

“Climate Change and global warming are perpetrated by the Capitalists to oppress the poor to make profit”

by Reverend Mavuso of the Rural Network

We are told that our world is at risk from global warming caused by the pollution of the capitalists over many years. These same capitalists have become rich by making the rest of us poor. We were forced off our land, forced to work in their mines, factories and homes and now we are told that there are no more jobs for us. We are left to rot. For us the world has been in crisis for a very long time.

We cannot be expected to pay the price for global warming. Many of us don't even have electricity in our homes. The price for fixing global warming must be paid by those that have become rich while disrespecting and damaging this world that God created for all of us.

As the Rural Network we are very concerned that game farming and the tourism industry are being presented to the world as 'eco-tourism' when international guests are being encouraged to come to South Africa. In fact we are being evicted for 'eco-tourism'. This exercise is used to rob people of their land and to evict poor people and replace them with animals. Empty promises of new job opportunities are made to the poor. But these job opportunities are for domestic workers and security guards. The B&Bs belong to the rich and the poor do not benefit out of it beyond some few people getting badly paid jobs as domestic workers or securities. This whole business of eco-tourism is just a new stage in the long war against us. Now we find that when people want to harvest the blessings of God's world there is a huge cry of poaching. People need their land back. Any environmentalism that doesn't start and end with people will just become another excuse for the rich to oppress us.

If there are extreme temperatures or floods the landless and homeless will suffer the most. Industry must be heavily taxed for its pollution – past and present. That money must go towards creating ways of working and creating energy that will not damage the earth. But it must also go towards making sure that everyone has a decent house or enough land.

Farmers are producing food for exportation which is a threat to food sovereignty. When their product is not good enough for the export market they throw it away where it could not be reached or consumed by the poor. Milk, sugar and bread are so expensive in such a way that they are not affordable to the poor. It is as if they are imported but in fact they are locally produced. The planting of sugarcane is a practice of monoculture. The commercial farmers are not crop rotating and so they deplete and destroy our soil. The burning of sugarcane is also causing global warming and is polluting the environment. Sugarcane and timber plantations consume a lot of water and cause drought. Ploughing with tractors also emits carbon so the government must give us nguni cattle so that we can use them for farming. These cattle must not to be taken by government officials for their own private herds as it is happening with the KZN government. Land reform must not be about creating black farmers who can farm like the big commercial white farmers. Land reform must be about creating a livelihood for people that have been dispossessed and have no work. It must be about local production for local needs. It must be about food sovereignty.

Transport must be safe, viable and reliable. The taxis are said to be public transport but they are privately owned. The government must negotiate with the taxis owners so that we can do what they call clubbing. That means sharing the transport to reduce the amount of cars in the roads. Public transport must be cheap and safe and run for the people and not for profit. The politicians must stop using big cars and the must reduce their fleets of cars and stop travelling in big convoys with blue lights. They threaten our safety and they pollute the environment through emissions of carbon.

When travelling short distance they must use bicycles together with their V.I.P protection.

Climate change and global warming must not be used as a mechanism to deny the poor to access basic services and enjoyment of basic human rights. Food production should be aimed for local feeding not for exportation. Natural resources must not be privatized and sold, because they are a gift from God. Water must be channelled to all people especially the poor. The Umngeni river has never dried up. There are the Uthukela, Umhlathuze and Jozini dams but the poor have no water. So this notion of saving water must not be misused as a way of denying the poor access to water.

Industries must rest at night to allow the earth to use its natural cooling system. The government must make sure that one day is the resting day where all industries are forced to rest. God made the night on purpose for all human kind to rest. There must be a way of controlling these industries. They should only work to meet the needs of the people - not to produce for 24 hours just to make some few people rich.

Climate change must not be used to deny us access to jobs. Jacob Zuma promised half a million jobs but every day there is less and less work. We should change the work week to three days so that everyone can get work and there can be more time for families, learning and community work.

Renewable energy must not be a way of denying the poor access to electricity. Whenever Eskom is in trouble they blame the poor for self-organised electricity connections and the police are sent out to shoot us and disconnect us. We all have a right to electricity. It is not the poor that are using too much.

COP17 that is coming next week will be a meeting of perpetrators of global warming. They are not serious about climate change mitigations and adaptations. They only care about profit making. They will converge in Durban with airplanes, buses and cars which are going to pollute even more our environment.

They will not be meeting in a democratic city. As the repression of Abahlali baseMjondolo has shown to the world this is a city where there is no freedom for the poor. This is a city where if you are a poor person and you want to be part of discussions about your future you will be met with violence from the party and the police. Here the poor are not allowed to represent themselves. They must be represented by civil society organisations.

It has been said that God made this world as a common treasury for all. That is how we need to treat this world – as a common treasury for all – not as something to be bought and sold and exploited by the rich.