

Future of the Global Greens -

Proposal EGP think tank - 3rd version, 2008-04-04

After the EGP Council in Vienna decided to put more energy into the future of the Global Greens - both regarding the Sao Paolo Congress and beyond, a small think tank was formed. In this paper you will find its draft proposal for the follow-up of Sao Paolo. As the future of the Global Greens depends on the ambitions and energy the member parties wish to put in it, we have, rather than drafting a ready made receipt, chosen for a range of options which serve to structure the debate. These options will be discussed during the Council of the European Green Party, from 11-13 April in Ljubljana. But hereby we invite all those not present in Slovenia to give their comments.

As to the final result: a serious debate during the Global Green Congress in Sao Paolo is vital. A plenary is part of the programme, in which there is ample space for broader visions. During a workshop we hope to work towards more concrete proposals, which should be included in the final resolution that will be put to the vote.

Best wishes

Cathérine Grèze, Richard Lawson, Steve Emmott, Tania <?>, Didier Coeurnelle, Lin Tabak, and Jean Rossiaud

Introduction - Why Greens should join forces globally

Most Green parties have one single country as their working space or, in the case of the European Green Party an almost continental political organisation. But their reference is, and always has been, the planet. Because they realise that only at the global level climate and other environmental problems can be solved, poverty can be eradicated, justice can be done, human rights be safeguarded, and policies for a balanced migration, a fair trade and sustainable development for all can be designed.

Background & status quo - From Rio to Sao Paolo

The first world wide Green contacts go back to the early 1990s when parties from all continents prepared a common presence for the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro. In the years to follow a common Calendar, a News Bulletin and a Directory were issued and, in 1996, the first of a series of common Declarations was released protesting against the French nuclear tests in the South Pacific. In 2001, during the first Global Green Congress in Canberra (Australia) in which 70 parties participate, the Global Greens were officially founded. An ambitious common Charter was agreed upon and a structure decided, consisting of a Network in which now 24 parties participate, and a Coordination of 12 members, three per federation.

To date 75 Green Parties from all five continents are represented, through the African (15) and American (11) Federations, the European Green Party (35) and the Asia and Pacific Green Network (14).

Since Canberra common statements have been issued, on the Israeli-Palestine conflict, the Iraq war, and the possible outcome of the Climate conference in Bali.

Federation conferences have been visited, a website has been set up, networking events and inter-city meetings have been arranged, support for new parties has been given, and global action was undertaken for Ingrid Betancourt. Considerable efforts have been put, especially by the EGP, into strengthening the African Federation - which unfortunately did not yet lead to an organisation strong enough to organise a Global Greens Congress. And the preparations for the second Global Green Congress still lay a heavy claim on the organising Coordination.

Evaluation - Is that enough?

Compared to NGOs like Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, Amnesty International or Via Campesina, who have been organised on a worldwide basis for years, the Global Green's visibility still is fairly weak and patchy. Apart from the Global Green organisation itself (see below) few lasting inter-continental co-operations have been established. And compared to the global NGOs, the Global Green organisation is rather small, depending on only three volunteers per continent and hardly more than some phone lines and travel budgets for material support. This leaves us to crucial question: how should the Global Greens proceed after Sao Paulo? Finding a form that ensures lasting added value for all parties will be one of the most important challenges to be addressed in Sao Paulo.

Structuring the Sao Paulo discussion

In order to discuss the future of the Global Greens we should answer the following questions successively:

1. What should the Global Greens do, bearing their Global Green Charter in mind and the preferences and capacities of the parties present?
2. How and through what organisational model can those functions identified be realized best, and which means, resources and reconditions are needed for the various models?
3. Which steps are to be taken to put the desired future of the Global Greens into practice?

In order to facilitate the debate, several options are drawn addressing the questions mentioned above. Because the organisational model depends on the functions that will be chosen, the possible functions are presented first. They have been drawn from the Global Green Charter in Canberra. structures of the Global Greens are defined afterwards. Thereafter the organisational options are presented.

WHAT possible functions for the Global Greens?

1. Strengthen our local and national message - by making the planetary dimension really present?

For Greens and their voters translating a global outlook into local action is crucial. Through global cooperation this approach can be reinforced. By discussing the global impact of local policies with the parties abroad, and translating the outcome into local action, propositions and campaigns, the local message can become stronger.

2. Globalise the Green message through common statements, common presence, campaigns and lobbies?

Common statements and press releases at crucial moments like UN-meetings, social summits, the G8 or events that shock the world are important indeed: that is what people would expect from the Greens. But as the Global Greens are not yet very well known, these messages will only

be heard when they are given by people with political weight, well known in- and outside their countries. In case only some parties are concerned however, joint press releases by those parties might be far more effective (as is shown by experience of Friends of the Earth International). Common presence during social forums or UN conferences: can be excellent both for networking and our visibility. Many parties go there anyway - with more coordination their presence can be more effective. In many cases (social summits, g8) it answers a need from grassroots Greens as well. Common campaigns in the name of the global Greens might be less important at this point - experience from the European Green Party (European Elections campaigns excepted) and Friends of the Earth International learns, as the Global Greens are locally less known than almost all of their member parties. But campaigning together with a party from another continent that is equally concerned, may very well add weight. And telling the public that a campaign simultaneously takes place in a whole range of countries, may have the same effect. Common lobbying as Global Greens will probably only be more effective once the Global Greens have more political weight than the individual parties and federations separately.

3. Develop common views?

At the same time a culture of common views should grow, on issues like migration, peace and security, human rights or agrofuels demanding a global approach. And only when Greens from all regions concerned take part in the debate, the result will be balanced and supported by all. So participation of them is more important than continental balance.

4. (Mutual) support to parties, assistance in network building and experience exchange?

Mutual support ranges from answering simple questions and hosting (politically speaking) Greens from abroad who visit your region, to using their successes in local campaigns and using their experiences in your political work or even go as far as giving technical or organisational support. This support could, some time in the future, be expanded to party building and campaign advice. Structure: sharing and building up of networks, linking national databases of intercontinental contacts. According to the Coordination there is an increasing demand for Green contacts, for support in organising events, for information, skills and experience all over the world.

5. (Strategy:) Cooperate and strengthen links with like-minded global and international NGOs ?

This seems to be a logical next step; on the national and sometimes continental level those NGO's are our natural allies as well, and many of them already are organised intercontinental or world wide. Back in '92, they already were part of the 'large ecologist gathering', which met in Rio. In 2001 in Canberra, priority was given to building a stronger Green political force before continuing in that direction. Seven years later the question is back on the table: are the Greens now, in 2008, strong enough to engage in joint projects with civil society? And if so, in what way could they reinforce each other:

The answer won't be easy to give. In many regions the public opinion tends to be more favourable towards NGOs than towards political parties, in others (like East-Africa and other parts of the English speaking world)

political parties and NGOs often are different sides of the same coin. But in others, they are not. And more in general, NGOs have a different mission: they go for a political majority for their claims, not for seats in Parliament, and associating too closely with one party might compromise that objective.

But some coordination before a statement or when drafting a common view might be a good start - and the networks of NGOs like Via Campesina, FOEI or Amnesty could be useful when building our own.

Before deciding to cooperate or not however, some more research should be done because successful cooperation also depends on the NGOs. Inviting some for a workshop in Sao Paolo might be an option although it is late days.

6. Implement our democratic principles by acting as a model of participatory democracy in our own internal organisation at all levels.

This is a less obvious field of action, but perhaps the most crucial one for the future of the global Greens. As long as they are hardly present at the national level, they will remain marginal and easy to put at the bottom of the priority lists. And only if Greens at all lower levels share the global structure, they will feel part of it and act accordingly.

It is, however, also the most difficult one to realise. How can a global participation be achieved if a continental one already is so very weak? Direct participation would be a novelty and may be very complicated to achieve, but a lot more can be done on establishing links at the lower levels.

How can these functions best be accomplished ?

Background of the current organisation [11]

The current way the Global Greens are organised is a compromise. Before the Canberra Congress, two options had been put forward: a network consisting of 'duly elected representatives from (preferably all) Green Parties', the other a coordination consisting of three representatives per federation. A combination of both was the result: on the one hand the Coordination responsible for common statements, the organisation of the Global Greens Congress and other initiatives mentioned above, on the other hand a Network that could be gradually expanded, trying to tighten the links between parties engaged in it.

This combination reflects a tension between different ambitions - the coordination as the more practical and modest way to pass to action, the network as the way to expand both the network of parties engaged and to improve their capacity to act. But it also reflects a difference in approach, between federation and party representation and between appointed representatives and democratically elected ones.

In practice, the Coordination has had the most visible output - the Network's principle activity being a mail list in which people from 20 to 30 parties are involved. This was due to several reasons: communication between the two could have been better, it was not clear what the Network could expect from the Coordination and vice versa, and the Network, having the least clear responsibilities, has not been very active either.

If the Global Greens are to move forward in one or more of the above-mentioned respects, it is obvious that the present organisation is not sufficient. The people involved in the Coordination are too busy maintaining the status quo to

be able to develop new projects and answer new demands, the people in the Network didn't manage to broaden the circle. And the proposals of both can too easily be marginalised and put behind other, more short term and nearer-to-home goals.

Next step

Which changes to make. depends on the functions the Sao Paolo Congress defines as most important for the future Global Greens. To facilitate the debate four more or less general models are developed below, with their respective (dis-)advantages and the (material and human) means required. These models are not necessarily exclusive; the party plus network model might move towards an inter-party situation, advantages of the NGO-network could very well serve to improve the other options.

A separate paragraph should be added on *working methods*, because whichever model is chosen, the inter-party contacts can be improved considerably - and the human and financial burden be diminished, by making optimal use of modern communication tools like visio-conferencing, e-mail lists, and skype calls.

1. If developing common views is deemed as most important for the future Global Greens, the organisation should move towards an inter-party or even federation model. The EGP can serve as an example.

Such a model requires democratically chosen party representatives, elected spokespersons and a coordinating committee in charge of the practical organisation. To improve the output, either the congresses (or councils) should be organised more frequently or the coordinating committee should be reinforced considerably.

Advantages: a stronger democratic legitimacy, more visibility within the parties and more support from them, because they all will have a direct link to the global organisation.

Disadvantages: a huge demand for organisational capacity and financial means; the risk that the congresses become the principal activity of the Global Greens instead of only a means. Moreover, this option requires full cooperation of the member parties that all should agree to implementing the democratic election internally, which certainly will take time.

Required means: a central or virtually connected office with some staff for administrative tasks, coordinating the working groups, improve the network, maintaining contacts between member parties, and run a common, regularly updated website. FOEI for example has an international office where ten people work, assisted by some 'tele-staff' based in the member organisations for campaigns.

The financial support needed should come from annual membership fees from the parties. The members of Parliament and paid councillors could be asked to contribute as well. A member of the Coordination team should be the treasurer.

2. If globalising the Green message is deemed most important, the existing 'Committee of Federations' plus Network model needs to be reinforced.

The Network should have a more important role: it should be at least consulted in Committee decisions, be encouraged to expand, have the right to propose and have a role in executing the programme. To improve

continent balance, considerable effort could be put into reinforcing the non-European federations. Democratic election of the committee members could improve legitimacy in the parties. To improve the impact and frequency of the common statements, a small group of well known politicians trusted by the parties could be named to speak out on behalf of the Global Greens.

Advantages: more legitimacy within the parties, more possibilities for parties to participate and more energy that can be put into action. If enough effort is put into expanding and reinforcing the Network, this option can move towards a cooperation strong enough to carry common views. Disadvantages: participation in the network is optional and therefore, there is a risk of low participation. Reinforcement of the non-European federations is not obvious: they lack a political platform similar to that of the EU. For example, in FOEI, only the European organisations have their federation, because the EU exists as a logical focus for lobbying. Other continents don't have a federation and don't tend to create one either.

Required means: working groups can be established to improve the development of common views on global issues. For a good representation of regions, the focus can be put on smaller collaborations of regional networks (Mediterranean, North-South) or thematic groups (migration, water management, agrofuels). Stronger parties taking the initiative would be no problem, as they have more resources, as long as the views of the weaker parties is deliberately sought and respected. A Global Green Committee should be responsible for active participation of as many countries as possible in the different groups. The budget only requires common campaigns on those topics that are addressed in the regional and thematic networks, phone and travel costs and a modest amount of money for administrative assistance and for maintaining the network.

3. If collaboration with like-minded NGOs is deemed most essential, a **Green Network of NGOs** needs to be formed.

Many NGOs like Amnesty International, Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth are having a global network already. Besides their own global meetings, these NGOs are present at many global events (the yearly Conferences of Parties of UNFCCC and CBD, the yearly UN meeting in New York et cetera). Clearly, these global meetings are usually an opportunity of gathering many Greens, although usually they are not representing the Greens. This can be changed by explicitly designing Global Greens meetings along these global meetings. In this way, active global greens can speak out as being Green besides their professional activities.

Advantages: the Global Green movement is part of existing NGOs and shows their existence as part of globalised concerns. Therefore, the societal global movement shows its Green face and Green parties all over the world can benefit from this profiled Green message.

Disadvantage: the network is very informal and continuity is hardly assured. The Green message is dependent of individuals and the Global Greens are nothing more than a collection of active individuals.

Required means: a networking infrastructure probably through internet, some kind of coordination and a communication campaign to activate green individuals within NGOs.

4. If exchanging experiences is deemed most essential a network of politically active Greens needs to be formed.

Modern communication technology like social networking sites has created the possibility to connect politically active Greens individuals all over the world. Together they can develop new visions, strategies and actions, and exchange ideas. It is even possible to elect a board among them for decision making, issuing statements, or acting as an advisory body. The actual organisation in formal structures based on continents or parties can be continued, the network of individuals being an additional possibility for reinforcing the performance of other functions.

Advantages: more human resources will be created; a greater outreach, also to NGOs and other organizations and communities greens are affiliated to; a light arrangement that doesn't need to be very costly.

Disadvantages: a network like this is difficult to build up and keep alive, it is hard to determine what kind of people are exactly jumping on. High risk of no effectuation of the Global Green message.

Required means: a networking infrastructure (e.g. on the www), some kind of coordination (perhaps possible to deliver by member parties), communications campaign to activate green individuals.

Follow-up

After having determined which organisational model is best suited to fulfil the functions defined as most important for the future Global Greens, we should determine what steps are necessary to build up the new model. At every step certain actions will be needed and they need to be done by someone or some party.

The result of the Sao Paulo Congress should thus agree on an **Action Plan**, consisting of steps with time frames, concrete actions designated to named actors. This will be our Common Project for the upcoming time shaping the future of the Global Greens!