relations between producers and consumers... actions limiting waste and providing jobs for many people.

- *WE*, as citizens, *COMMIT* to inform and raise awareness of the political community about this essential issue.

*Spirituality  
and political  
communities*

For many citizens, belief or faith is essential. This results in crucial values for political communities.

- *WE COMMIT* to urge political instances for a greater care of the Christian spiritual influence (and of the influence of other great religions and spiritualities).

## FINAL PROVISIONS

*Help in the implementation of the commitments proposed in this text*

Practicing responsibility has become more and more complex because of the globalisation of many problems. This text of commitments calls for exchanging and following up on the progress realised by each person and by the diverse communities.

- *WE*, as parishioners, *COMMIT* to organise meetings focussed on prayer, joy, and identification of progress already done and yet to do about our relationship with the Creation and the Biosphere.

*Amendments to this Statement*

The present Statement will be, after some time, enriched and amended in a consultation process. Only this interactive approach, using periodical questioning, will permit to maintain the state of mind this Statement claims.

- *WE*, as parishioners, *COMMIT* to periodically review this Statement and its commitments in order to stay aware of the Creation needs in these troubled times.

*Transmission of this Statement*

Convinced that many religions have a fundamental role to play in the realisation of our responsibility towards the Biosphere, we agree that elements from this Statement are used and associated with other theological considerations in order to fit the requirements of other

religious communities.

- *WE*, as parishioners, *COMMIT* to get inspiration from this text in our personal, community and political life, and to promote the adaptation of this text to other theological requirements.

*Praise*

*“I long for your salvation, O LORD, and your law is my delight.” (Ps. 119.174)*

*“Therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; moreover my flesh will live in hope.” (Acts 2.26)*

Text approved by the Council of the Chêne Protestant Parish of the Geneva Protestant Church on the 10 November 2015 (revised for the English on the 7 May 2016).

To sign this document and show your interest, please send your contact information to [secretariat.chene@protestant.ch](mailto:secretariat.chene@protestant.ch), indicating your intention.

You can find this Statement on <http://chene.epg.ch>, under “documents”, and on [globethics.net](http://www.globethics.net): <http://www.globethics.net/gel/9301976> (English) <http://www.globethics.net/gel/6207622> (French)

## 5.1 The Contributors

The working group of the Chêne Protestant Parish, who wanted and wrote this text, consisted of the following people: pastors Michel Schach, Gabriel Amisi and Jacques Matthey, Brigitte Buxtorf (musician), Ignace Haaz (philosopher), Dominique Guignard (musician and biologist), François Debey (economist) and Jean-Marc Mottet (President of the Council). Frédéric-Paul Pigué contributed to this work by giving his advice on questions about philosophy of law and the Biosphere

# 1

## **ADDENDUM, THE BIOSPHERE AND THE NO HARM PRINCIPLE: RECONNECTING WITH A POLITICAL SPIRITUALITY**

*By Frédéric-Paul Piguet<sup>20</sup>*

The question of ecology indicates a great failure of politics. Even after the Meadows report about the Limits to Growth in 1972 for the Club of Rome, the ecological situation of the planet continued to get worse. This failure leads to a certain disappointment, and a need to go beyond the governments' statements. Many anti-globalisation activists and supporters of economic degrowth are grateful to Churches for their work about the respect of the planet and of its inhabitants. Do Churches fight since a long time for ideas of which the value is recognised by these groups only now? In any case, the "temperance", which is part of the theological and moral vocabulary since the origins, is well represented by the "happy sobriety", used by the supporters of economic degrowth.

In Lima, New-York and elsewhere, demonstrations for the climate in 2014 and 2015 rallied more people. We witness the development of related protests about employment, about the protection of a river... as if the climatic question was beyond diverse movements and was able to

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<sup>20</sup> PhD in environmental sciences at the University of Lausanne, in charge of teaching and projects at the Institut Biosphère (Geneva), and author of *Justice climatique et interdiction de nuire*, Globethics.net, 2014, 550pp. <http://www.globethics.net/gel/5824591>

federate them. As if it revealed some coherence where diverse interests are only juxtaposed.

More interestingly, we can ask ourselves about the raise of a *political spirituality*.<sup>21</sup> The protesters' emissions exceed the sustainable threshold. We can suppose they tell their need to change their personal lifestyles just as much as they criticise the great emitters for their guilty negligence. They do not ask much for economic advantages, but they do tell their disdain for an existence dedicated to consumption.

The most difficult part in the climatic question comes from a change of scale. There are still local pollutions, which we managed as we could since the XIX century. Additionally, global changes appear at the scale of the planet. Since the first half of the XX century, development aid was discussed. Today the whole economic system is questioned. This text aims to explain these changes in order to precisely define certain philosophical terms employed in the *Statement* this publication is about.

## **6.1 The Biosphere as the Common Home**

The Biosphere is an organism uniting, in a process that cannot be dissociated, all living creatures, the ocean, the atmosphere and the soils. It is the life base of mankind.<sup>22</sup>

Referring to this concept helps emphasize on this physical reality: the Biosphere, as well as our human beings bodies are mainly made of carbon, nitrogen, oxygen and hydrogen; life is based on 22 different amino-acids, of which 19 are exclusively composed of these 4 elements, 2 bearing an extra phosphorus atom, and the last one bearing an extra selenium atom. This demonstrates the unity of life.

The Biosphere unites all living creatures in a process that cannot be dissociated.<sup>23</sup> Living creatures have modified their environment over

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<sup>21</sup> After Michel Foucault's words.

<sup>22</sup> We write "Biosphere" with an upper case "B", to emphasize on its statute of common home and to show a difference with the "biosphere" with a lower case "b", referring to the object studied in environmental sciences.

time: the atmosphere, the ozone layer, soils, sedimentary rocks, and oceans. For example, a place without water springs because of the deforestation can have rainfalls and water springs again, after reforestation. In other words, trees have an “attractive” power on the rain, and can “adapt” their environment to their “needs”. A species of phytoplankton, *Emiliana huxleyi*, enhances the production of clouds above the ocean and reinforce the water cycle at the scale of the planet. The atmosphere contained almost no oxygen before the emergence of vegetation (420 millions of years ago). Today, thanks to the activity of this vegetation, we measure 21% of oxygen in the atmosphere. In a word, at the geological time scale, living creatures modify their environment.

Physicochemical exchanges occur between the Biosphere ecosystems, which puts its metabolism in a state of dynamic balance. This balance benefited humans, who can consider the Biosphere as the organism they can live in symbiosis with. On a philosophical point of view, it is not exaggerated to tell that mankind inhabits a living organism.

Each organism has functions, which are its goals. And some of these goals are on a higher hierarchical ranking than others. Passet explains that the dominant goal of the Biosphere “encompasses and goes beyond the goals of each of its components”.<sup>24</sup> Social and capital could, to some extreme, try and control the whole thing, at the margins, by modulating some flows of the Biosphere metabolism, but only if they respect the dominant goal of the Biosphere. In other words, the economic activity should be subordinated to the Biosphere metabolism, and should respect this prioritisation. The flows mankind could allow itself to interfere with should be determined by an ecological judgement fully aware of the Biosphere mechanisms. Many authors talk about

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<sup>23</sup> Cf. Vernadsky Wladimir, *La biosphère*, Seuil, 2002 (1926), pp. 44-45 et 77-78.

<sup>24</sup> Passet René, *L'économie et le vivant*, 1983 (1979), Payot, p. 219.

“finiteness”, a term expressing how the Biosphere is the ultimate goal of everything.<sup>25</sup>

Scientific ecology links the future of mankind and of the Biosphere by showing that our present situation is the one of a symbiont, depending on the qualities of its host. On the succeeding generations point of view, the Biosphere organism transcends each generation, which shows a certain externality, yet keeping in mind that we all are an integral part of this organism. Many channels inextricably linking scientific data and normative discourses show, to who can see it, that the Biosphere is indeed a tutelary organism calling us to live in harmony with it. We can identify a metaphor in an ancient concept of justice, which conceived human activity under laws determined by nature (*natural law*). Today, things are different in the sense that we focus on respecting the natural balances, in a concept of scientific ecology, posterior to classical natural law and to modern natural law. We do not revive those two laws, but we close the chapter of a form of justice that did not need anymore to conceive what nature was.

## **6.2 Today's Economy and the Biosphere**

Currently dominant economic models do not permit to create wealth without degrading the Biosphere qualities, even though numerous economists say the contrary. Human economy disturbs the Biosphere metabolism, both by modifying the amounts of some elements (notably carbon dioxide and nitrogen oxide emissions), and by extraction and creation of elements naturally absent from the fundamental flows of the Biosphere. Matter exchanges within the Biosphere are in a state of dynamic balance. However, the dominant economy aims at a constant increase of flows of products and services, implying a constant increase of flows of the materials used for these products and services. The contradiction between the two systems is fundamental and the

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<sup>25</sup> Cf. Meadows Dennis L. et al., *Rapport sur les limites de la croissance*, in: *Halte à la croissance ?*, Fayard, 1972, p. 198.

sustainable development model does not fix it, despite the improvement of recycling and dematerialisation processes.

Recycling processes remain insufficient in a world where political societies aspire to a high consumption level, while their comparative advantages drastically differ. Ecological techniques remain insufficient regarding the systematic need of the economy in terms of consumption growth — “consumption” comes from Latin “*consumere*”, consume, destroy —, since the demand must increase to provide new opportunities to the economy, including in developing countries addicted to this system.

The induced global warming effects represent an intolerable danger for water resources, agriculture, fishing and food security. It might seem meaningless to the economy, but the base of a quality life is thereby threatened, without mentioning the consequences of climate migrations and of a biological diversity crash. Furthermore, the raise of the oceans, caused by the greenhouse gases emissions, threatens the territorial integrity of many countries and regions across Europe.

One of the goals of the economy was to channel human beings violence. But since its main goal is not set on the respect of the ecological limits of the life-support commons, it threatens the qualities of the Biosphere, which is the common home. It is like human beings were in a competition to destroy the Biosphere qualities, while pretending they are preserving it.

### **6.3 The Economy Replaced the Sacred**

The economical system is like some divinity or some self-transcendence, as described by Friedrich von Hayek, a liberal theoretician. Jean-Pierre Dupuy criticises modern economy, explaining it has replaced the archaic sacred because it *contains* the violence in both senses of the term “contains”. Economy has violence in itself since it implies phenomena of competition for the same items (mimetic competition). But economy also limits violence since anybody can acquire more goods thanks to economical growth, by working for his or

her own good, and not by fleecing the neighbour. Moreover, economical rules make us believe that there is no bad intention in losing, which limits resentment and contains violence.<sup>26</sup> The economy is different from the archaic sacred since it does not ritualise a founding murder, but it takes the place of the sacred because, just like the sacred, it contains violence in both senses.

In other words, the economy is like a divinity that people should worship, at risk of losing everything they have. When they spend money on some social aid, it is only to reinforce the economical demand. When they care about environment protection, it is only to promote green tourism... Everything must be bankable, as imposed by this divinity. In the end, everything is hers.

## **6.4 Distributive Justice Subject to Economic Growth**

Distributive justice allocates economic advantages, social transfers or infrastructures. In the name of distributive justice, we raise taxes. Thanks to distributive justice, we finance education and health, but also the measures of regulations of flows and behaviours, which, without distributive justice, would ruin the environment qualities even faster than they do today. Limiting the numbers of jumbo jets take offs in order to reduce the phonic nuisances is another example of distributive justice.

Distributive justice distributes charges and economic advantages and, since it legitimates what it distributes, it also defines *the right balance*, according rights on charges and on economic advantages. Based on that, many moral philosophers would like to consider climate issues in terms of distributive justice. They consider restricting the quotas of emission rights, so that global greenhouse gases emissions would decrease.

Currently, high emitting countries emit up to 15 to 20 tons of greenhouse gases per inhabitant, or even more. However, some

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<sup>26</sup> Cf. Dupuy Jean-Pierre, *L'avenir de l'économie*, Flammarion, 2012, 290 p.

ecosystems of the Biosphere, like oceans, certain soils and forests, can capture CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere. For example, the ecosystems capture 2.9 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> *per inhabitant* and per year.<sup>27</sup> Over this sequestration threshold,<sup>28</sup> the atmospheric concentration of CO<sub>2</sub> increases, together with the risk of a climatic upheaval. A country that would decrease its emissions over 40 years in order to reach the sequestration threshold would still contribute, during this period, to the raise of atmospheric greenhouse gases concentration, despite considerable efforts.

Let's talk about numbers. The current CO<sub>2</sub> atmospheric concentration is 400 parts per million (ppm). This concentration leads to a temperature raise of 0.8 to 2.3 °C by 2100.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, current emissions, even reduced, will continue to contribute to a raise of atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> concentration for one to three decades at best. Despite all ongoing efforts, future emissions seem to too largely exceed a raise of 2°C of the global temperature by 2100, while the agreement made in Paris in December 2015 makes a point on not surpassing 2°C, and possibly staying under 1.5°C.

Despite emissions reduction, knowing the risks, distributing emission rights or permits to great emitters thanks to distributive justice would be like distributing, potentially, the rights to participate in an intolerable damage and to wrong others.

If these risks are unacceptable, as we think, giving emission rights or permits (or any synonym term legitimating these emissions) means giving the rights to participate in an intolerable damage, which is a contradiction. How can we understand the climatic issue if, on the one hand, the risk has become serious, irreversible and potentially

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<sup>27</sup> Global Carbon Project, <http://www.globalcarbonproject.org/carbonbudget/14/data.htm>, viewed 18 December 2014

<sup>28</sup> This amount varies over time and needs regular update. We do not develop more here.

<sup>29</sup> Rummukainen Markku, "Our commitment to climate change is dependent on past, present and future emissions and decisions", *Climate Research*, Vol. 64: 7–14, 2015, pp. 10 and 12.

intolerable, and if, on the other hand, we still talk about legitimating the emissions that increase the importance and the probability of the risk?

Here is a first clue pointing at the non-operability of distributive justice to allocate emissions rights to the great emitters.

Here is the second clue: we live in a world where distributive justice is supposed to serve the economical growth, showing it is profitable. Therefore, allocations, thanks to distributive justice, depend on the economical growth, while distributive justice must serve the economical growth in return. Asking for more distributive justice regarding climate is equivalent to ignoring the opposition between the Biosphere metabolism balance and the exponential growth determined by the current economy logic. Insisting on distributive justice can only harm the Biosphere. Therefore, distributive justice cannot be the main guardian of the ecological limits. Distributive justice helps distributing resources, employment and money. Since fossil fuels represent exactly these resources, employment and money: we cannot fight their extraction in the name of distributive justice.

According to the distributive justice discourse about the greenhouse gases emissions reduction, the Biosphere is a booty we are dividing among ourselves, and not a common home. Therefore, distributive justice is not a credible answer to the climatic issue.

What we just explained is not exhaustive about this contradiction, but it should help perceiving the quasi-impossibility to respect the Biosphere limits by directly using distributive justice.

This thesis might seem extreme. But one should not confuse the object emitting a “poison”, or which production caused the emission (car, house, meet...), with the “deadly” flow of greenhouse gases. It is good to conceive regulations and concrete measures on the access to objects that represent wealth in terms of distributive justice (low emissions cars, access to green energies, etc.). But these regulations do not constitute the whole justice by themselves.

Regarding greenhouse gases emissions, great emitters cannot claim rights higher than the sequestration threshold and representing, *de facto*, a poison to the Biosphere ecosystems. Great emitters cannot receive

emission rights because they did not pay enough attention to the warnings they started receiving more than 20 years ago. Emission rights markets are, in fact, indulgences markets. Furthermore, these indulgences are baneful.

The climatic issue naturally leads to the no harm principle.

## **6.5 The Principle of Non-Harming Others by Negligence**

Let us define the no harm principle as a prevention principle, commanding not to inflict damages to others or to put them at perilous risks. People might understand this only once the principle has been violated, but this preventive function is also highly valuable. This principle is *a fortiori* preventive when it comes to avoid a deleterious negligence. One should then interrupt chemical or physical vectors, as well as any deception. This being said, the no harm principle still depends on a concept of common good, which will “tell” whether the damage is acceptable or unacceptable, knowing that an acceptable damage only implies the mutualisation of costs in a perspective of distributive justice.

Let us consider two different concepts of a common good:

1° When the first condition of the common good is the economical growth, climatic victims represent an acceptable damage, even though we try and minimize their number. We balance these victims with the number of people who would lose their economic activities and their income because of an ecologic transition, according great importance to these losses. Since the short term has a strong importance in this concept, no one will notice a transgression by great emitters of the prohibition of harming others by negligence, despite the number of victims.

2° But, when the first condition of the common good is the dynamic balance of the Biosphere metabolism and the biological diversity, emitting greenhouse gases higher than the sequestration level transgresses the “do no harm to others” principle by negligence.

Damages suffered by the climatic victims are unacceptable because they announce worse events, which could ultimately crush political communities by ruining the first condition of the common good. Aware of this collective guilt by negligence, each of the great emitting States is perceived as inherently part of the occurring process, as a co-author. Not stepping out of this deadly process wrongs others and is a fault.

Thanks to the acknowledgement of the relevance of the no harm principle, the delegate of a low-emitting (per inhabitant) State threatened by climate changes could fight for his rights in a more vigorous way, in front of a higher-emitting State. In order to rightfully protest, there is no need for his community to be under the sequestration threshold. The emissions of his community just need to be lower than the emissions of the community to whom representative he addresses.

When an important decision is about to be taken in a highly emitting society, for example regarding the energetic industry, which is directly linked to greenhouse gases emission, an opportunity for a diplomatic protest appears. The representative of the threatened country could complain in words inspired by these lines:

*“You are an ally and a friend. However, by greenhouse gases flows high above the sequestration threshold, flows way higher than ours, and by the bad decision we are afraid you are about to make, you would do us wrong, like you would damage the Biosphere, our common home and supreme condition for the good of all... Your attitude constitutes a severe wrong. I highly encourage you to adopt a different policy in order to limit these deadly flows, just like we did.”* This polite, friendly but firm speech can be reinforced by summoning of ambassadors or even by economic sanctions.<sup>30</sup> Words might seem commonplaces, but they can provide more results than distributive justice.

Thanks to the acknowledgement, by the public opinion, of the collective violation of the no harm principle by greenhouse gases emissions, political communities reject the *economism*, which was

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<sup>30</sup> Cf. Pigué Frédéric-Paul, *Justice climatique et interdiction de nuire*, Globethics.net, 2014, section 14.1.

ruling them until then, to recognise the Biosphere as a common home and a supreme condition to the good of all. (It is not a booty to share anymore).

Based on this thesis, in June 2015, the *Urgenda* foundation won a civil lawsuit against the State of Netherlands for its too lax ecological policy regarding emissions reduction. Judges gave due to the foundation, mentioning article 6:162 of the Civil Code, which prohibits the act of wronging others.<sup>31</sup> Despite the appeal currently on going, this verdict highlights the fact that too high emission levels violate the no harm principle. This principle is at the base of civil law, hence at the base of citizen's equality in front of the law. The fact that the judges considered there was a causal link between the Netherland policy and a risk of a future climatic damage, despite the very small weight of the Netherland emissions at the global scale, attests that this question goes beyond distributive justice. The State of Netherland is, off course, only one participant among a large informal collective of States. But this situation could never serve as an excuse for participating in the creation of serious and irreversible damages. This justice decision highlights the creation of wrongs to others and condemns the State to diminish emissions in its jurisdiction.

By extension, what was at stake in this lawsuit was the civil equality of citizens in front of the law. This is the principle specifying that nobody is allowed to offend someone else, claiming that this person's dignity is lower. Civil equality is against this type of violence, and other similar types of violence. Therefore, too high greenhouse gases emissions are a real threat, not only for citizen's material conditions of existence, but also for the civil rights equality, which is at the base of their freedom and of their institutions. Since the high emissions level threatens the survival of certain ecologically sensitive States, this ruling is consistent with the principle of sovereign equality of all States.

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<sup>31</sup> The Hague District Court, *Urgenda Foundation versus the State of the Netherlands (Ministry of Infrastructure and the Environment)*, Judgment of 24 June 2015, C/09/456689 / HA ZA 13-1396.

If potential victims of climatic changes and their representatives want to change the dynamic, they have no other choice than gain recognition of the fact that greenhouse gases emissions harm the qualities of the Biosphere, the acme of this wrong to others being not yet reached. And they have no other choice than designating as co-authors of a guilty negligence high emitting countries, who avoid facing their responsibilities.

By using more coherent and harsher words when talking about the violation of the no harm principle, it becomes easier to disqualify those who do less efforts regarding climate. It also helps reinforcing cohesion within the plaintiff country. Informal sanctions and bad image could raise the costs in States choosing not to take action. These sanctions and protests could then lower the relative cost of energetic transition for those who choose to follow this direction.

Based on the latter explanations, putting the respect of the Biosphere qualities at the centre of moral and political preoccupations is not equivalent to giving more importance to this organism than to human beings' needs. Respecting the Biosphere is admitting that respecting this organism and common home is, on a legal point of view, an act of protection of civil equality. Protecting the qualities of the Biosphere is equivalent to protecting the institutional order and freedoms, which are essential to mankind, just as much as the common home integrity.

## **6.6 The Question of Political Spirituality**

The political community does not define itself by its members or their origins, but by the fact that its members share a common debt towards it.<sup>32</sup> The individual existence is given, since it is sacrificed to its own end – death, ultimately – and because it is due to the political community. Recognizing one's own duty – the romans *munus* – towards the community is the prior condition to the constitution of a political

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<sup>32</sup> Cf. Esposito Roberto, *Communitas : origine et destin de la communauté*, Puf, 2000 (1998), 166 p.

community. In this context of obligations and charges, but also in the hope of a less unjust world and in a constant quest for the person's dignity, political spirituality could appear and flourish.

Concerning the climatic question, political spirituality arises when people consider they owe the community, while being aware of its corruption and while willing to take action. The questioning is expressed by a great feeling of freedom, criticism towards those who rule the community, and awareness of what should be changed in the power spheres, like in one's self, for more fraternity and justice within the community and in its relations with other communities. Given the global scale of the climatic question, political spirituality also implies reproaches to other countries, in the name of the common good, while accepting critics from members of more virtuous communities. In other words, addressing the climatic issue in terms of the no harm principle implies to represent a political spirituality based on some sort of "patriotism" for the Biosphere, complementary to the protection of civil equality and of sovereign equality for all States. The above Charter provides a Christian theological perspective.

This being said, it is a bit perturbing because it does not rely on questions of distributive justice. But these questions remain important since human being life necessarily implies themes other than greenhouse gases emissions reduction. The implementation of a ban often requires the implementation of incentive measures, the share of ecological infrastructures, or the protection of certain professional activities linked with the emissions reduction, etc.

When addressing the climatic issue, we see the good and the bad differently, without being able to clearly identify them in all domains. However, this approach permits citizens to identify the challenge to take, in a deeper way than the common managers and accountants.

More precisely, citizens and their representatives should renew the discourse about justice, using the recognition of the Biosphere as common home and the recognition of the violation of the prohibition of harming others by negligence. This process is not easy, but it offers a chance to step out of a concept based on economy, which can be

resumed more by “consumere” (consume, destroy) than by “consummare” (sum up, accomplish).

Using distributive justice to address emission limits is inefficient at the international scale, because it twists the climatic question and deprives this question from a decisive argument that could foster political spirituality. In the present situation, the economical advantages should be conceived in regards of the protection of civil equality of the members of different political communities. Issues of sharing economical advantages are important, but we should address them bearing in mind the respect of equality as a superior priority. Respecting this priority order permits, at the end of the process, to recognise the Biosphere as a common home, to conceive a political structure less unjust, and to preserve what can be, keeping hope.

Religious communities have an essential role to play, addressing these issues with a spiritual point of view. The authors of the text *Climate Justice Charter: Statement and Commitments on Climate Justice* understood that very well. I am grateful they trusted me on these moral and judicial philosophy elements.

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# Climate Justice Charter

## *Statement and Commitments on Climate Justice and Respect for the Biosphere*

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*Chêne Protestant Parish*

The latest news from our planet is threatening: climate change, pollution, forest loss, species extinctions. All these words are frightening and there is no sign of improvement. Simple logic leads to the conclusion that humanity has to react, for its own survival. But at the scale of a human being, it is less obvious. Organizing one's daily life in order to preserve the environment implies self-questioning, changing habits, sacrificing some comfort. In one word, it is an effort. Then, what justifies such an effort? The personal choice to act in order to preserve our environment is often made by simple altruism. This choice is based on our love for other human beings: our love for the others grounds our effort. Our moral values, our ethical reflections and our religious beliefs are the deep core of these choices. *"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you."* (John 15.12 NRSV). This Charter shows the moral and religious values that can help us react regarding the current environmental crisis and it should empower us to transcend the ideas of effort and sacrifice in order to consider the respect of the shared house, in a prophetic fulfilment of the being.

