
Appeal from literature and journalism for socially and environmentally clean paper

“Paper is a wonderful material, which for centuries has served for a fertile exchange of ideas among human beings. For us all who use it as an essential vehicle to share what we think, imagine, dream, know or believe we know, paper is a wonderful tool that we want to be able to continue using ... but not at the expense of people and the environment.

As people who live in this reality, we are aware of the serious injustices and inequalities - social and environmental – arising from the world production and consumption of paper.

In addition to the destruction of forests for making paper, now forests and grasslands are being replaced by vast monoculture tree plantations, destroying communities, water, soil and all life. Both the destruction of forests and the installation of monoculture tree plantations – occupying food-producing land – bring about enormous damage to the local population, who see their rights violated, their environment destroyed and their way of life irremediably affected.

The destructive cycle is continued with pulp production, in which fewer and increasingly larger companies take possession of land where they plant trees, of water that their trees and mills consume and contaminate, of political power acquired through their billion dollar investments, and of the environment that they destroy in the regions where they are installed.

To destruction are added inequities. The enormous volume of paper produced from this pulp feeds a “world market” centred on rich and powerful peoples’ consumption. The average figures (that hide enormous inequalities on a national level), show that consumption per capita is more than ten times higher in the countries of the North than in those of the South.

To inequity is added excessive consumption. Only as an example it is enough to see the mountains of paper and cardboard growing night after night in the streets of New York to understand that most of the pulp production does not end up as books, newspapers or journals, but simply as trash. In general terms, at least half the pulp produced goes to the production of paper and cardboard for wrapping and packaging, most of it totally unnecessary.

We do not want to have anything to do with paper produced in this way. We do not want to become accomplices to the social and environmental destruction this implies. We do not trust certifications schemes that have given their seal of “sustainability” to these same monoculture plantations whose impacts we know so well.

This situation has already reached intolerable limits and its solution requires policies discouraging unnecessary consumption, promoting a rational and socially appropriate use of paper, ensuring an equitable use among countries and within countries, facilitating the development of diversified models on a smaller scale for the production of pulp, respecting both people and the environment.

The above is perfectly feasible and no technical limitations of any kind exist to prevent it from

becoming a reality. The only and real obstacle is the economic interest of large companies, whose objective is to continue making profits by imposing an increasingly large and unlimited consumption of paper. The time has come to tell them that this is enough.

We are therefore appealing to those, who like us want to be able to continue communicating through this marvellous material called paper, to join in this struggle for a socially and environmentally clean paper.”

Victor Bacchetta, Nnimmo Bassey, Jordi Bigues, Elizabeth Bravo, Ricardo Carrere, Antonio Franco, Mempo Giardinelli, François Houtart, John Karumbizda, Kintto Lucas, George Monbiot, Edgar Morin, Guillermo Núñez, Wale Okediran, Ike Okonta, Noel Rajesh, Ana Cristina Rossi, Vandana Shiva

WRM fully supports this initiative and we invite writers, poets and journalists who agree with its content, to strengthen this appeal by signing on to it. By adding your signature you will be joining in this struggle for a socially and environmentally clean paper and amplifying the voices of those who say that “this is enough.” At the same time, we invite everyone who shares these views to spread this initiative to other writers, poets and journalists who might be willing to endorse it.

Those who would like to adhere to the appeal can do it at:

<http://www.wrm.org.uy/plantations/writers.html>