

The Global Greens have honoured me with an invitation to speak at this opening ceremony, despite there being so many talented ecologists in Africa and elsewhere. I would like to thank them, hoping to live up to the task entrusted to me.

I come from Mauritius, an island barely visible on the map of the world, next to Madagascar, in the east of Africa. I am part of the diaspora resulting from the tragedies that have been slavery and the Forced labour, tragedies on which rests the world capitalism. As descendants of those who have gone through these great trials, I can say that life always ends up being right with the worst ordeals that humanity can go through. My party, the Fraternal Greens, was created in 1989, 28 years ago, thanks to a simple meeting in Paris between Constantin Fedorovski, French green whom I would like to thank here, with Élie Michel, my brother and "struggle-mate" , who died in 2013. *Before the nonviolent movement that I founded with my comrades in 1968 led many social and political struggles against injustice and misery.*

It is therefore not as an intellectual and a theoretician that I will speak here to discuss with you the subject at hand for this opening ceremony. I shall base myself on these twenty-eight years of political struggle within the Greens.

I have focused on three challenges that affect the majority of the Green Party but are particularly relevant to the Green Party of Africa. These three challenges may seem like stumbling blocks, but they are not insurmountable:

1. The first challenge is the question of financial resources
2. The second is freedom of expression
3. The third is that of contexts predominated by violence and repression.

### **I. The first challenge, then, is the question of financial resources.**

Most green parties are penniless. Despite the ecological values they defend for the good of the populations, our parties are not able to complete their budgets. We are somehow victims of the values we defend. Instead of recourse to the manipulation of the electorate, the powers of money, terror, insurrectional revolts, coups d'état, wars which cause so many victims and cause forced migration, our parties advocate for non-violence and good governance to achieve their goals; that is, green economy, social justice, participatory democracy, housing policy, education reform, gender equality and so on.

Our struggles, which consist of marches, sit-ins, recourse to the judiciary, hunger strikes, occupation, run counter to those who hold economic power.

Our green parties are most often forced to make unnatural alliances to stay alive. They find themselves having to support traditional left or right parties that are in power or in the opposition. On the other hand, these traditional parties are better off, better equipped. They benefit from all the financial, logistical and media advantages to make their campaigns during and after the elections.

The financial support goes straight into the vaults of the ruling parties or the opposition. In Mauritius, after the December 2014 elections, the police seized a sum of 224 million rupees (about € 7.5 million) from private donations for the election campaign in the former Prime Minister's residence, which were not used. This situation exists in most countries. To this must be added that there is no reimbursement of electoral expenses by the state in these same countries. The control by the electoral commission of regulated expenses is uncertain. You can declare what you want, you will not be worried. In many countries, it is also prohibited to receive foreign aid for election campaigns.

Let us talk about the two options that a green party often has in order to have elected representatives in parliament or municipal councils: either the party concludes an alliance with the traditional parties, posing under their banner; or it gets in debt to finance its campaign. The Fraternal Greens have done both. When you win the elections in an alliance, the other parties, once in power, make you understand that you did not weigh heavily in elections and do not keep their election promises. Then you decide: whether you leave or they help you leave. In the event that you agree to incur debts to go alone in elections, it is death insured with, in addition, repayments that can exceed three times the loan.

We also have some cases of greens elected through alliances, who have abandoned their party because of a ministerial portfolio or a lucrative position, or who have chosen to support policies that are contrary to ecological principles.

So what to do? How to break the deadlock. A first solution calls for the long-term political struggle focused on electoral reform with the following fundamental principles:

1. Proportional representation at 4%,
2. The reimbursement of electoral expenses for each party having reached 4%,
3. And parity for investitures: which traditional parties are struggling to achieve.

A second option would be the establishment of a self-financing plan pending the above-mentioned electoral reform. I think there are a number of parties around the world that are using this type of plan. In addition to membership fees, we have to focus our efforts on creating businesses with ecological objectives that can support the party. In Mauritius, our first political struggles for the indigenous people displaced from the Chagos were financed from 1976 to 1995 by a bakery set up with contributions from members. Unfortunately, in the course of the steps we took for their right of return to their homeland, the bakery was burned criminally in 1995 and the Chagossians left us. However, it seems to me that companies' access to information, training, advertising, would allow us both to finance our activities and better promote political ecology.

And finally, I want to testify that the Greens of Mauritius have gotten more results from outside the Parliament than from inside. Outside Parliament, we represent a formidable opposition party that begins our courage to say truths that other parties concerned about gaining power do not dare to say.

**II- The second challenge** is the lack of freedom of expression in totalitarian regimes, dictatorships or the semblance of democracy.

The strength of the Green Party lies in their courage to denounce the powers in place, the economic policies that generate social injustice and the destruction of ecosystems. This challenge is enormous and presents serious risks in the countries governed by the dictatorship, a president who wants to stay in power or a multiparty front. We have the case of our friends from Zimbabwe who have gone through the prison trial for having dared to challenge power.

Even international news agencies complain that they can not operate freely in some countries.

The new American president Donald Trump does not go by four ways to deal with all names the media that are hostile to him.

In China, North Korea and Thailand, despite the expansion of new technologies, people have difficulty accessing information that is not controlled by the state. This one can at any time cut off communication with the foreigner.

The challenge is less, but very real in countries with a democratic reputation. The right of opposition parties to information exists only on paper. In these countries, the government retains a monopoly over public media and seeks to control private agencies. The premises of the private radio of our friends in Madagascar were sealed by the authorities during the last presidential campaign.

On the other hand, private agencies are subject to the powers in place or the imperatives of investors.

### **... What outcome to the question of freedom of expression?**

In some countries, recourse to justice can be an issue. In Mauritius, in 1999, our party obtained the right to information in Creole, the mother tongue of more than 90% of the population, thanks to an ongoing action against the national television channel. However, in the case of dictatorships, it is the intervention at the international level of the global greens and the various federations that represent a possible outcome. Globally, green parties are a real force of pressure that we tend to neglect. This force can be exercised through press releases, pronouncements and invention with international organisations.

**III. The third challenge concerns** countries where weapons have replaced the polls and where opponents have taken the maquis against the dictatorship and occupy important territories. In these countries, we see daily the atrocities, the massacres.

In other countries where dictatorship has taken place, any opponent is summarily killed, or if he is captured, he is thrown into prison, in inhuman conditions, without trial for months or even years .

In these contexts, the strength of the Greens lies in the actions carried out in non-violence and transparency. Rwanda's experience shows that such actions, admittedly difficult at the outset, when they succeed, end by making us credible and obtaining some recognition from the population. However, to these actions must be added once again the international support that remains important.

We must also develop, through parties and green NGOs, a solidarity network that allows us to come to the aid of people, affected by conflicts and natural disasters, in a very short time.

There is already support for the Green Party, and I would like to thank those who have helped many of us to attend this Congress. There are many specific cases where a particular green party has benefited from the green network of other countries. I would like to thank the leaders of the FEVA and the Greens who supported us with their communiqués during the 26 days of hunger strike undertaken in Port Louis in October 2013. Thanks to the press releases disseminated by international media, dialogue was opened between We and the authorities for an exit from the crisis. However, it is important to make a special effort to strengthen our international ties, strengthen our global awareness. Again here, it seems to me that the development of antennas and media agencies remains fundamental.

Dear friends, my intervention is probably focused on one aspect of ecological struggle: the struggle for more democracy. However, this aspect depends in many countries on the creation, existence or maintenance and expansion of a green party.