



# Spire's political platform (English)

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## 4 **Introduction**

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

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

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

### 13 **1.2. Sustainable development**

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

### 18 **1.3. Fair distribution**

19 The current economic and political structures are contributing to the maintenance of injustice and  
20 immense differences. Although we are living in a world with plenty of natural resources and  
21 material growth, a big part of the population is still living in extreme poverty. Most of these  
22 people live in poor agricultural and fishing societies. A lot of them suffer from hunger while at  
23 the same time there is a global overproduction of food. The fight against poverty has to take the  
24 enormous differences in the world more into account. It is important that the poor themselves are  
25 active in the fight against poverty and global redistribution. Furthermore, it is crucial that  
26 countries have the sufficient freedom to carry out active distribution policies without being  
27 hindered by supranational agreements and regulations. This has to be the basis for international  
28 trade regulations, trading and investment agreements and organizations such as the World Bank,  
29 the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

30

## 31 **2. Climate and environment**

32 Climate change is a structural problem, because the ones is affects the most are the vulnerable

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

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

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

## 56 **2.1. Ecological debt**

57 The term ecological debt refers to the debt industrialized countries have towards developing  
58 countries in terms of pollution, CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, unfair trade and environmental damage. Carbon  
59 debt is an example of ecological debt in which Norway is a big contributor. We are exhausting  
60 the atmosphere's capacity to absorb CO<sub>2</sub> by emitting it in big amounts. Based on the notion that  
61 the atmosphere is a global common property, we are creating a carbon debt for ourselves towards  
62 those who are not overusing the atmosphere's capacity, and those impaired by the high levels of  
63 CO<sub>2</sub> emission. Ecological debt is a term which turns over-consumption into to a both moral and  
64 political issue.

## 65 **2.2. Biological diversity**

66 Greenhouse gas emission, uniformity in agriculture and major interventions in nature cause both  
67 eradication of species and reduction of earth's biological diversity. Biological diversity is vital  
68 for sustaining ecosystems. People are a part of nature and the knowledge, traditions and  
69 worldview of local people, must be meaningfully included in environment protection. Destruction

70 of the biological diversity brings consequences for culture, food sovereignty and food security.

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

### 74 **2.3. Consumption**

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

81 The current economic systems presume an ever-rising consumption. The prices of many products  
82 are far away from the real cost of their production and lead to overconsumption. There is a need  
83 to shift from economic growth as an aim of development to focus on people's quality of life and  
84 sustainability.

### 85 **2.4. Technology**

86 Development and research in the field of environmentally friendly and energy efficient  
87 technology is part of the solution for the environmental challenges we are facing.  
88 Environmentally friendly technology must become globally accessible for all social classes.  
89 Industrialized countries are responsible for technology transfer to developing countries. It is  
90 necessary to create ethical regulations for the use of genetic research, biotechnology and  
91 nanotechnology.

## 92 **3. Food security**

93 Food security is the situation when all people have at all times access to sufficient, safe,  
94 nutritious and culturally acceptable food to satisfy their need in order to live an active and healthy  
95 life. The possibility to be satiated every day by nutritious and culturally acceptable food is also a  
96 human right. There is more than enough food to feed all the people on Earth. Therefore the  
97 hunger problem is a political problem of distribution, and the solution is not only to produce more  
98 food. The production and distribution system itself has to be improved, by implementing the food  
99 sovereignty principle.

100 Simultaneously, an increase in food production in the world will also be needed in the near  
101 future. This is carried out best in a sustainable way where farmers' desires are central and their  
102 own traditional knowledge is preserved and combined with new information based on research. It  
103 is therefore important to invest in independent agricultural research and to set aside resources for  
104 innovation and transport of technology. The world's food production system is now more than

105 ever dependent on knowledge and ability to adapt. Farmers must also be secured the freedom to  
106 organize themselves into cooperatives and other organizing forms which make them independent  
107 from international companies when it comes to production, processing and sale as well as access  
108 to credit.

109 Small-scale agriculture based on agro-ecological methods will be an environmentally friendly  
110 agriculture, able to improve the resource-base, contribute to the prevention of climate change,  
111 preserve biological diversity, reinforce food security and contribute to social and economic  
112 development. As long as the food is not produced sustainably, food security will be undermined  
113 in the long run.

### 114 **3.1. Food sovereignty**

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

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

### 131 **3.2. The right to store sowing seeds and food**

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

135 Since climate change makes harvests more unpredictable and farmers become more and more  
136 vulnerable because of floods and droughts, there should also be national food reserves  
137 established. This way, potential famine in case of crop failure can be avoided. The states are  
138 responsible for taking care of these measures and they must be able to implement them  
139 without fearing international sanctions.

### 140 **3.3. GMO in food and fodder**

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

### 151 **3.4. Property rights**

152 It is necessary for those who live off agriculture to have property rights or land-use rights to the  
153 land they till to secure themselves the opportunity to escape poverty. Property rights are to be  
154 used as a means to hinder injustice and abuse of power on the part of resourceful actors. This  
155 concerns particularly indigenous peoples, women and ethnic minorities. It is also important that  
156 local customs and traditions are taken into account in the assessment and development of  
157 appropriate resource regimes and rights. The development of property rights and use rights  
158 should secure good legal protection as well as protection of local culture and tradition. It is  
159 crucial that the unequal and unfair distribution of land should not be segmented in the process of  
160 establishing and formalizing property rights. Land reform is necessary in countries where large  
161 areas of land lie fallow, and where land is unfairly distributed in order to prevent a small minority  
162 from owning incalculable amounts of land while others are completely without property. The  
163 battle fought by organizations and grassroots movements of landless and small-scale farmers who  
164 are fighting for rights to their own land is a legitimate one.

165 Property rights in urban areas can contribute to securing economic safety for marginalized  
166 groups. Through the registration of dwellings and families who own these, a sound financial basis  
167 can be secured, and for some this can become an incentive for long-term development and value  
168 creation.

### 169 **3.5. Fishing**

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

176 Fishing rights through quotas that can be bought and sold are becoming the market-based  
177 solution for overfishing and excessive capacity in fishery nowadays. This is privatization of

178 common resources by which the rights end up in the hands of a few wealthy players. Small-scale  
179 fishing must have central position in the forming of big fishing reforms and representatives from  
180 fishing communities must be heard when adopting conventions for climate and biological  
181 diversity.

### 182 **3.6. The right to water**

183 Water is a human right, however, large numbers of people die every day because of the lack of  
184 clean drinking water. There is enough drinking water for everyone, but it is not well managed or  
185 distributed. The lack of drinking water worsens the health situations of the poorest in the world,  
186 hinders development, increases discrimination and creates conflicts. For the right to water to be  
187 fulfilled, water must not be commercialized or privatized.

## 188 **4. International trade**

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

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

### 200 **4.1. Trade and investment agreements**

201 More and more bilateral, regional plurilateral agreements are being concluded. These can be  
202 problematic for developing countries, since their possibility to achieve their demands is reduced,  
203 because they often have the weakest position in the negotiations. Bilateral investment treaties  
204 (BITs) protect investors in their encounter with governments. Especially the mechanism for  
205 investor-state dispute settlement is very problematic. It provides the possibility to take legal  
206 action against states which introduce legislation, even though it is beneficial for environment,  
207 people and animals. The agreements should reflect the responsibility of the investors in the  
208 countries they operate in. Technology transfer, local employment, high environmental standards  
209 and decent working life are possible examples of investors' duties. Investor should not interfere  
210 with national policies, but respect human rights, environment and contribute to social and  
211 economic development.

### 212 **4.2. Trade in foodstuffs**

213 International trade regulations set standards for regulating and limit political room to act  
214 considering food security. Spire believes that all countries should have to right to produce enough  
215 food for their own population. Therefore, Spire is not against subsidized foodstuff production for  
216 national use. Indirect export subsidies of rich countries, however, cause unnaturally low prices  
217 and consequently outcompete countries in the South on international, national and local markets.  
218 Stricter international regulations against food dumping are needed to avoid this problem.

219 Unprocessed foodstuffs have a low and unstable price on the current international market. Poor  
220 countries must therefore get the opportunity to further process their commodities so that they can  
221 have higher profit from the production. This will also bring industrial development with positive  
222 effects in the form of increased employment and economic development. Moreover, the access to  
223 market must be improved, so that farmers and food companies in poor countries can sell their  
224 products. From a climate and development perspective, the biggest possible amount of trade  
225 should be enabled nationally and regionally so that the value creation is retained in the area and  
226 the emission of greenhouse gasses is minimized. Rich countries should, however, open up for  
227 more trade with poor countries when it comes to foodstuffs they are not able to produce  
228 themselves, provided the trade is contributing to real development of the poorest ones.  
229 Furthermore, the legislation on tariff escalation must change, so that exporting processed  
230 foodstuffs pays off for developing countries. Farmers must be guaranteed a fair minimum price  
231 which makes them less vulnerable from the fluctuating international prices of raw materials. This  
232 has to be regarded as a temporary solution, since the aim is to terminate all unfair trade.

### 233 **4.3. Trade with public services**

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

### 237 **4.4. Patents**

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

### 243 **4.5. Financial markets and capital flows**

244 The function of the financial market is to make the economy more efficient by transferring capital  
245 from savers to investors. The current financial market is, however, very distant from this model  
246 and consists of more and more speculation which is of little benefit to society and creates a big  
247 risk of financial crises. Historically, financial crises have occurred as a consequence of increased  
248 financial liberalization and deregulation, increased flow of global financial capital and increased

249 financial activity.

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

253 One form of speculation with particularly serious consequences is speculation in food commodity  
254 markets and raw materials, which causes big international price fluctuations. Unpredictable price  
255 fluctuations make it difficult for farmers to plan and invest in agriculture. This reduces food  
256 security in developing countries where farmers do not have access to forward contracts, insurance  
257 schemes and other support schemes from the authorities.

258 More than ten times the amount of money developing countries receive in aid disappears because  
259 of illegal capital flow. This is among other things done through banks and companies' use of tax  
260 havens, corruption, internal mispricing and tax evasion. Illicit capital flow constitutes a big  
261 problem for economic justice, it is a global challenge. Profit of the companies comes at the  
262 expense of public tax income, including countries in the North. Land-for-land-reporting is an  
263 important tool for counteracting illicit capital flow.

#### 264 **4.6. Debt**

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

#### 275 **4.7. Agricultural investments and land grabbing**

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

282 Investments must be made on the background of thorough impact assessments, so that they do  
283 not cause violation of human rights. Without strict state regulations, including taxes and tolls on  
284 export and productions, land investments will not result in economic growth at a national level.



285 Moreover, the process must be based on democratic planning, independent supervision, real  
286 participation and free and informed consent.

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

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

## 296 **5. Social justice and democracy**

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

### 301 **5.1. Gender equality**

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

### 307 **5.2. Education and informal learning**

308 All people have the right to education. Education, both formal and informal, increases  
309 competence, knowledge and awareness. Education is an important tool for the fight against  
310 poverty. Liberalization requirements cause cuts in education budgets and the result is that people  
311 lose access to education. This is unacceptable. Education must be adapted to local conditions.  
312 Early commenced teaching about what sustainable development means will form conscious  
313 pupils with a better chance of taking care of their own future. National and international measures  
314 to hinder brain drain are important to maintain educated resourceful persons in the countries that  
315 need it.

### 316 **5.3. Participation of young people**

317 Young people also play an important part in development and strengthening of participatory  
318 democracy, both nationally and globally, and they should be included in important political

319 processes which influence our future. Diversity in the international youth movement is important  
320 for a sustainable future. The possibilities to be heard must be strengthened for groups which are  
321 now underrepresented in political forums. Youth is a resource with energy and creativity able to  
322 mobilize for social and political change.

## 323 **6. Cities**

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

### 329 **6.1. Diverse and inclusive cities**

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

### 335 **6.2. The right to a good city life**

336 A central objective of city development must be to develop infrastructure and an urban  
337 environment which increase public health and social unity by facilitating an active life for the  
338 inhabitants, keeping pollution to a minimal, and providing clean drinking water and good  
339 sanitation conditions for all inhabitants.

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

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

### 345 **6.3. Ecology and urban food production**

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