

IU Representative Alanna Hartzok to Chair UN Millennium Forum Event

The Millennium NGO Forum is a first-ever gathering of 1400 people at the United Nations this May 22-26 to develop a peoples platform to present to the Millennium General Assembly and the Secretary General. There are main thematic areas — Such as Peace & Disarmament, Eradicating Poverty, Sustainable Development and Strengthening Global Organizations — and a number of additional sub-themes. Alanna Hartzok will chair the Tax Policy subtheme. She has prepared a document, called “A Green Tax Shift Policy Approach to Financing Local-to-Global Public Goods”, that is being widely disseminated through the NGO community. Some excerpts follow:

⊙ *Green tax reform makes a clear distinction between private wealth and common wealth. Private wealth is that which is created by labor. Common wealth is that which is provided by nature. This policy removes taxes from privately created wealth and increases taxes and user fees on common wealth domains.... Increasing taxes on common heritage resource use is a practical way to protect and fairly share the earth.*

⊙ *Captured in brief soundbites, “tax waste, not work” “tax bads, not goods” “pay for what you take, not what you make” and “polluter pays” become tax shift principles readily translated into voter-friendly policy recommendations with broad-based political support.*

⊙ *...Green tax reform has the potential for becoming a comprehensive approach to public finance policy that can readily be integrated into a three-tier system of local-to-global governance. Percentages of total resource revenues collected could be disbursed up or down these tiers based on criteria of equity, as some nations and regions of the earth are better endowed with natural resources than others. Freedom to live or work in any part of the globe would also help to ensure equal entitlement to the planet.*

⊙ *...The Global Resource Agency would be responsible for monitoring the global commons (e.g.,the ozone shield, global forest reserves, fish, biodiversity), determining rules for access, issuing permits and collecting resource revenues. Such a body could also assume substantial authority for equitably distributing fees collected and levying fines and penalties for the abuse of common heritage resources.*

⊙ *There are numerous domains for raising global revenue. One of the main categories are fees for the use of the global commons, including parking charges for satellites placed in geostationary orbits, royalties on*

Meanwhile, in New York...

Pat Aller attends session after session, leaflets incessantly, and promises to link interested officials up with a worldwide network of experts on this fundamental reform. In June she will speak at the five-year review (by the General Assembly in a rare session outside New York) of the World Summit on Social Development in Geneva. The UN system has recommended that the Commission on Social Development name LVT as an initiative; Pat is now lobbying the Commission to propose it to the General Assembly.

The work is long and slow. Yes, Pat says, the United Nations is indeed bureaucratic. One must be patient and work the system — and there is no substitute for being present in the UN headquarters and knowing the ropes. One caucus inevitably leads to another; connections must always be followed up. The IU's application to upgrade its NGO status from "Public Information" to "Economic & Social Council" is a good example of the process. Procedures are to be followed precisely, forms presented, translated and reviewed by 19 national delegates. The process could be derailed at any point. Clearly, United Nations advocacy work rewards patience and persistence! But Pat is not discouraged. In fact, she was on her way back to the UN, as soon as she hung up the phone!

minerals mined or fish caught in international waters, charges for exploitation of Antarctica, and use of the electromagnetic spectrum. Other significant global revenue sources include fees based on the polluter-pay principle, such as international flights, aviation fuel, shipping, or dumping at sea....

◎ *Revenue raised from access fees for the use of the global commons could be used to fund sustainable development programs, environmental restoration, peacekeeping, or to back low-interest loans to help eradicate poverty. Funds are also needed on the global level to finance justice institutions such as the World Court and the International Criminal Court and to facilitate policy convergence in areas such as trade, currency exchange, and human rights. A portion of these funds could also be distributed as direct world citizen dividends similar to the Alaska Permanent Fund.*

◎ *THE EARTH IS THE BIRTHRIGHT OF ALL PEOPLE*

◎ *It is simplistic to view the world as being divided between the rich North and the poor South. In the North there are many people living in poverty and despair while in the South there are those with the riches of royalty. Poverty is a structural, global problem. Taxes structured along the proposed lines, if fully implemented, would level the economic playing field, both within and among nations. A coherent and integrated local-to-global green public finance system would fundamentally alter the status quo and would give every person a stake in the planet as a birthright. With basic needs securely met for all, humankind would be free to advance to a higher dimension of expression and realization.*

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