

STAND UP FOR AFRICA! STAND UP FOR CLIMATE JUSTICE!

From 24-26 May 2011, representatives of African trade unions, farmers, women and faith-based groups, as well as key African non-governmental organisations and networks concerned with the climate change crisis met in Johannesburg, South Africa to discuss shared strategies to confront this crisis and its root causes. Under the joint sponsorship of the Africa Trade Network (ATN), the International Trade Union Confederation-Africa (ITUC-Africa) and the Pan African Climate Justice Alliance (PACJA), the meeting deliberated on the threats posed to the peoples of Africa and the world over by climate change, as well as the continuing inaction by governments in the face of these threats. The meeting reached the shared understandings and adopted the conclusions that follow.

This year and the next few years ahead are critical for the survival of humanity on Earth, and for our ability to live in conditions that meet our material, spiritual and cultural needs and aspirations. There is increasingly little time left to take the action required to avert further catastrophic effects of climate change, in a manner that is consistent with the developmental needs of the overwhelming majority of people who live in poverty and deprivation. For Africa and its peoples in particular, governments meeting at this year's United Nations Conference on Climate Change in Durban must end years of unacceptable vacillation, and meet their moral, historical and legal obligations and commitments for action on climate change, in accordance with the requirements of science and the principles of equity.

Like the other major crises ravaging the world, the crisis of climate change arises principally from policies and practices of the advanced industrial countries over a long period of time, and the related systems of production and consumption by which the needs of the vast majority of people are sacrificed for the comfort of an elite few. The peoples of Africa and other developing countries bear little responsibility for the climate change and other crises, yet they are suffering its worst effects, and lack the means for countering them.

CLIMATE CHANGE: CHALLENGES AND THREATS TO AFRICA

Africa stands on the front-line of climate change. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Africa's land mass and other geo-physical characteristics means that it will warm one and a half times more than the global average. The consequences of global warming are likely to be more severe in Africa. Indeed, the World Meteorological Organisation has recently reaffirmed that African countries are already suffering major levels of warming and effects in terms of drought and other extreme weather events.

Extreme weather events are already disrupting Africa's agricultural and other livelihood systems, which are more dependent on natural cycles.

These effects will worsen unless global warming is reversed in time.

However, the impacts of climate change, as well as the capacity of African nations to cope, are further complicated by the essentially primary commodity export-dependent economic structures inherited from colonialism and perpetuated since. This has resulted in a neglect of the economic and social needs of the rural and agricultural majority, limited domestic development of national and regional industry, and, above all, extreme weaknesses in overall productive capabilities.

Transforming these structures is essential to Africa's ultimate response to the challenge of climate change. Such transformation encompasses building more resilient and people-centred agriculture systems; industrialisation and creation of decent work; addressing the immediate and systemic livelihood and social needs and challenges of women; conserving and using natural resources for local, national and regional needs; and other measures – all as part of a just transition to systems and methods of production and consumption that are compatible with the needs of the planet, as well as societies that place the needs of people above the narrow pursuit of profit.

A SCIENCE- AND EQUITY-BASED RESPONSE

An international regime on climate change that supports these needs and circumstances of Africa requires not only a global temperature goal that keeps Africans and other vulnerable communities safe, protects ecosystems and food production, and promotes sustainable development. It requires a corresponding limit on global emissions. It requires equitable distribution of the Earth's atmospheric space through ambitious emission reductions by the developed countries. And it requires adequate transfers of finance, technology and capacity to Africa and other developing countries to enable adaptation to rising temperatures and implementing mitigation actions. It requires, in sum, a package of measures that "adds up" to curb warming, provide space and support for the sustainable development of all countries and peoples, and ensure effective compliance with commitments.

The foundation and essential elements of this regime exist already in the UN Climate Convention and the Protocol and decisions implementing it. At the Bali Conference on Climate Change in 2007, governments agreed to renew their efforts to implement and strengthen this system through a second phase of legally binding mitigation commitments for developed countries under the Kyoto Protocol, as well as through a comprehensive process to implement their commitments under the Convention relating to mitigation, adaptation, finance and technology transfer, in line with a shared vision and temperature goal.

RISKS OF AN INAPPROPRIATE RESPONSE

However, instead of working towards the effective realisation of such a regime, the advanced industrialised countries that are historically responsible for the climate crisis have embarked on its destruction.

Instead of honouring their obligations, these countries are now seeking to impose a voluntary "pledge and review" system in which countries only take actions that are consistent with their own national circumstances and prescriptions, instead of scientific requirements and equitable principles. This will enable developed countries to escape their historical, moral and legal responsibilities, and provide only token support to developing countries to meet the challenges of climate change, leaving developing countries with the greater burden.

This attempt, which runs against the entire history of the global understanding and efforts to address climate change based on "common but differentiated responsibilities", gained prominence with the Copenhagen Accord, an extra-legal agreement cooked up by a small group of countries outside normal UN practices and principles at the climate meetings in Copenhagen in 2009. Although vigorously contested all throughout the following year, it was further embedded in the Cancun decisions adopted in December 2010.

If implemented, the agenda of a pledge-based climate regime has serious consequences. A recent UN report concludes that under current pledges, the world risks global warming of 2.5 to 5°C before the end of this century, and much higher levels in Africa. Many scientists and over 100 governments believe that the safe limit is below 1 or 1.5°C. Warming at higher levels threatens hundreds of millions of people to inhumane conditions and serious violations of their human rights, and risks destabilizing the Earth's climate system.

DEMANDS FOR DURBAN

The gradual erosion of the science, equity, and pro-development based climate change regime in order to advance the narrow economic interests of a small elite in the industrialized countries cannot be allowed to progress further in Durban. On the contrary, in the interests of Africa's peoples, of the world's majority of poor, marginalised and vulnerable, and of all humanity, it must be reversed. To this end, the climate change negotiations must deliver on the following:

- As part of the shared vision, the call of over 100 countries and many civil society groups and movements for warming to be kept well below 1 or 1.5°C must be acted upon; developed countries must peak their domestic emissions in the shortest possible time and become carbon

neutral well before 2050; developing countries must have equitable access to global atmospheric space.

- The principle of just transition adopted in Cancun as part of the shared vision must be strengthened and operationalised through, among other things, the adoption of concrete measures in all fundamental elements of the international regime on climate change that support structural economic transformation in Africa and ensure a socially just and equitable global response to climate change. In this regard, we support the call for the International Labour Organisation (ILO) to be given the mandate to oversee the operationalisation of just transition and report on progress at all Conferences of the Parties.

- Developed countries must halve their emissions by 2017 through all available domestic measures. These must be undertaken in accordance with their legally binding obligation to adopt a second commitment period starting in 2013 under the Kyoto Protocol. The United States, which has been outside the Kyoto Protocol, must adopt “comparable” efforts in scale, legal form and compliance under the Convention. Developed countries must close all accounting loopholes relating to market mechanisms, land-use, surplus allowances and marine and aviation transport, which threaten to undermine their contribution by demonstrating reductions “on paper” without delivering them in practice.

- Developing countries should undertake ambitious nationally appropriate mitigation actions to the extent they are enabled and supported by finance, technology and capacity as legally required from developed countries. Oversight and review of developing country mitigation actions must reflect their responsibilities and capabilities and thus be substantially less onerous than for developed countries.

- Existing carbon market mechanisms in the Kyoto Protocol as well as proposals to create new carbon market mechanisms under the Convention, both generally and in relation to forests management (REDD) must be discontinued, and the use of market mechanisms ultimately eliminated.

Financial resources under the Convention must come from public sources and should not provide a means by which developed countries shift the burden of mitigation further to developing countries, thereby appropriating an even greater share of the Earth’s limited remaining atmospheric space.

- Climate change presents a fundamental threat to agriculture in Africa and elsewhere.

Developed countries must not be allowed to shift attention from emission reductions in their own highly industrialized, subsidized and polluting agriculture sector towards mitigation in developing countries. Efforts to connect soil carbon to carbon markets must not be allowed as they threaten to transfer rights over the soil of the poorest farmers in developing countries to the richest financial institutions and most polluting corporations in developed countries, to enable those countries to continue emitting the climate pollution that threatens food security in Africa.

Addressing agriculture and climate change in developing countries must emphasize food security and sovereignty, farmers’ rights and rural livelihoods, and focus on adaptation, public finance and the transfer of appropriate technologies.

- The effect of response measures taken by developed countries must be evaluated for their economic, social and environmental consequences on all developing countries. Climate measures must not be used as a means of arbitrary or unjustifiable trade discrimination. The spill-over effects of developed countries’ policies must be minimized and fully compensated, while also addressing other fundamental challenges relating to a just transition, the elimination of poverty and sustainable development.

- Adaptation is a central priority for Africa and for all developing countries. The people of Africa – including workers, farmers, women, indigenous peoples, and other affected groups - must be fully compensated for the adverse impacts of climate change, for the costs of avoiding impacts wherever possible, and for lost opportunities for development. Mechanisms to address loss and damage must address adverse impacts to agriculture and other sectors in Africa. Developed countries must pay their adaptation debts, while “adapting” their own lifestyles to reduce climate pollution and minimize future impacts on Africa. There must be an Adaptation Committee that is fully supportive of, and responsive to the needs of, African and other developing countries.

- The technology mechanism established in Cancun, including an executive committee, centres and network, must be forged into an effective constellation of institutions, including technology centres in each country, with clear reporting and accountability to Convention Parties. Patents and other intellectual property rights that inhibit the transfer of accessible, affordable, sound and adaptable technologies to developing countries must be removed, and domestic capacities and technologies in developing countries enhanced.
- Developed countries must provide financial resources to address their climate debts and implement their commitments under the Convention. The \$30 billion pledged as “fast start” finance has emerged as neither new nor additional, but as largely repackaged official development assistance. The \$100 billion pledged to be mobilized offers a start, but as an ultimate level of financing for 2020 is arbitrary, inadequate and inconsistent with the requirements of the Convention. We therefore support the African Group’s call in Copenhagen for immediate funding of \$150 billion in Special Drawing Rights, \$400 billion in short-term finance, and 5% of Annex I GNP in longer-term finance. In addition, mechanisms must be established to evaluate the necessary scale of finance; clarity provided over the sources of funds; “innovative sources” evaluated for their incidence on developing countries; and the Green Climate Fund and Standing Committee established in Cancun must be fully operationalized. The role of the World Bank as interim trustee of the Green Climate Fund must be narrowly defined, and it must have no further role in the Convention’s financial architecture.
- Finally, the system of binding emission reductions for developed countries must be continued and extended. The United States and other wealthy countries must not be allowed to replace the agreed science-, equity- and rules-based system being negotiated under the Kyoto Protocol with a weak system of domestic pledges that are not negotiated, not binding in international law and not subject to robust oversight and compliance.

To enable the above, African governments must strengthen their collective positions and action. In particular, the South African government must support the interests of all 53 African states and their peoples; ensure the Durban process adheres rigorously to UN practices and principles (including on consensus); avoid the undemocratic and untransparent processes of Copenhagen and Cancun; and guarantee effective civil society participation.

All African institutions – particularly the African Union and the Conference of African Heads of State and Government on Climate Change (CAHOSCC) – must respect the sovereignty of all African countries in the formulation and negotiation of climate policies. African climate policy must remain “bottom up” to ensure our Heads of State are informed by their people and experts and not merely by a small group of technicians that are not directly accountable to the people.

OUR COMMITMENT TO STRUGGLE AND GLOBAL CIVIL SOCIETY SOLIDARITY

As civil society organisations we commit ourselves to continued struggle for the realization of these demands, and call on other organizations and citizens groups across Africa to join us in this effort. We express solidarity with the global movement and efforts in the cause of climate justice, and with the spirit and commitment to climate justice expressed at the World Peoples’ Conference on Climate Change and Mother Earth Rights in Cochabamba, Bolivia.

As we approach Durban, we call for the support of other global civil society movements as part of a common platform for solidarity and action with a view to ensuring that the Durban Climate Conference is the turning point for climate justice – a major stepping-stone on the journey towards stabilizing the climate system, securing a just transition and ensuring a future in which the rights and aspirations of all peoples can be realized.

Signed by:
Africa Trade Network (ATN)

Alliance Panafricaine de la Justice Climatique (PACJA) Confédération Syndicale Internationale - Afrique (CSI-Afrique) Alternative Information Development Centre (AIDC), South Africa Centre for Trade Policy Development (CTPD), Zambia Civic Response, Ghana Economic Justice Network (EJN) of FOCCISA, South Africa

ENDA- Syspro, Senegal

Énergie, Environnement, Développement (ENDA-Energy), Senegal, Environmental Rights Action, Nigeria General Agricultural Workers Union of the Trades Union Congress of Ghana, Ghana Global Network Africa (GNA), South Africa National Workers' Union of Mali (UNTM), Mali Pambazuka News Participatory, Ecological Land Use Management (PELUM), Lesotho Public Service Association, Zimbabwe Rwanda Rural Rehabilitation Initiative (RWARRI), Rwanda South Africa Municipal Workers Union, South Africa South African Non-government Organisations Coalition (SANGOCO), South Africa South African Transport and Allied Workers Union (SATAWU), South Africa Southern and Eastern African Trade Information and Negotiations Institute (SEATINI), Uganda Third World Network-Africa (TWN-Af), Ghana Trade Strategy Group (TSG), South Africa Working Group on Climate Change, Cameroon Zambia Climate Change Network, Zambia Zimbabwe Environmental Lawyers Association (ZELA), Zimbabwe