

March 26th, 2021

Thematic Discussion: Environmental Racism, the Climate Crisis and reparatory justice (Chair: Ahmed Reid, Member of the WGEPAD)

Statement

I really echo, Prof Shepherd. The harmful effects of climate change are dramatic in so many places in the world, especially in the Global South.

I am a black woman from Senegal, West Africa, a former french colony. Africa has not been spared the climate menace. The African context includes: rising sea levels and coastal degradation and erosion (About 56% of the coastlines in Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal and Togo), extreme events having food security impacts (number of undernourished people has increased by 45% since 2020 according to FAO), health impacts (warmer temperatures and higher rainfall increase habitat suitability for biting insects and the transmission of vector-borne diseases such as dengue fever, malaria and yellow fever) and economic impacts (According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), adverse consequences of climate change are concentrated in regions with relatively hot climates, where a disproportionately large number of low-income countries are located).

Eliminating colonial harm, environmental harm for People of African descent is a MUST. Our president, Macky Sall of Senegal, in the midst of the covid 19 pandemic that heavily impacted african economies, made a statement calling for the cancellation of the debt of African countries. This is a small comment that I wanted to share before intervening.

Thank you very much for the great presentation from speakers,

We're really glad to take part in this important session around environmental racism, climate crisis and reparatory justice. As a big global environmental and campaigning organization, Greenpeace embarked on a racial justice journey last year following the tragic death of Georges Floyd in the US that left humanity speechless (this is not to assume that racism is new, or say that such racist acts didn't exist before, and in other continents Africa, Asia but rather to show that it has been the extra" drop of water that overflowed the vase"). The objective of the journey was to explore as a global organization, ways to become an anti-racist organization by committing to dismantle systemic racism within our own internal systems, policies, procedures, practices, and ways of working. Charity begins at home so we would like to make sure that our Black Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC) staff and our people in general are safe within the working place. We think that it is very important to create a work environment in which every employee is treated fairly, equitably and with the same chances of success, development and growth, regardless of race, gender, age, sexual orientation, class,

disability, and religion. This also means that People of Color (PoC) are not tokenized.

The reason why I am bringing this is because we started the journey by hosting what we called safe space calls in which courageous and honest courageous were encouraged. We began with a first round with our PoC staff, and a second round with privilege groups including staff and the top leadership.

We also drafted an internal report on Institutional Racism at Greenpeace to see how we could make cross departmental gap analysis and provide the global organization with practical recommendations on how to gradually address structural inequalities and dismantle systemic racism across our global networks.

We're now at the implementation stage of it and that's basically the main reason why we're attending this session. We would like to learn from People of African Descent working groups, other NGOS, and anti-racist movements working in the fields of racial justice, human rights, and explore ways to co-create and build partnerships. We also think that it would be important to begin to examine the intersectionalities that exist between environmental justice and racial justice.

Greenpeace, as I have mentioned earlier, recently embarked on a transformational change process with the racial justice initiative (a quite new topic for the organization). Therefore, we would like to hear from Racial justice field experts and collaborate with different key stakeholders who are engaged in the Racial justice and restorative justice work.

My questions to Prof V.Shepherd and W.Darity are:

1- According to you, how can we best implement this racial justice initiative within our organization and in the environmental movement in general?

2-How can we, as an environmental organization, heal, repair, and restore justice for our people of color staff? What would an effective apology, reparation and restorative process look like?

3-Given the ecocide, and the long history of extractivism and trauma that People of African descent and other indigenous communities endured, how are the countries' working groups and United Nations organizations tackling racial discrimination? What are the current governmental and institutional commitments to restorative and racial justice?

Thank you,

Awa Traoré, Greenpeace's International Project Lead for Racial Justice