



DECLARATION OF GIJÓN AGAINST HUNGER AND POVERTY

VI WORLD CONFERENCE ON BIOETHICS (SIBI)

GIJÓN (Spain), 18th – 21st May, 2009

Preamble

Bearing in mind that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights holds that:

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood (Article 1), and that:

Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services... (Article 25 (1)).

Whereas poverty is a situation or inappropriate way of life, which arises from a lack of resources, or being unable to access same in order to satisfy the basic human needs, such as food, housing, education, medical care and access to clean and drinkable water, thus giving rise to a deterioration in the individual's standard of living and quality of life.

Whereas the FAO, the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation, in its report entitled "*The state of food and insecurity in the world (SOFI)*", presented in Rome in 2008, underlines the fact that:

1. The total number of undernourished people in the world is higher than 1,000 million people, some 40 million more people than in 2007. Moreover, according to the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), 70% of these are women.
2. The food crisis being suffered by many countries has still not been resolved, in spite of the fact that food prices have dropped to early 2008 levels.
3. The current global economic and financial crisis may still lead to even more people suffering from hunger and poverty.
4. The majority of undernourished people in the world live in developing countries. Indeed 65% of the overall figure is to be found in only seven countries: India, China, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Pakistan and Ethiopia.
5. The 1996 World Food Summit (WFS) goal of halving the number of undernourished people in poor countries by 2015 is not being met. An objective that requires annual investments of at least €30,000 million a year in agriculture and social protection.

Convinced and claiming that one of the main causes of poverty is the negative action of wealthy countries on the economies of poor countries due to the control exercised on the international markets.

Bearing in mind that the likelihood of being poor, or not, depends on the conditions of where one lives, and furthermore, bearing in mind that in regions with products characterised by low levels of added-value, unemployment is high, wages are low and economic opportunities are limited, in addition to the fact that the segregation of certain social groups gives rise to the lack of public services, employment and opportunities.

Bearing in mind that at the 34th session of the UN General Assembly in 1980 it was agreed to assign 0.7% of the gross national product to aid in the development of poor countries, very few countries have indeed met this goal, while the majority have maintained their official aid at around 0.3 %, thus with the passing of time, the amount of resources assigned to development aid has indeed dropped.

Bearing in mind that UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) has pointed out that poverty manifests in different ways, especially as hunger, illnesses, illiteracy, lack of jobs, exclusion and social discrimination, and that poverty is a social objective and key factor of sustainable development and that UNESCO states that **not to be poor is one of the rights of man**.

Denouncing that poverty affects the most fragile groups (women, the elderly, the disabled, etc.), and most especially, children, given that according to the 2009 World Education Monitoring report disseminated by UNESCO, millions of children are "condemned to living in poverty" because of the failure of governments in the fight against inequality in education, based on income, gender, ethnic group or place of residence, which in 2006 translated into 75 million children without schooling and 776 million illiterate adults.

Witnessing with concern that the European Union is failing to meet the goals it set with respect to the subsidies to be assigned to less developed countries.

Aware of the increase in the use of biofuels as a possible solution to relieving climate change, which is increasing the price of certain foods and making it difficult for underdeveloped countries to access same.

Confirming the scant efficacy of food aid, in the form of surpluses, sent to developing countries, which fails to resolve hunger in the long term, and which, moreover, creates dependence rather than self-sufficiency.

Bearing in mind the foregoing, we hereby make the following:

DECLARATION

We reaffirm

- That all people have the right to enough resources to feed themselves adequately.
- That everyone has the right to clean and drinkable water.
- That everyone has the right to dignified housing.
- That everyone has the right to sufficient medical care to enable them to possess an adequate level of health.

We call on the relevant authorities to take the measures needed to meet aforementioned rights.

We condemn the fact that wealthy countries have taken advantage of the resources of poor countries, as a result of which:

- **We ask** that wealthy countries assign 0.7% of their gross domestic product for development aid so that these countries can, as agreed at the 34th Session of the UN General Assembly in 1980, extricate themselves from poverty.

- **We ask** that the debt of poor countries be cancelled, given that wealthy countries have been the big beneficiaries of the resources extracted from the poor countries.

- **We ask** that the earth's natural resources be shared out equally among the countries of the world and that they not be used abusively by the few: the most powerful.

We call for the prioritisation of food crops as opposed to those grown to produce biofuels, as well as the use of products that are not suited to food consumption, such as organic waste, for the manufacturing of aforementioned biofuels.

We call for the creation of infrastructures, innovation in machinery and the granting of micro-credits in poor countries in order to promote livestock farming, agriculture or any other activity that enables the obtaining of sufficient resources to lead a dignified life.

In fine:

BEARING IN MIND THE ENORMOUS AMOUNT OF RESOURCES AFFORDED TO US BY THE EARTH, NOBODY SHOULD BE POOR ON THIS RICH PLANET

Adopted by the Plenary Session of the VI World
Conference on Bioethics on 21st May, 2009

This **Declaration** was drawn up by:

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