

Save The Planet From Capitalism: An Open Letter On Climate Change

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Sisters and brothers:

Today, our Mother Earth is ill. From the beginning of the 21st century we have lived the hottest years of the last thousand years. Global warming is generating abrupt changes in the weather: the retreat of glaciers and the decrease of the polar ice caps; the increase of the sea level and the flooding of coastal areas, where approximately 60% of the world population live; the increase in the processes of desertification and the decrease of fresh water sources; a higher frequency in natural disasters that the communities of the earth suffer¹; the extinction of animal and vegetal species; and the spread of diseases in areas that before were free from those diseases.

One of the most tragic consequences of the climate change is that some nations and territories are the condemned to disappear by the increase of the sea level.

Everything began with the industrial revolution in 1750, which gave birth to the capitalist system. In two and a half centuries, the so called “developed” countries have consumed a large part of the fossil fuels created over five million centuries.

Competition and the thirst for profit without limits of the capitalist system are destroying the planet. Under Capitalism we are not human beings but consumers. Under Capitalism mother earth does not exist, instead there are raw materials. Capitalism is the source of the asymmetries and imbalances in the world. It generates luxury, ostentation and waste for a few, while millions in the world die from

1 Due to the “Niña” phenomenon, that becomes more frequent as a result of the climate change, Bolivia has lost 4% of its GDP in 2007.

hunger in the world. In the hands of Capitalism everything becomes a commodity: the water, the soil, the human genome, the ancestral cultures, justice, ethics, death... and life itself. Everything, absolutely everything, can be bought and sold and under Capitalism. And even "climate change" itself has become a business.

"Climate change" has placed all humankind before great choice: to continue in the ways of capitalism and death, or to start down the path of harmony with nature and respect for life.

In the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, the developed countries and economies in transition committed to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by at least 5% below the 1990 levels, through the implementation of different mechanisms among which market mechanisms predominate.

Until 2006, greenhouse effect gases, far from being reduced, have increased by 9.1% in relation to the 1990 levels, demonstrating also in this way the breach of commitments by the developed countries.

The market mechanisms applied in the developing countries² have not accomplished a significant reduction of greenhouse effect gas emissions.

Just as well as the market is incapable of regulating global financial and productive system, the market is unable to regulate greenhouse effect gas emissions and will only generate a big business for financial agents and major corporations.

The earth is much more important than stock exchanges of Wall Street and the world.

While the United States and the European Union allocate 4,100 billion dollars to save the bankers from a financial crisis that they themselves have caused, programs on climate change get 313 times less, that is to say, only 13 billion dollars.

The resources for climate change are unfairly distributed. More resources are directed to reduce emissions (mitigation) and less to reduce the effects of climate change that all the countries suffer (adaptation).³ The vast majority of resources flow to those countries that have contaminated the most, and not to the countries where we have preserved the environment most. Around 80% of the Clean Development Mechanism projects are concentrated in four emerging countries.

2 Known as the Clean Development Mechanism.

3 At the present there is only one Adaptation Fund with approximately 500 million dollars for more than 150 developing countries. According to the UNFCCC Secretary, 171 billion dollars are required for adaptation, and 380 billion dollars are required for mitigation.

Capitalist logic promotes a paradox in which the sectors that have contributed the most to deterioration of the environment are those that benefit the most from climate change programs.

At the same time, technology transfer and the financing for clean and sustainable development of the countries of the South have remained just speeches.

The next summit on Climate Change in Copenhagen must allow us to make a leap forward if we want to save Mother Earth and humanity. For that purpose the following proposals for the process from Poznan to Copenhagen:

Attack the Structural Causes of Climate Change

1. Debate the structural causes of climate change. As long as we do not change the capitalist system for a system based in complementarity, solidarity and harmony between the people and nature, the measures that we adopt will be palliatives that will be limited and precarious in character. For us, what has failed is the model of "living better", of unlimited development, industrialisation without frontiers, of modernity that deprecates history, of increasing accumulation of goods at the expense of others and nature. For that reason we promote the idea of Living Well, in harmony with other human beings and with our Mother Earth.
2. Developed countries need to control their patterns of consumption - of luxury and waste - especially the excessive consumption of fossil fuels. Subsidies of fossil fuel, that reach 150-250 billions of dollars⁴, must be progressively eliminated. It is fundamental to develop alternative forms of power, such as solar, geothermal, wind and hydroelectric both at small and medium scales.
3. Agrofuels are not an alternative, because they put the production of foodstuffs for transport before the production of food for human beings. Agrofuels expand the agricultural frontier destroying forests and biodiversity, generate monocropping, promote land concentration, deteriorate soils, exhaust water sources, contribute to rises in food prices and, in many cases, result in more consumption of more energy than is produced.

4 Stern report.

Substantial Commitments to Emissions Reduction That Are Met

4. Strict fulfilment by 2012 of the commitments⁵ of the developed countries to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least by 5% below the 1990 levels. It is unacceptable that the countries that polluted the planet throughout the course of history make statements about larger reductions in the future while not complying with their present commitments.
5. Establish new minimum commitments for the developed countries of greenhouse gas emission reduction of 40% by 2020 and 90% by for 2050, taking as a starting point 1990 emission levels. These minimum commitments must be met internally in developed countries and not through flexible market mechanisms that allow for the purchase of certified emissions reduction certificates to continue polluting in their own country. Likewise, monitoring mechanisms must be established for the measuring, reporting and verifying that are transparent and accessible to the public, to guarantee the compliance of commitments.
6. Developing countries not responsible for the historical pollution must preserve the necessary space to implement an alternative and sustainable form of development that does not repeat the mistakes of savage industrialisation that has brought us to the current situation. To ensure this process, developing countries need, as a prerequisite, finance and technology transfer.

An Integral Financial Mechanism to Address Ecological Debt

7. Acknowledging the historical ecological debt that they owe to the planet, developed countries must create an Integral Financial Mechanism to support developing countries in: implementation of their plans and programmes for adaptation to and mitigation of climate change; the innovation, development and transfer of technology; in the preservation and improvement of the sinks and reservoirs; response actions to the serious natural disasters caused by climate change; and the carrying out of sustainable and eco-friendly development plans.

5 Kyoto Protocol, Art. 3.

8. This Integral Financial Mechanism, in order to be effective, must count on a contribution of at least 1% of the GDP in developed countries⁶ and other contributions from taxes on oil and gas, financial transactions, sea and air transport, and the profits of transnational companies.
9. Contributions from developed countries must be additional to Official Development Assistance (ODA), bilateral aid or aid channeled through organisms not part of the United Nations. Any finance outside the UNFCCC cannot be considered as the fulfillment of developed country's commitments under the Convention.
10. Finance has to be directed to the plans or national programmes of the different States and not to projects that follow market logic.
11. Financing must not be concentrated just in some developed countries but has to give priority to the countries that have contributed less to greenhouse gas emissions, those that preserve nature and are suffering the impact of climate change.
12. The Integral Financial Mechanism must be under the coverage of the United Nations, not under the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and other intermediaries such as the World Bank and regional development banks; its management must be collective, transparent and non-bureaucratic. Its decisions must be made by all member countries, especially by developing countries, and not by the donors or bureaucratic administrators.

Technology Transfer to Developing Countries

13. Innovation and technology related to climate changes must be within the public domain, not under any private monopolistic patent regime that obstructs and makes technology transfer more expensive to developing countries.
14. Products that are the fruit of public financing for technology innovation and development of have to be placed within the public domain and not under a private regime of patents⁷, so that they can be freely accessed by developing countries.

6 The Stern Review has suggested one percent of global GDP, which represents less than 700 billion dollars per year.

7 According to UNCTAD (1998), Public financing in developing countries contributes with 40% of the resources for innovation and development of technology.

15. Encourage and improve the system of voluntary and compulsory licenses so that all countries can access products already patented quickly and free of cost. Developed countries cannot treat patents and intellectual property rights as something "sacred" that has to be preserved at any cost. The regime of flexibilities available for the intellectual property rights in the cases of serious problems for public health has to be adapted and substantially enlarged to heal Mother Earth.
16. Recover and promote indigenous peoples practices in harmony with nature which have proven to be sustainable through centuries.

Adaptation and Mitigation With the Participation of All the People

17. Promote mitigation actions, programs and plans with the participation of local communities and indigenous people in the framework of full respect for and implementation of the United Nations Declaration on Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The best mechanism to confront the challenge of climate change are not market mechanisms, but conscious, motivated, and well organized human beings endowed with an identity of their own.
18. The reduction of the emissions from deforestation and forest degradation must be based on a mechanism of direct compensation from developed to developing countries, through a sovereign implementation that ensures broad participation of local communities, and a mechanism for monitoring, reporting and verifying that is transparent and public.

A UN for the Environment and Climate Change

19. We need a World Environment and Climate Change Organization to which multilateral trade and financial organizations are subordinated, so as to promote a different model of development that environmentally friendly and resolves the profound problems of impoverishment. This organization must have effective follow-up, verification and

sanctioning mechanisms to ensure that the present and future agreements are complied with.

20. It is fundamental to structurally transform the World Trade Organization, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the international economic system as a whole, in order to guarantee fair and complementary trade, as well as financing without conditions for sustainable development that avoids the waste of natural resources and fossil fuels in the production processes, trade and product transport.

In this negotiation process towards Copenhagen, it is fundamental to guarantee the participation of our people as active stakeholders at a national, regional and worldwide level, especially taking into account those sectors most affected, such as indigenous peoples who have always promoted the defense of Mother Earth.

Humankind is capable of saving the earth if we recover the principles of solidarity, complementarity, and harmony with nature in contraposition to the reign of competition, profits and rampant consumption of natural resources.

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