



## SESSION FIVE

# Lines of Approach and Action

**163** Dialogue. I believe we humans must enter into dialogue at a number of levels in order to address the situation that I have just outlined.

### **1. DIALOGUE ON THE ENVIRONMENT IN THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY**

**164** A global consensus is essential if we are going to successfully confront our ecological challenges, which cross national boundaries, are connected to multinational companies, and affect the whole population of the world. We need to think of ourselves as “one world with a common plan” for sustainability. **165**] We also need to find alternative sources of energy to replace fossil fuels and coal, and eventually also gas. We hope that in our age we will step up to this challenge, agree how to pay for it, and shoulder this responsibility. **166**] Many ecological organizations and leaders have emerged, and we’re grateful for them. What we also need

now is political will. 167] An example of this is the Earth Summit held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. However, although the outcomes were excellent, they have been poorly implemented. 168] Other agreements have been more successful, which gives us hope.

169] The truth is that international agreements do not succeed because countries place their national interests above those of the world community. 170] Strategies for reducing pollutant gases must be paid for by the nations who benefited most from the technology. 171] The system of buying and selling carbon credits is not a long-term solution. 172] Poor nations must eliminate extreme poverty and reduce corruption. The technology for alternative energy is there, and the cost of implementing it is low compared to the cost of climate change.

173] We urgently need enforceable international agreements, ones that honor each nation's sovereignty while setting clear regulatory norms for the world. 174] We need the same agreements for the oceans. 175] Because transnational companies are so dominant in the economy, we need strong international agencies with the power to impose sanctions on violating companies and nations.

**II. DIALOGUE FOR NEW NATIONAL AND LOCAL POLICIES**

176] We have spoken of the need for the international community to come together to take serious action, but there is also a need on the national and local level for this. 177] The chief way a nation will control polluting technology is through law, and such laws are a growing trend within nations. 178] Politics also plays a role, but politicians are often sponsored by the very sectors of the economy that need regulation. It's very difficult for politicians to enact far-reaching laws whose effects are beyond their time in office. 179] Local people can

have an impact through movements such as energy cooperatives and others.

180] We do not lose hope because much can indeed be done on the local level. People can be taught to conserve energy, consume less, avoid goods known to cause pollution, manage waste better, protect certain species, and practice ecologically sound agricultural methods. We can build infrastructure, develop markets, support small businesses and farmers, and, through non-government organizations, help local people manage resources ranging from water to forests to land. 181] Continuity in policy is vital in order to succeed. We cannot change policies with every new government. We're talking about a long-range plan with short-range steps. I call on politicians to be more courageous in this regard, give up being owned by investors; invest instead in the human family.

**Group or Personal Process**

*Reflect:* What actions would you like to see your own government take on the international level to help curb greenhouse gases and preserve the natural environment?  
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*Action:* List the actions you can take on your local level, or on a personal level, to conserve energy and reduce consumption.

**III. DIALOGUE AND TRANSPARENCY IN DECISION-MAKING**

182] When investors have environmental studies done, the outcomes should be available to everyone. We cannot let those who pay determine the way. 183] Such studies should be done before projects get too far along, and a consensus among the various stakeholders, especially the

Local population, should be reached before proceeding. In the end, business will succeed more if everyone buys in. 184] When the local quality of life is threatened by emissions or waste, the common good should have precedence over profits. 185] This is especially true when precious local resources are at stake, such as water. 186] When development will result in serious and irreversible damage, the project should be halted. 187] Again, profit cannot drive every decision. 188] We encourage an open and honest dialogue about these things at the local level.

#### IV. POLITICS AND ECONOMY IN DIALOGUE FOR HUMAN FULFILLMENT

189] There is an urgent need for politics and economics to enter into a serious dialogue. The financial system cannot be given absolute power; this will only produce more crises. We must be more attentive in our economics to ethical principles. We simply cannot go on producing goods without regard to any value other than profit. 190] The question of whether or not to protect the environment cannot be made solely based on financial considerations. Related to this, we have to reject the magical idea that more profit alone will solve the problems. Profit seekers don't consider nature's rhythms, its regeneration, or the complexity of ecosystems.

191] When these questions are raised, some accuse others of "standing in the way of progress," but they are wrong. We can care for the environment and still succeed in business. 192] For example, productive development leads to innovation, profitable ways of reusing materials, diversification, and new sources of employment. Everyone wins, not just the investor! 193] We cannot sustain the lifestyle of those who consume and destroy goods. We must accept decreased growth in certain places in order to allow expanded growth in others.

194] New models of global development are needed, and halfway measures are not enough; they simply delay the crisis. Technological development that fails to leave a better world in its wake cannot claim success. 195] The principle of maximizing profits is a myth anyway because the economy does not do well when production ignores the long-term costs, both to the environment and to people. We call on those who lead production decisions to pause and consider another way, one that values human existence and the natural environment.

196] Now to politics. Economics must be governed by politics in order to ensure that both the care of the environment and the inclusion of the poor and marginalized occur. 197] But politics itself can become corrupt, and government leaders are sometimes enriched by providing policies or ignoring laws, all to benefit production and profit. The political sphere is where fruitful dialogue could occur. 198] When production sectors are concerned only with profit, and political sectors only with hanging on to power, the whole system is crippled and we cannot succeed at solving this crisis.

#### V. RELIGIONS IN DIALOGUE WITH SCIENCE

199] As we move forward in the human family, we need an "explanation of life" that includes art, poetry, and the search for meaning. The ethical principles we seek may very well come from the religious sphere. 200] If humanity loses its orientation to goodness and beauty, if we lose sight of what brings us together as a human family, then no technical solution to the ecology crisis can succeed. We people of faith must live convincingly ourselves, embracing justice, peace, simpler and sustainable living, and solidarity with the poor. If we are violators of nature ourselves, then we must correct our own behaviors first. 201] Let's bring the religions of the world together for dialogue to defend the poor, pro-

tect nature, and build economic systems that produce both wealth and justice at the same time, rather than wealth for a few and poverty for everyone else. A similar dialogue is needed among the various ecological movements around the world. We must all come together to work for the common good.

#### **Group or Personal Process**

*Reflect:* Why are government officials (politicians) unable to take decisive action in some nations to agree on steps to curb environmental destruction (articles 196–198)?

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*Reflect:* What role can religion play in the movement for environmental preservation and restoration (articles 199–201)?

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*Reflect:* What is your response to articles 189–190? What role does profit play in a robust economy? How does “profit at any cost” contribute to the degradation of the environment?