

Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth

Speech to the G77 at the United Nations

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I have come here to share the conclusions of the First World People's Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth, held last April 20th to 22nd in Cochabamba, Bolivia. I convened this Conference because in Copenhagen the voice of the peoples of the world was not listened to or attended to, nor were established procedures respected by all States.

The Conference attracted 35,352 participants, and of those, 9,254 were foreign delegates, representing movements and social organizations from 140 countries and five continents. The event also benefited from the participation of delegations from 56 governments.

The debates that took place at the Conference were organized into 17 Working Groups. The "People's Accord" adopted by the World People's Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth is a summary of the conclusions of each of those 17 Working Groups. From among all of the documents, I would like to place special emphasis on the project of the Universal Declaration on the Rights of Mother Earth.

We, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, formally presented these conclusions last April 26th, along with a technical proposal, to the negotiation process taking place under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

The Government of the Plurinational State of Bolivia convened this Conference because the so-called developed countries did not comply with obligations to establish substantial commitments to reducing greenhouse gas emissions at last year's Copenhagen Conference on climate change. If these countries had respected the Kyoto Protocol and had agreed to substantially reduce emissions within their borders, the Cochabamba Conference would not have been necessary.

I am personally convinced that the only way to guarantee a positive result in Cancún, México is through the broad participation of the world and the ironclad unity of the countries of the G77 + China.

We in the G77 + China are a group of 130 developing countries that are the least responsible for climate change, and, nonetheless, the most affected by the dire impacts of global warming. We represent two-thirds of the countries comprising the United Nations, and close to 80% of the world's population. In our hands is the task of saving the future of humanity and planet Earth, and making the voices of our peoples heard and respected.

That is why I have come here to address the G77 + China!

We all know that, within the G77 + China, there is a great diversity of political, economic, and cultural positions. This is our strength: unity through diversity. I know that different criteria exist within our Group, but I also know that, when we agree, there is no force that can stop us or detain us. This strength is like the unity of so many sardines before sharks. This is what happened at the last climate change meeting in Bonn from April 9th to 11th, at which we were slow to reach an agreement, but once we achieved consensus in the G77 + China, the rest of the developing countries had to submit to our consensus.

I would like to begin by highlighting the points of convergence between the G77 + China and the World People's Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth.

The first point of convergence is the need to preserve and fulfill the Kyoto Protocol. That is to say, the need for developed countries to make substantial commitments to domestic greenhouse gas emissions reductions under the framework of the Kyoto Protocol.

In the G77 + China, nobody is proposing to liquidate or dilute the Kyoto Protocol. We all agree that the Annex 1 countries that are historically responsible for causing greenhouse gas emissions should honor their commitments and obligations under international treaties on climate change.

The World People's Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth demands that developed countries reduce their domestic greenhouse gas emissions by 50% based on 1990 levels for the second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol.

Current offers for reducing greenhouse gases in developed countries would at best only amount to a reduction of 2% based on 1990 levels.

The Cochabamba Conference does not propose substituting the Kyoto Protocol with various voluntary reduction commitments that are not directed toward global goals, and in which no distinction is made between what the different developed countries must do.

The People's Accord states: "The United States, as the only Annex 1 country on Earth that did not ratify the Kyoto Protocol, has a significant responsibility toward all peoples of the world to ratify this document and commit itself to respecting and complying with emissions reduction targets on a scale appropriate to the total size of its economy."

The second point of convergence among the World People's Conference and the G77 + China is the need for the reduction commitments made by developed countries to be as deep possible in order to stabilize the increase in temperature to, where possible, within a range of 1.5 to 2 degree Celsius.

We developing countries present here are aware that an increase in temperature will bring grave consequences for the provision of food, for coastal zones, for glaciers, and all of Africa. All of us here in the G77 + China are resolved to avoid letting a single island state fall into the ocean.

A third point of convergence among the G77 and the Conference is the concept of the climate debt that developed countries owe to developing countries. This concept was much discussed at the World People's Conference on Climate Change, and it became clear that the concept has the following components:

The first component is the need to give back the atmospheric space that has been occupied by the developed countries and their greenhouse gas emissions, affecting developing countries. Developed countries should decolonize the atmosphere to allow for an equitable distribution of the atmospheric space among all countries in accordance with the size of their population.

The second component is the debt with regard to forced migrations due to climate change. The number of forced migrations has reached 50 million worldwide, and could increase to 200 million to 1 billion people by the year 2050. To honor this debt, developed countries, as the generators of climate change, must open their borders to receive the affected migrants. The existence of migration laws like that of Arizona or the Return Policy in the European Union is absolutely unacceptable.

The third component is the debt to our Mother Earth. This is because not only have human beings and developing countries been affected, but so has nature. To honor this debt, the First World People's Conference considers it fundamental to discuss here in the United Nations a proposal for a Universal Declaration on the Rights of Mother Earth that establishes obligations for all human beings with regard to nature and that recognizes, in the form of rights, the limits that human activity must have if we are going to preserve planet Earth.

Some of the rights of nature that it proposes are:

- The right to life and to exist
- The right to regenerate its bio-capacity and to continue its vital cycles and processes free from human disruptions;
- The right to be free from contamination, pollution and toxic or radioactive waste;
- The right to not have its genetic structure modified or disrupted in a manner that threatens its integrity or vital and healthy functioning

We hope that this proposed Declaration on the Rights of Mother Earth will begin to be discussed and analyzed within the General Assembly of the United Nations.

Finally, we have the fourth component, the economic component of climate debt, which is comprised of the adaptation debt and the development debt that the industrialized countries have to developing countries.

On the topic of financing, the World People's Conference considers that, to confront climate change, a budget should be designated similar to the budget that countries allot for military and security spending.

The amount of 10 billion dollars that developing countries are currently offering is less than 1% of the total amount of their defense budgets. It is simply not possible to dedicate 120 times more resources to war and death than to preserving life and our Mother Earth.

Developed countries should commit to annual financing from public sources in addition to the Official Development Assistance in order to confront climate change in developing countries. This financing should be direct and without conditionalities, and should not violate the sovereignty of States.

It is necessary to establish a new financing mechanism that functions under the authority of the Conference of Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and with significant representation by developing countries to guarantee compliance with

the financing commitments of Annex 1 countries.

The World People's Conference proposes the creation of a multilateral and multidisciplinary mechanism for technology transfer. These technologies should be useful, clean, and socially appropriate. The Cochabamba Conference considers it essential to create a fund for the financing and inventory of appropriate technologies free from intellectual property rights, particularly by moving patents from private monopolies into the public domain for free access.

The People's Conference notes that developed countries increased their emissions by 11.2% in the period from 1990-2007 despite having claimed that reductions would be assisted by market mechanisms.

The carbon market has become a lucrative business that commodifies nature, favors a few intermediaries, and does not significantly contribute to the reduction of greenhouse gases.

The recent financial crisis has demonstrated that the market is incapable of regulating the financial system, and that it would be totally irresponsible to leave care for and protection of the very existence of humanity and our Mother Earth in the hands of the market.

In this regard, the Conference considers it inadmissible that the current negotiations attempt to create new mechanisms that broaden and promote the carbon market.

The first Conference proposes the substitution of REDD (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation) by a new mechanism that is not based on the promotion of the carbon market, and that respects the sovereignty of States and the right of the peoples to free, previous, and informed consent. This new mechanism should directly transfer technologies and economic resources from developed countries for the restoration and maintenance of forests and woodlands.

The topic of agriculture and climate change was also widely discussed, and the concept of food sovereignty was adopted. This goes beyond food security by implying not just the right to nourishment, but also the right of the peoples to control their own seeds, lands, water, and technology for food production in harmony with Mother Earth and at the service of the whole community, not just the sectors with the highest income.

In this regard, it was put forth that, to confront the climate change crisis, it is necessary to bring about a profound shift away from agriculture solely based on business and profit, strengthening instead agriculture for life, communities, and equilibrium with nature.

In the negotiations and in the application of the accords on climate change, it is necessary to fully guarantee the rights of the Indigenous Peoples.

The Conference also proposes a new theme to be discussed in the climate change negotiations and more broadly in the General Assembly of the United Nations: the establishment of a Climate and Environmental Justice Tribunal to try developed countries that fail to meet their commitments and sanction States and corporations that negatively affect the vital cycles of the Mother Earth.

Among our peoples there is much worry because the international accords to which we have subscribed are not ultimately complied with. For this reason there is an interest in creating binding mechanisms that guarantee compliance and are capable of sanctioning violations to

international treaties relating to climate and the environment.

Another proposal has to do with the need to convene a Referendum on Climate Change so that the world's population can decide what should be done about this important issue.

The Cochabamba Conference challenges us to begin to imagine and to promote a kind of global democracy in which the major issues facing humanity can be decided by all peoples.

To bring about all of these proposals, the Conference resolves to initiate the construction of a World People's Movement of the for Mother Earth.

The Cochabamba Conference places special emphasis on analyzing the topic of development and what kind of development it is that we want.

Some of the principles agreed upon were:

- There cannot be unlimited development in a finite planet
- The model of development we want is not that of the so-called developed countries, which is unsustainable in a planet with limited natural resources
- So that developing countries might satisfy the needs of their populations without affecting planet Earth, it is essential that developed countries lower their levels of consumption and waste
- To achieve development in harmony with nature, we must also seek harmony among human beings through an equitable distribution of wealth

The First World People's Conference proposes that the climate change negotiations analyze the structural causes of global warming and develop alternative proposals of a systemic character.

For the First World People's Conference, the root cause of the climate crisis is the capitalist system. What we are seeing is not just a climate crisis, an energy crisis, a food crisis, a financial crisis... but also the systemic crisis of capitalism itself, which is bringing about the destruction of humanity and nature. If the cause is systemic, then the solution must be systemic as well. For this, the People's Conference discussed the theme of alternatives for living well in harmony with nature.

To conclude, the Conference considers that to construct the future we must learn from the past, which remains present among us in the example of indigenous peoples that have in all parts of the world preserved their forms of living in harmony with nature.

Esteemed ambassadors of the G77 + China, I believe that the best way to strengthen our unity and our actions in the negotiations is by strengthening our consensus and discussing our different positions in a frank and sincere manner.

On this path, it is fundamental that situations like that of Copenhagen last year not be repeated. We should respect the position agreed upon in the Bali Plan of Action and defended by the G77 + China, and ensure that climate change negotiations continue through the two established channels of "Long-Term Cooperative Action" and the Kyoto Protocol.

Our unity gives us the strength to guarantee that the negotiations will be broadly participatory, transparent, and respectful of the equal rights of all member States of the

United Nations, whether large or small, and to ensure that the voice of our peoples is heard and respected.

In the unity of the developing countries lies our potential to forge a new world in which harmony exists among human beings and with our Mother Earth.

Ambassadors:

The response to global warming is global democracy for life and for the Mother Earth. Let us choose to be clean and active today for the sake all of humanity, not toxic and reactive tomorrow, against nature. Esteemed ambassadors, we have two paths: to save capitalism, or to save life and Mother Earth.

Thank you very much.

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