

5-POINT PLAN TO ASSIST THE MOST VULNERABLE

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THE COVID-19 crisis has affirmed the urgency to unify as a global community. The crisis has laid bare systemic injustices in all facets of society, so we have to align around a just recovery and invest in a better future for all.

I outline a five-point plan to assist the poorest and most vulnerable people in society, those most exposed to crises such as work and food insecurity, access to healthcare, Covid-19 and the impacts of climate change.

First, the prioritisation of health for people and the planet. During the lockdown, waste-pickers saved cities lots of money by doing free collection, segregation and recycling, yet we have not done enough to protect their health and livelihood. We cannot treat people as disposable second-class citizens.

We need to focus on a recovery

that keeps the poor at the centre of our solutions. Our environment and human rights cannot be compromised.

Second, there needs to be a shift and more investments towards solutions, not bailouts.

Deprioritise and divest from extractive industries and their boom and bust cycles. Instead of investing billions in bailing out failed state parastatals such as Eskom which threaten the financial stability of our country, we should be investing in the future.

Transition our workforce into sustainable economies while prioritising investments in community resiliency and not corporate interests.

Third, the replacement of single-use with sustainable systems. There isn't a country that has sustainably managed single-use plastic because they cannot be managed. They mostly cannot be recycled or composted. The only way



to solve the plastic crisis is to stop the production and use of single-use plastic and transition to refill and reuse.

Corporations need to redesign their delivery systems to become more sustainable. All this must be complemented by an aggressive demand for corporate and government accountability. Government policies must ensure countries manage their own waste. Policy must be informed by credible, third-party science.

Materials with no way of being recycled should not be produced.

The worst part is that the companies imply that we should invest in incineration and chemical recycling – technologies that cost a huge amount

of money to deal with a problem that should not be created in the first place.

We need our government to put in place stronger policies that aim to phase out non-recyclable, single-use plastic.

Last, spaces must be created for meaningful engagements with impacted communities. There is a great need to support community efforts to hold dirty industry accountable for health and environmental impacts and ensure that regulators measure and monitor emissions and health impacts and take decisive action to redress the impacts.

We find ourselves at a critical crossroads: we can perpetuate an unequal system that has caused multiple crises, or we can take care of the most vulnerable and make decisions that address the causes of our global problems.

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