



## climate justice & energy

### changing the system not the climate, at cop 17 in durban and beyond

**As emissions soar to unprecedented levels<sup>1</sup> and the window for collective action on climate change narrows further, Friends of the Earth International unites with social movements, Indigenous Peoples, workers, activists, trade unions, youth and women's organisations to demand systemic change and climate justice.**

We are fighting for a just international climate architecture based on science and equity with rich industrialised countries fulfilling their historical, moral and legal responsibility to deliver radical domestic emission reductions. Rich countries should transfer appropriate public finance to support the shift towards clean, sustainable societies and adaptation to destructive climate impacts throughout the Global South. Just transitions should be enacted globally to move economies away from unsustainable exploitative economies and corporate globalisation that put profits above people's welfare and planetary survival.

**the science is irrefutable:** According to NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies, average temperatures have climbed 0.8 degrees Celsius around the world since 1880<sup>2</sup>. However, further warming of 0.6 degrees Celsius is already believed to be locked in without any further increase in the concentration of global greenhouse gas emissions<sup>3</sup>. This means that there is a very strong likelihood that exceeding a 1 degree Celsius temperature increase is already unavoidable, and that even stabilisation at 1.5 degrees may be extremely difficult.

The UN Environment Programme (UNEP) has warned that we could be moving towards a global temperature rise of up to five degrees Celsius before the end of this century.<sup>4</sup> A two degree temperature rise cannot be considered 'safe' as it could trigger tipping points in the climate system, and will have highly damaging impacts, in particular in Africa, small island states and low-lying coastal states like Bangladesh. Thresholds could be crossed that induce greater warming such as the melting of permafrost causing the release of methane, and the die-back of the Amazon forest. A four degree increase would cause a global sea level rise of up to two metres and commit the world to larger sea level rises should the irreversible melting of the Greenland and West Antarctica ice sheets be triggered.<sup>5</sup> This level of warming is beyond 'adaptation'.<sup>6</sup>

Climate change already affects hundreds of millions of people with flooding, drought and food shortages. In 2011, Australia, South and South East Asia, Brazil and Central America have been hit by devastating flooding and millions have been affected by the famine in the Horn of Africa. The US is experiencing unprecedented extreme weather patterns including intense storms and hurricanes, flooding, droughts and wildfires. Countries in the Global South are most immediately at risk. A third of humanity, primarily in Africa and South Asia, is exposed to the worst climate change impacts while rich, Northern European countries are the least vulnerable.<sup>7</sup> However, they will definitely not escape the impacts of the worsening climate crisis, with poor communities and those living in coastal areas, flood prone areas and below sea level being particularly vulnerable.

Yet despite these tragic events that are set to rapidly multiply in frequency and intensity across the globe, climate talks in Durban are likely to be characterised by rich industrialised countries promoting weak, voluntary emission reduction pledges and expanded carbon offset loopholes. This avoidance in tackling the climate crisis by those most responsible is being strongly criticized already by developing countries, social movements, Indigenous Peoples and civil society organisations, and is evidence of the capture of the policies of national governments towards the UNFCCC negotiations by multinational corporations and national level corporate and finance interests.

#### unfccc background

Due to growing political awareness of climate science, governments came together and signed the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992.<sup>8</sup> The guiding principle known as 'common but differentiated responsibilities' under this Convention places a greater responsibility on developed countries to address climate change, which is primarily caused by more than 150 years of their industrial pollution.

Developed countries make up just 15 per cent of the world's population, but are historically responsible for 75 per cent of global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. The poorest ten per cent of the world's people have contributed less than 1 per cent of these emissions but are the most affected, and therefore are owed a 'climate debt', i.e. compensation from the rich, industrialised world for the disproportional climate impacts they face. Developed countries therefore have a moral and legal obligation to take action on emissions first and fastest and provide financial resources for mitigation and adaptation measures, including the transfer of technology, to developing countries.





World Food Day march in Indonesia, 2008

Carbon markets are being pushed as a silver bullet to the climate crisis even though they do nothing to reduce emissions. Commercial interests are driving new carbon market initiatives that support most governments' refusal to tackle the climate crisis by moving away from fossil fuels. New 'sectoral' proposals are being tabled – with the support of the World Bank – to extend carbon trading beyond Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) projects by allowing whole sectors of the economy to generate offsets. Forest carbon offset proposals under Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation in developing countries (REDD+) as well as offsets based on carbon stored in soil could lead to the privatisation of land and mass displacement of local communities to compensate for industrial pollution in the North.<sup>14</sup> Forests could be cut down and replaced with industrial tree plantations. Shell, BP and Chevron Texaco are already engaging in forestry projects to greenwash their tarnished brands and profit from carbon market investment.<sup>15</sup>

Since the pledge and review system would mean no binding emissions reduction targets that could be met through offsets, to ensure that the carbon market expands rich countries are also promoting carbon markets as a source of climate finance. But carbon markets have a very poor track record of delivering finance to the Global South. Over 99 per cent of finance generated by the CDM and the EU Emission Trading Scheme (ETS) goes to carbon traders, brokers, verifiers and project developers, leaving a tiny fraction for developing countries. At the same time, these countries are faced with

the destructive impacts that offset projects often wreak on communities and their livelihoods.<sup>16</sup> Industrialised countries have an appalling track record on climate finance – around US\$5 billion of the US\$30 billion pledged at the Copenhagen talks has been delivered to developing countries since 2009.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, much of this is not new additional finance but rather development assistance redirected from other essential social needs.

At COP 16 in Cancun, a small ray of hope was provided to developing countries with the announcement of a Green Climate Fund (GCF) that established a Transition Committee (TC) to shape the fund for approval in Durban. However, despite the opposition of social movements and civil society organisations, the World Bank, which loans billions of dollars for dirty fossil fuel projects and hosts damaging carbon funds,<sup>18</sup> was named as trustee of the Fund.

The GCF offers a commitment to “mobilizing jointly” US\$100 billion per year by 2020, from both public and private sources – potentially exposing the Fund to harmful, market-based proposals. This funding is also conditional on emission reductions on behalf of developing countries, instead of emissions reductions by those who have the greatest historical responsibility for climate change, and it is unclear if finance would be delivered as grants or loans.<sup>19</sup> Delivering climate finance in the form of loans will increase illegitimate and unfair debt burdens, which continue to exacerbate poverty in the Global South. The US controversially wants developing countries and the private sector to contribute to the fund.<sup>20</sup>

## political context

The wider political environment is having a detrimental impact on international negotiations. Since late 2008, global markets have been in permanent crisis. Banks, at the heart of the global financial architecture and operating with little or no oversight or governance, caused the crisis due to reckless financial activities. Trillions of dollars of public money have been spent on bailouts and programs to prop up the ailing, volatile financial system while executives have received billions of dollars in bonuses.<sup>21</sup> The controversial World Bank has stated that this global economic crisis makes it more difficult for countries “to be truly generous with regard to climate finance.”<sup>22</sup> There is now a clear emphasis on private rather than public funding sources for climate finance. Public sectors including health, education and pensions are facing drastic cuts worldwide. In addition, the push for the expansion of carbon markets in different sectors throughout the negotiations implies the creation of new pollution permits that entail the risk of creating a new financial speculative market bubble.

While there is a dominant political narrative claiming that very limited money is available for climate action and public services, the military as well as the financial sector continue to receive generous public funding. The US dedicates over US\$700 billion per year for military expenditure – more than 40 times that spent on climate action.<sup>23</sup> Trillions of dollars have been spent on the illegal<sup>24</sup> war against Iraq, which has fuelled climate change and placed 60 per cent of Iraq’s oil reserves under long-term foreign corporate control – the largest sell-off of oil in history.<sup>25</sup>



FoE Europe regional meeting, 2009  
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**durban to rio:** In the wake of COP 17 in Durban, world leaders will be tasked with assessing the last 20 years of global governance and outlining a roadmap towards a global ‘green economy’ at the UN Conference on Sustainable Development, known as Rio+20, in June 2012. This marks two decades since the Earth Summit 1992. The poorly defined concept of a ‘green economy’ could open the door for dangerous approaches to tackling the current ecological crisis which neglect important national and international level social justice and human rights considerations. There are concerns that false solutions like carbon markets, agrofuels and large-scale geo-engineering could enter into the Rio+20 process. We demand profound structural change away from the failed neo-liberal model that benefits elites but exacerbates the ecological crisis. Genuinely sustainable and pro-people economies should promote community rights and sustainable livelihoods that are rooted in diverse local contexts, and lead us into a transformed, equitable and post-petroleum world.

## what needs to happen?

**cutting emissions – rejecting carbon markets:** Prospects for legally binding emission reductions are very low as Japan, Canada and Russia have declared they will only pledge voluntary cuts. The US has reaffirmed its opposition to ratifying the Kyoto Protocol and the EU has failed to give conclusive support to binding cuts.<sup>26</sup> 65 per cent of existing reduction pledges come from developing countries even though 75 per cent of all historical emissions stem from rich countries. A conservative approach to allocating the remaining carbon budgets – dividing up the atmospheric space that remains on the basis of the population of different countries and not taking account of their historical responsibility – would require the US to slash emissions by 95 per cent by 2030 and the EU by 80 per cent to avoid a temperature rise of two degrees (that cannot be considered ‘safe’).<sup>27</sup> The longer the delay, the harder it will be to reduce emissions.

Carbon offsetting must be rejected as there is no atmospheric space left for business-as-usual pollution. It is essential that we resist all market-based approaches including new ‘sectoral’ markets, REDD+ and soil carbon offsets. Instead of trying to reduce emissions elsewhere, economies need to move away from dirty energy dependence and invest in a transition to appropriate clean energy, as well as reducing energy consumption in all sectors, including industry and agriculture.

**financing transformation:** The COP should operationalize the Green Climate Fund (GCF) in Durban. To ensure that the GCF is effective in addressing the needs of developing countries there should be no direct funding of the private sector by the GCF, including through a private sector facility. Risky financial instruments must be excluded and finance must be provided in the form of grants and concessional loans. Innovative sources of public funds for climate finance should be prioritised immediately. A small transaction tax or ‘Robin Hood Tax’ on financial speculation, as well as redirecting military expenditure, would generate funds for emission cuts and adaptation.

**protecting biodiversity – enforcing rights:** Carbon offsets and market-based proposals are dominating the talks under REDD+. REDD+ type projects are already marginalising local communities, many of whom have insecure land tenure. Unless there is a dramatic U-turn, a global REDD+ mechanism is set to trigger land grabs as the economic value of forest land would rise, thus paving the way for conflicts over land and exclusionary models of conservation such as private, for-profit forest management. Governments should instead address and act upon overconsumption that drives deforestation and enforce the rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities to manage and preserve their forests.

**voices of reason for climate justice:** As a reaction to the Copenhagen debacle, the Government of Bolivia hosted the 'World People's Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth' in Cochabamba in April 2010. This brought together over 30,000 people from the climate justice movement and resulted in a People's Agreement, which outlined progressive demands on technology, finance, forests, emission reductions and rights, all grounded in the interests of ordinary people: workers, small-scale farmers and others.<sup>28</sup> In Cancun, Bolivia opposed the final outcome on the grounds that it was full of loopholes for polluters and opportunities to expand carbon markets, while putting an unequitable burden for climate action on developing countries.

Domestically in the US, there have been unprecedented protests against unethical fossil fuel exploitation and inequality caused by an elite minority. The campaign against the Keystone XL pipeline, which would carry tar sands oil from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico, led to protests and sit-ins across the US.<sup>29</sup> The Occupy Wall Street movement – inspired by protests against cuts in Spain, Greece and Chile, and political uprisings in Egypt and Tunisia – has spread across the US and globally under the banner of, 'We are the 99 per cent'. The movement has harnessed public discontent in a nation where 1 per cent of the people take nearly a quarter of the country's income and control 40 per cent of the nation's wealth.<sup>30</sup> According to a UN study in 2006, the richest one per cent of adults in the world owns around 40 per cent of the planet's wealth.<sup>31</sup> On 15 October 2011, 'occupy' protests took place in over 1000 cities in 82 countries.<sup>32</sup>

These waves of political action have breathed more life into the economic and environmental justice movement. The demands for systemic change to how our elite-dominated economies are run echo our goal to dismantle neo-liberalism and implement just transitions towards sustainable societies. Strengthening and multiplying these kinds of protests is essential if the voices of ordinary people are to be heard by politicians and our interests prioritised above the narrow self-interested concerns of multinational corporations and elites.

**recommendations for cop 17 and beyond:** We are reaching a historic culmination of events in the fight for radical cuts in greenhouse gas emissions and systemic change in the unjust and unsustainable economic system which underlies the climate crisis. Corporate and financial elites and multinational corporations are intensifying their efforts to serve and protect their interests through false solutions like carbon markets. This injustice is being met with resistance by movements, organisations and activists that are calling for the transformation of societies to take back our futures. Friends of the Earth International demands governments at COP 17:

- Accept strong, legally-binding emission reductions for developed countries based on science, equity and the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities
- Commit to adequate and appropriate public finance for mitigation and adaptation by developing countries
- Reject all forms of carbon trading and offsetting
- Embark on just transitions towards genuinely sustainable economies domestically through the reduction of commodity flows and consumption, investment in public infrastructure, appropriate renewable energy, green jobs, small-scale sustainable agriculture and community-led biodiversity and forest conservation
- Respect and enforce the rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities
- Reject any role for industrial monoculture tree plantations, agrofuels and GMOs and other false solutions such as nuclear energy and carbón capture and storage (CCS)
- Respect the Convention of Biological Diversity moratorium against geo-engineering.<sup>33</sup>

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**Friends of the Earth International**

**friends of the earth international** is the world's largest grassroots environmental network, uniting 76 diverse national member groups and some 5,000 local activist groups on every continent. With approximately 2 million members and supporters around the world, we campaign on today's most urgent social and environmental issues. We challenge the current model of economic and corporate globalization, and promote solutions that will help to create environmentally sustainable and socially just societies.

**our vision** is of a peaceful and sustainable world based on societies living in harmony with nature. We envision a society of interdependent people living in dignity, wholeness and fulfilment in which equity and human and peoples' rights are realized. This will be a society built upon peoples' sovereignty and participation. It will be founded on social, economic, gender and environmental justice and free from all forms of domination and exploitation, such as neoliberalism, corporate globalization, neo-colonialism and militarism.

We believe that our children's future will be better because of what we do.

**friends of the earth has groups in:** Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Belgium, Belgium (Flanders), Bolivia, Brazil, Cameroon, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Curaçao (Antilles), Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, El Salvador, England/Wales/Northern Ireland, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Grenada (West Indies), Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Korea, Latvia, Liberia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Macedonia (former Yugoslav Republic of), Malaysia, Malawi, Mali, Malta, Mauritius, Mexico, Mozambique, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Palestine, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Scotland, Sierra Leone, Slovakia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Tanzania, Timor Leste, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Ukraine, United States, and Uruguay.

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