



# Political platform

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## 4 **1. Introduction**

### 5 **1.1. Spire's aim**

6 Spire wishes to change the social structures which maintain unfair distribution and  
7 administration of economic, social, biological and cultural rights and resources.  
8 Environment and development have to be seen in context and environmentally  
9 sustainable development is central in Spire's work.

10 We wish to achieve our goals by collaborating with local partner organizations that  
11 carry out grass-root initiatives in developing countries, as well as educating,  
12 exchanging knowledge, non-violent campaigning and political lobbying in national  
13 and international arenas.

### 14 **1.2. Sustainable development**

15 Spire's goal is sustainable development. Sustainable development is development  
16 which fulfills the needs of the present generation, without destroying the possibility  
17 for future generations to satisfy their own. Sustainable development includes social,  
18 economic and environmental aspects. All of these must be attended to in their  
19 entirety.

### 20 **1.3. Fair distribution**

21 The current economic and political structures are contributing to the maintenance  
22 of injustice and immense differences. Although we are living in a world with plenty  
23 of natural resources and material growth, a big part of the population is still living  
24 in extreme poverty. Most of these people live in poor agricultural and fishing  
25 societies. A lot of them suffer from hunger while at the same time there is a global  
26 overproduction of food. The fight against poverty has to take the enormous  
27 differences in the world more into account. It is important that the poor themselves  
28 are active in the fight against poverty and global redistribution. Furthermore, it is  
29 crucial that countries have the sufficient freedom to carry out active distribution

30 policies without being hindered by supranational agreements and regulations. This  
31 has to be the basis for international trade regulations, trading and investment  
32 agreements and organizations.

## 33 **2. Climate and environment**

34 Mankind is contributing to climate and environmental changes through non-  
35 sustainable consumption and land-use, causing greenhouse gas emissions. Climate  
36 and environmental changes are structural problems, because the ones it affects the  
37 most are the vulnerable groups who at the same time have the worst presupposition  
38 for reversing the development or adapting to the changes. As an active climate  
39 change contributor, mankind is both responsible for and able to change this  
40 behavior and development which leads to climate change. The climate systems and  
41 the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions caused by mankind must be stabilized. Most of the known  
42 deposits of coal, gas and oil must remain in the ground. Fossil energy must be  
43 phased out, while alternative energy sources are developed. Profiting from  
44 investing in continued or increased extraction of fossil fuels is unethical and  
45 incompatible with good climate policies. The world's food production has a big  
46 potential for cutting emissions. Switching to more environmentally friendly food-  
47 systems is thus a part of the solution for the climate issue.

48 The negative effects of climate change have an impact on the poor in the global  
49 South first. Climate change menaces ecosystems and is one of the causes of the  
50 eradication of species. Industrial countries have historically achieved their  
51 prosperity by using natural resources intensively and emitting massive amount of  
52 greenhouse gases. Poor countries also have the right to economic development, but  
53 there must be a premise that all economic development is sustainable. Acting  
54 sustainably should be in the interest of all communities, and nobody can be freed  
55 from this responsibility.

56 With the term “climate justice” it is acknowledged that rich countries have  
57 contributed most to climate change, and therefore are the most responsible for  
58 solving the problems coming with it. International climate and environment  
59 agreements must be based on the “common but differentiated responsibilities”  
60 principle. Norway has therefore a special responsibility to be a pioneer-country  
61 both nationally and internationally.

## 62 **2.1. Ecological debt**

63 The term ecological debt refers to the debt industrialized countries have towards  
64 developing countries in terms of pollution, CO2 emissions, unfair trade and  
65 environmental damage. Carbon debt is an example of ecological debt in which  
66 Norway is a big contributor. We are exhausting the atmosphere's capacity to absorb  
67 CO2 by emitting it in big amounts. Based on the notion that the atmosphere is a  
68 global common property, we are creating a carbon debt for ourselves towards those  
69 who are not overusing the atmosphere's capacity, and those impaired by the high  
70 levels of CO2 emission. Ecological debt is a term which turns over-consumption  
71 into to a both moral and political issue.

## 72 **2.2. Biological diversity**

73 Greenhouse gas emission, uniformity in agriculture and major interventions in  
74 nature cause both eradication of species and reduction of earth's biological  
75 diversity. Biological diversity is vital for sustaining ecosystems. People are a part  
76 of nature and the knowledge, traditions and worldview of local people, must be  
77 meaningfully included in environment protection. Destruction of the biological  
78 diversity brings consequences for culture, food sovereignty and food security.

79 Spire is against trade with and speculation in ecosystem services. All species and  
80 ecosystems have their intrinsic value. The challenges connected to loss of  
81 biological diversity cannot be solved by mathematical calculations and quota  
82 systems.

## 83 **2.3. Consumption**

84 In the world today we see extreme overconsumption, both on a personal and global  
85 level. This is creating an enormous pressure on earth. The current intensive  
86 extraction of natural resources is emptying reservoirs and leaving behind big  
87 amounts of waste and pollution. It is highly necessary to reduce consumption,  
88 especially in industrialized countries. Waste and other byproducts must also be  
89 looked at as a resource. Private and public actores are responsible for changing the  
90 production and distribution systems so that the aim of sustainable use of resources  
91 is achieved.

92 The current economic systems presume an ever-rising consumption. The prices of

93 many products are far away from the real cost of their production and lead to  
94 overconsumption. There is a need to shift from economic growth as an aim of  
95 development to focus on people's quality of life and sustainability.

## 96 **2.4. Technology**

97 Development and research in the field of environmentally friendly and energy  
98 efficient technology is part of the solution for the environmental challenges we are  
99 facing. Environmentally friendly technology must become globally accessible for  
100 all social classes. Industrialized countries have a responsibility to make technology  
101 accessible to developing countries. It is necessary to create ethical regulations for  
102 the use of genetic research, biotechnology and nanotechnology.

## 103 **3. Food security**

104 Food security is the situation when all people have at all times access to sufficient,  
105 safe, nutritious and culturally acceptable food to satisfy their need in order to live  
106 an active and healthy life. The possibility to be satiated every day by nutritious and  
107 culturally acceptable food is also a human right. There is more than enough food to  
108 feed all the people on Earth. Therefore the hunger problem is a political problem of  
109 distribution, and the solution is not only to produce more food. The production and  
110 distribution system itself has to be improved, by implementing the food sovereignty  
111 principle, and reducing food waste in each link from producer to consumer.

112 Simultaneously, an increase in food production in the world will also be needed in  
113 the near future. This is carried out best in a sustainable way where farmers' desires  
114 are central and their own traditional knowledge is preserved and combined with  
115 new information based on research. It is therefore important to invest in  
116 independent agricultural research, to set aside resources for innovation and to make  
117 technology and relevant knowledge accessible to developing countries. The world's  
118 food production system is now more than ever dependent on knowledge and ability  
119 to adapt. Farmers must also be secured the freedom to organize themselves into  
120 cooperatives and other organizing forms which make them independent from  
121 international companies when it comes to production, processing and sale as well  
122 as access to credit.

123 Small-scale agriculture based on agro-ecological methods will be an

124 environmentally friendly agriculture, able to improve the resource-base, contribute  
125 to the prevention of climate change, preserve biological diversity, reinforce food  
126 security and contribute to social and economic development. As long as the food is  
127 not produced sustainably, food security will be undermined in the long run.

### 128 **3.1. Food sovereignty**

129 People and states' food sovereignty is important for securing the right to food. Food  
130 sovereignty involves the right for people, local communities and states to decide  
131 their own policies and strategies to ensure food security, sustainable food  
132 production, distribution and consumption of food.

133 All countries must have the right to initiate the measures they consider necessary to  
134 protect and support food production for their own citizens, as long as these  
135 measures do not collide with the same right for another country. These measures  
136 include protectionist means such as agricultural support for their own production,  
137 building up food storages and using import protection to protect their own market.  
138 International trade agreements, which in practice limit the possibility for poor  
139 countries to form their own policy by forcing liberalism on them, are in direct  
140 contravention to the food sovereignty principle and contribute to the maintenance  
141 of the current level of hunger in the world. Norway hereby has responsibility to be  
142 a constructive international actor by clearly advocating poor countries' rights to  
143 start using the food sovereignty principle. Food sovereignty will be able to secure  
144 greater power to states and food producers over their own food production and  
145 national policies, but it will also be able to secure economic development by  
146 empowering the poorest ones, and consequently increase purchasing power for vital  
147 food products.

### 148 **3.2. The right to store sowing seeds and food**

149 In order to increase food security and reduce the risk of crop failures, access to and  
150 reliable availability of seeds is crucial for farmers. This can be secured through  
151 seed banks and farmers' freedom to store seed from their own harvest.

152 Since climate change makes harvests more unpredictable and farmers become more  
153 and more vulnerable because of floods and droughts, there should also be national  
154 food reserves established. This way, potential famine in case of crop failure can be  
155 avoided. The states are responsible for taking care of these measures and they must

156 be able to implement them without fearing international sanctions.

### 157 **3.3. GMO in food and fodder**

158 There is little independent research done on long-term consequences of genetic  
159 engineering. Spire therefore has a precautionary approach towards GMO in food  
160 and fodder. Spire is not principally against GMO, but believes they must lead to  
161 sustainable development and have proven positive consequences for society. The  
162 GMOs at the market today often prove themselves to have negative effect on both  
163 people and environment. Moreover, most of the commercially traded GMOs are  
164 produced to be used in an industrial and monoculture-based agricultural model,  
165 which in itself is not sustainable. GMOs must be subject to strict demands of  
166 sustainability in the future, and GMO must be developed based on the interests of  
167 people rather than the companies maximizing profit. A fair access to eventual  
168 advantages from future GMOs must be secured to the population and research must  
169 be carried out based on benefits for society and environment.

### 170 **3.4. Property rights**

171 It is necessary for those who live off agriculture to have property rights or land-use  
172 rights to the land they till to secure themselves the opportunity to escape poverty.  
173 Property rights are to be used as a means to hinder injustice and abuse of power on  
174 the part of resourceful actors. This concerns particularly women, indigenous  
175 peoples and minority groups. It is also important that local customs and traditions  
176 are taken into account in the assessment and development of appropriate resource  
177 regimes and rights. The development of property rights and use rights should  
178 secure good legal protection as well as protection of local culture and tradition. It is  
179 crucial that the unequal and unfair distribution of land should not be segmented in  
180 the process of establishing and formalizing property rights. Land reform is  
181 necessary in countries where large areas of land lie fallow, and where land is  
182 unfairly distributed in order to prevent a small minority from owning incalculable  
183 amounts of land while others are completely without property. The battle fought by  
184 organizations and grassroots movements of landless and small-scale farmers who  
185 are fighting for rights to their own land is a legitimate one.

186 Property rights in urban areas can contribute to securing economic safety for  
187 marginalized groups. Through the registration of dwellings and families who own

188 these, a sound financial basis can be secured, and for some this can become an  
189 incentive for long-term development and value creation.

### 190 **3.5. Communal resources**

191 Privatisation and/or state regulation is often represented as the only solutions to  
192 securing a sustainable management of finite resources. Spire is sceptical towards  
193 this. In reality, collective management of communal resources has proven to work  
194 at least just as well, as long as some important principles are set. These principles  
195 include common norms, that the rules should be fashioned and enforced locally,  
196 that the user group should be clearly defined, and that those who are considered a  
197 part of the system should be close to the resources and thus also to the gains and  
198 losses related to the management of them. This recognises a local population's  
199 knowledge of and ability to manage their own resources. Particularly suited for  
200 such management are resources like fish, forests, water resources and pastures.

### 201 **3.6. Fishing**

202 Small-scale fishing produces as much food as industrial fishing globally, while the  
203 former receives smaller subsidies, is more energy efficient, throws away little of  
204 the catch and employs far more workers. Millions of people work with small-scale  
205 fishing and aquaculture and even more work in the processing and trade of fish to  
206 local markets. The livelihoods of these people are under pressure from a number of  
207 agents: industrial fishing, climate change and market liberalization.

208 Fishing rights through quotas that can be bought and sold are becoming the market-  
209 based solution for overfishing and excessive capacity in fishery nowadays. This is  
210 privatization of common resources by which the rights end up in the hands of a few  
211 wealthy players. Small-scale fishing must have central position in the forming of  
212 big fishing reforms and representatives from fishing communities must be heard  
213 when adopting conventions for climate and biological diversity.

### 214 **3.7. The right to water**

215 Water is a human right, however, large numbers of people die every day because of  
216 the lack of clean drinking water. There is enough drinking water for everyone, but  
217 it is not well managed or distributed. The lack of drinking water worsens the health  
218 situations of the poorest in the world, hinders development, increases

219 discrimination and creates conflicts. For the right to water to be fulfilled, water  
220 must not be commercialized or privatized.

## 221 **4. Trade**

222 Trade can be a way out of poverty and a cause of positive development for  
223 individuals, groups and nationalities. However, trade itself should not be an aim,  
224 but a means of economic and social development, fair distribution, extermination of  
225 poverty, increased democracy and sustainable development. Current economic  
226 structures are not contributing to these positive effects of trade, but increase the  
227 differences between the rich and the poor. Trade agreements and the most  
228 important financing institutions such as the IMF, the World Bank and the WTO  
229 lack democratic control and participate in upholding the existent structures.

230 Industrialized countries have historically used trade as a strategic instrument for  
231 securing growth and development. However, current trade agreements limit the  
232 developing countries' room to act by restricting their possibility to implement the  
233 same instruments and to choose their own economic policies.

### 234 **4.1. Trade and investment agreements**

235 More and more bilateral, regional plurilateral agreements are being concluded.  
236 These can be problematic for developing countries, since their possibility to  
237 achieve their demands is reduced, because they often have the weakest position in  
238 the negotiations. Bilateral investment treaties (BITs) protect investors in their  
239 encounter with governments. Especially the mechanism for investor-state dispute  
240 settlement is very problematic. It provides the possibility to take legal action  
241 against states which introduce legislation, even though it is beneficial for  
242 environment, people and animals. The agreements should reflect the responsibility  
243 of the investors in the countries they operate in. Local employment, high  
244 environmental standards, decent working life and making technology and relevant  
245 knowledge accessible are possible examples of investors' duties. Investor should  
246 not interfere with national policies, but respect human rights, environment and  
247 contribute to social and economic development.

### 248 **4.2. Trade in foodstuffs**

249 International trade regulations set standards for regulating and limit political room



250 to act considering food security. Spire believes that all countries should have to  
251 right to produce enough food for their own population. Therefore, Spire is not  
252 against subsidized foodstuff production for national use. Indirect export subsidies  
253 of rich countries, however, cause unnaturally low prices and consequently  
254 outcompete countries in the South on international, national and local markets.  
255 Stricter international regulations against food dumping are needed to avoid this  
256 problem.

257 Unprocessed foodstuffs have a low and unstable price on the current international  
258 market. Poor countries must therefore get the opportunity to further process their  
259 commodities so that they can have higher profit from the production. This will also  
260 bring industrial development with positive effects in the form of increased  
261 employment and economic development. Moreover, the access to market must be  
262 improved, so that farmers and food companies in poor countries can sell their  
263 products. From a climate and development perspective, the biggest possible amount  
264 of trade should be enabled nationally and regionally so that the value creation is  
265 retained in the area and the emission of greenhouse gasses is minimized. Rich  
266 countries should, however, open up for more trade with poor countries when it  
267 comes to foodstuffs they are not able to produce themselves, provided the trade is  
268 contributing to real development of the poorest ones. Furthermore, the legislation  
269 on tariff escalation must change, so that exporting processed foodstuffs pays off for  
270 developing countries. Farmers must be guaranteed a fair minimum price to limit  
271 their vulnerability to the fluctuating international prices of foodstuffs. International  
272 regulations must not put in place any limitations on the states' possibility to ensure  
273 this. This has to be regarded as a temporary solution, since the aim is to terminate  
274 all unfair trade.

### 275 **4.3 International trade and human rights**

276 The human rights were created through the idea that all humans have basic rights  
277 that apply to all humans, with no consideration to sex, age, religion or nationality.  
278 To contribute to safeguard each individual's self-worth the rules that govern  
279 international trade need to align with and support the human rights. This means that  
280 trade agreements can not undermine any national legislation or fundamental  
281 interests designed to promote human rights. This entails that trade agreements can  
282 not interfere with any individual's right to a private life, contribute to deprivation

283 of property or counteract safe working environments. Even more importantly, trade  
284 agreements can not counteract the human rights to food, water, clothes, health care,  
285 social benefits and education. Any company's rights to invest through trade and  
286 investment agreements can never be more important than the protection of humans'  
287 rights and self-worth.

### 288 **4.3. Trade with public services**

289 The current legislation about international service trade causes not all people to  
290 have access to basic rights such as water, health and education. Privatization of  
291 public welfare services allows multinational companies to profit from expenses on  
292 basic needs.

### 293 **4.4. Patents**

294 Patents are intellectual property rights. Patents on sowing seeds deprive farmers of  
295 the right to use their own seeds, which makes food production more expensive and  
296 threatens food security and biological diversity in agriculture. The current patent  
297 agreements protect commercial breeders over farmers. They maintain the unfair  
298 distribution of profits and acknowledge neither traditional knowledge, nor the  
299 country of origin.

### 300 **4.5. Financial markets and capital flows**

301 The function of the financial market is to make the economy more efficient by  
302 transferring capital from savers to investors. The current financial market is,  
303 however, very distant from this model and consists of more and more speculation  
304 which is of little benefit to society and creates a big risk of financial crises.  
305 Historically, financial crises have occurred as a consequence of increased financial  
306 liberalization and deregulation, increased flow of global financial capital and  
307 increased financial activity.

308 Developing countries are particularly in need of regulating international capital  
309 flow. At the same time, more rich countries wish to liberalize the financial markets  
310 in developing countries through deregulation and prohibition of capital control.

311 One form of speculation with particularly serious consequences is speculation in  
312 food commodity markets and raw materials, which causes big international price

313 fluctuations. Unpredictable price fluctuations make it difficult for farmers to plan  
314 and invest in agriculture. This reduces food security in developing countries where  
315 farmers do not have access to forward contracts, insurance schemes and other  
316 support schemes from the authorities.

317 More than ten times the value of what developing countries receive in aid  
318 disappears because of illegal capital flow. This is among other things done through  
319 banks and companies' use of tax havens, corruption, internal mispricing and tax  
320 evasion. Illicit capital flow constitutes a big problem for economic justice, it is a  
321 global challenge. Profit of the companies comes at the expense of public tax  
322 income, including countries in the North. Land-for-land-reporting is an important  
323 tool for counteracting illicit capital flow.

#### 324 **4.6. Debt**

325 Developing countries struggle with development in a positive economic direction  
326 and one of the reasons is heavy debt burden, of which big amounts are often  
327 illegitimate. All illegitimate debt must be evened immediately. Loans taken for the  
328 purpose of servicing illegitimate debt must also be characterized as illegitimate  
329 debt. These loans are often taken under corrupt and dictatorial regimes with the  
330 consequence that the population does not benefit from them. This results in  
331 restricted economic and political room to act. Repayments of legitimate debt is not  
332 to come at the expense of the state's possibility to secure basic needs such as food,  
333 health and education. With its strong position as creditor, Norway should lead the  
334 way and resist the demand for retrenchment policies in economies that are in crisis.  
335 Norway is also responsible for ensuring that loans from the World Bank are  
336 legitimate.

#### 337 **4.7. Agricultural investments and land grabbing**

338 Land grabbing is characterized by enormous areas of land being bought or leased  
339 on long-term contracts by private or state actors, either international, national or  
340 partly national. Spire defines investments in land without voluntary and prior  
341 informed consent of the local population in advance as land grabbing. Land  
342 grabbing concentrates land resources in the hands of a few persons at the expense  
343 of small-scale farmers who are dependent on land to produce food and secure  
344 income for themselves.

345 Investments must be made on the background of thorough impact assessments, so  
346 that they do not cause violation of human rights. Without strict state regulations,  
347 including taxes and tolls on export and productions, land investments will not result  
348 in economic growth at a national level. Moreover, the process must be based on  
349 democratic planning, independent supervision, real participation and free and  
350 informed consent.

351 Spire supports the global movement working against land investors that are taking  
352 peoples' productive means and resources such as land, water and fish together with  
353 rights to seed, technology, traditional knowledge etc. Securing the use rights and/or  
354 property rights to land for the local population and knowledge of their own rights  
355 contribute to granting the local population with a real possibility to negotiate with  
356 the authorities and investors and equalize power imbalances.

357 One of the consequences of land grabbing is that people lose access to sources of  
358 fresh water by i.e. overuse, pollution and protecting or redirecting of rivers. This is  
359 called water grabbing and is a growing problem.

## 360 **5. Cities**

361 More than half of world's population lives in cities and the number is expected to  
362 increase. Cities nowadays make up very little of the earth's area, but use most of its  
363 resources and cause the major share of global greenhouse gas emissions. Social and  
364 economic inequality are also a big challenge in urban areas. Cities have therefore a  
365 central role in the development of a sustainable and fair world.

### 366 **5.1. Diverse and inclusive cities**

367 It is important that urban development and area planning should be diverse and  
368 inclusive. All inhabitants – regardless of gender, disability, sexual orientation, age,  
369 nationality, ethnicity, religion and belief – must be able to participate in the  
370 development of their city and urban policies. Authorities must include, facilitate  
371 and take local engagement and grass roots democracy seriously. Urban areas must  
372 be formed to be beneficial for all groups.

### 373 **5.2. The right to a good city life**

374 A central objective of city development must be to develop infrastructure and an

375 urban environment which increase public health and social unity by facilitating an  
376 active life for the inhabitants, keeping pollution to a minimal, and providing clean  
377 drinking water and good sanitation conditions for all inhabitants.

378 One of the main goals must be to ensure housing of decent quality for a reasonable  
379 price. This will prevent people from being forced to live in informal or illegal  
380 housing.

381 The transportation sector and infrastructure must be adapted to the pattern of  
382 people's everyday movement. It is important that area planning should support an  
383 ambition in reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and the least possible travelling  
384 time in inhabitants' day.

### 385 **5.3. Ecology and urban food production**

386 Ecological consideration must be one of the main values in urban development. A  
387 greener city contributes to good city spaces, increased biological diversity,  
388 ecosystem services and protection from local pollution. Urban food production  
389 should be an integrated part of urban planning and urban development. By  
390 strengthening urban agriculture, food security increases, new social areas are  
391 created and relations between people and nature improve. At the same time it  
392 supports protection of foodsoil outside of cities.

## 393 **6. Social justice and democracy**

394 Social justice, good governance and local participation is crucial for a better  
395 distribution of resources. Democracy is the key to good governance and different  
396 democratic participation channels presuppose that civil society can participate in  
397 and influence political decisions. Active participation among all social groups is  
398 absolutely necessary for democratic development.

### 399 **6.1. Gender equality**

400 Spire wants to counteract discrimination in all its forms. It is important to achieve  
401 gender justice and strengthen the position of women and girls. Most of the poor in  
402 the world are women and the biggest part of the world's resources is owned by  
403 men. We need more women in leading positions globally and the future leadership  
404 role should to a greater extent reflect values such as diversity, compassion,  
405 empathy and respect for nature.

406 **6.2. Education and informal learning**

407 All people have the right to education. Education, both formal and informal,  
408 increases competence, knowledge and awareness. Education is an important tool  
409 for the fight against poverty. Liberalization requirements cause cuts in social  
410 services, for instance in education budgets, and the result is that people lose access  
411 to education. This is unacceptable. Education must be adapted to local conditions  
412 and be based on academic freedom. Early commenced teaching about what  
413 sustainable development means will form conscious pupils with a better chance of  
414 taking care of their own future. National and international measures to hinder brain  
415 drain are important to maintain educated resourceful persons in the countries that  
416 need it.

417 **6.3. Participation of young people**

418 Young people also play an important part in development and strengthening of  
419 participatory democracy, both nationally and globally, and they should be included  
420 in important political processes which influence our future. Diversity in the  
421 international youth movement is important for a sustainable future. The  
422 possibilities to be heard must be strengthened for groups which are now  
423 underrepresented in political forums. Youth is a resource with energy and creativity  
424 able to mobilize for social and political change.