



# Klimaforum09

Peoples' Climate Summit



# Declaration ▶

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**System change - not climate change**

A People's Declaration from Klimaforum09





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# SUMMARY

There are solutions to the climate crisis. What people and the planet need is a just and sustainable transition of our societies to a form that will ensure the rights of life and dignity of all peoples and deliver a more fertile planet and more fulfilling lives to future generations.

We, participating peoples, communities, and all organizations at the Klimaforum09 in Copenhagen, call upon every person, organization, government, and institution, including the United Nations (UN), to contribute to this necessary transition. It will be a challenging task. The crisis of today has economic, social, environmental, geopolitical, and ideological aspects interacting with and reinforcing each other as well as the climate crisis. For this reason, we call for urgent climate action:

**\* A complete abandonment of fossil fuels within the next 30 years**, which must include specific milestones for every 5-year period.

We demand an immediate cut in GHG of industrialized countries of at least 40% compared to 1990 levels by 2020.

**\* Recognition, payment and compensation of climate debt** for the overconsumption of atmospheric space and adverse effects of climate change on all affected groups and people.

**\* A rejection of purely market-oriented and technology-centred** false and dangerous solutions such as nuclear energy, agro-fuels, carbon capture and storage, Clean Development Mechanisms, biochar, genetically "climate-readied" crops, geo-engineering, and reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD), which deepens social and environmental conflicts.

**\* Real solutions to climate crisis** based on safe, clean, renewable, and sustainable use of natural resources, as well as transitions to food, energy, land, and water sovereignty.

Therefore, we demand that COP15 reach an agreement that will initiate the restoration of the environmental, social, and economic balance of planet Earth by means that are environmentally, socially, and economically sustainable and equitable, and finally come up with a legally binding treaty.

The adverse impacts of human-induced climate change cause gross violations of human rights. All nations have an obligation to cooperate internationally to ensure respect for human rights everywhere in the world in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. Any specific agreement on climate change must be seen in the broader context of achieving a sustainable transition of our societies.

We, participating peoples and organisations at Klimaforum09, commit to continue our full and active engagement in promoting such a transition, which will require a fundamental change in social, political, and economic structures and a rectification of gender, class, race, generational, and ethnic inequalities and injustices.

This requires a restoration of the democratic sovereignty of our local communities and of their role as a basic social, political, and economic unit. Local and democratic ownership of, control over, and access to natural resources will be the basis for meaningful and sustainable development of communities and simultaneously for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. There is also a need for stronger regional and international cooperative arrangements to manage common and shared resources, as well as for a stronger and democratic UN.

We call upon every concerned person, social movement, and cultural, political or economic organisation to join us in building a strong global movement of movements, which can bring forward peoples' visions and demands at every level of society. Together, we can make global transitions to sustainable futures.

# System change - not climate change

## A People's Declaration from Klimaforum09

### 1. Preamble

There are solutions to the climate crisis. What people and the planet need is a just and sustainable transition of our societies to a form that will ensure the rights of life and dignity of all people and deliver a more fertile planet and more fulfilling lives to present and future generations. This transition must be based on principles of solidarity - especially on behalf of the most vulnerable - non-discrimination, gender equality, equity, and sustainability, acknowledging that we are part of nature, which we love and respect. To address the climate crisis, however, awareness creation and determined actions adhering to a rights-based framework are required. All nations have an obligation to cooperate internationally to ensure respect for human rights everywhere in the world, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.

We, participating peoples, communities, and all organizations at the Klimaforum09 in Copenhagen, call upon every person, organization, government, and institution, including the United Nations (UN), to contribute to this necessary transition. It will be a challenging task. The crisis of today has economic, social, environmental, geopolitical, and ideological aspects interacting with and reinforcing each other as well as the climate crisis. This very moment of conjunction of crises - climate, energy, financial, food, and water crises, among others -, urges us to unite and transform the dominant social and economic system as well as global governance, which currently block necessary solutions to the climate crisis. For this reason, a movement from below is called upon to act now.

Environmental and climate debts must be paid. No false, dangerous, or short-term solutions should be promoted and adopted, such as nuclear power, agro-fuels, offsetting, carbon capture and storage (CCS), biochar, geo-engineering, and carbon trading. Instead, we should implement a truly sustainable transition built on clean, safe, and renewable resources as well as energy conservation. We welcome alliances across social movements and sectors, representing all ages, genders, ethnicities, faiths, communities, and nationalities. We want to take the future into our own hands by building a strong and popular movement of youth, women, men, workers, peasants, fisher folks, indigenous peoples, people of colour, and urban and rural social groups; a movement that is able to act at all levels of society to deal with environmental degradation and climate change. We call for a new international economic order and support a strong and democratic UN as opposed to G8, G20 or other closed groups of powerful countries.

### 2. The challenge as we see it:

The concentration of greenhouse gasses (GHGs) in the atmosphere is already so high that the climate system has been brought out of balance. The CO<sub>2</sub> concentration and global temperatures have increased more rapidly in the last 50 years than ever before on Earth, and will rise even faster in the coming decades. This adds to a multitude of other serious ecological imbalances, the impacts of which threaten the lives and livelihoods of the people of the world, most acutely, impoverished people and other vulnerable groups.

The imbalance of the climate system leads to greater and more frequent extremes of heat and rainfall patterns, tropical cyclones, hurricanes and typhoons, extreme flooding and droughts, loss of biodiversity, landslides, rising sea levels, shortage of drinking water, shorter growing seasons, lower yields, lost or deteriorated agricultural land, decreased agricultural production, losses of livestock, extinction of ecosystems, and diminished fish stocks, among others. These phenomena result in food crises, famine, illness, death, displacement, and the extinction of sustainable ways of life. Interacting with this is the introduction of genetically modified organisms (GMOs), monoculture

farming, and industrialized agriculture, all strongly promoted by corporations. These seriously threaten the stability and diversity of ecosystems, marginalize and impoverish small-scale farmers, and undermine food sovereignty. Corporate-controlled agriculture is geared to meet an inflated global demand generated by over-consumption especially in the North, rather than for local basic needs. The same can be said about modern industrial fisheries, intensive forestry and mining, which destroy ecosystems, diminish biodiversity and destroy the life and livelihoods of local communities.

These effects of climate change together with growing social inequalities and severe impacts on our common environment are already devastating the lives of millions of people as well as their local communities. However, we – the people – are not prepared to accept this fact as our fate. That is why there are fast growing popular movements determined to defend their livelihoods and stand up against those forces and causes that have led us onto this ultimately suicidal route of environmental destruction.

In Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Oceania and South and Central America, as well as the periphery of North America and Europe, popular movements are rising to confront the exploitation of their land by foreign interests, and to regain control over their own resources. A new type of activism has revitalized the environmental movements, leading to a wide variety of protests and actions against mining, dams, deforestation, coal-fired power plants, air travel, and the building of new roads, among others. There is a growing awareness about the need to change the present economic paradigm in a very fundamental way. Among various movements, alternative ways of life are proliferating. At the same time it is becoming evident to the public that the present holders of power are unwilling to face and deal with the threats of climate change and environmental degradation. The so-called strategy of “green growth” or “sustainable growth” has turned out to be an excuse for pursuing the same basic model of economic development that is one of the root causes of environmental destruction and the climate crisis.

### 3. The causes as we see them:

The immediate and primary cause of human-induced climate change is an unprecedented emission of greenhouse gasses (GHGs) into the atmosphere originating from the increasing burning of fossil fuels for industrial, commercial, transportation and military purposes, to mention a few but significant sources. Other important drivers of climate change are forest degradation – excluding indigenous people’s sustainable practice of shifting cultivations – deforestation, extractive industries, disturbance of the water cycle, expansion of industrial agriculture areas through land grabbing, increased industrial meat-production, and other types of unsustainable use of natural resources.

#### ***Uneven control and ownership over resources***

These immediate causes are the results of an unsustainable global economic system built on unequal access to and control over the planet’s limited resources and the benefits that accrue from their use. This system is premised on the appropriation of local, national, and planetary commons by local and global elites. What has been praised as great strides in technology, production, and human progress has in fact precipitated global ecological and development disasters. Still, a privileged global elite engages in reckless profit-driven production and grossly excessive consumption while a very large proportion of humanity is mired in poverty with mere survival-and-subsistence consumption, or even less. This is the situation not only in countries of the South but also in the North. The world’s largest transnational corporations (TNCs), based mainly in the northern countries and tax-havens, but with expanding operations, have long been at the forefront of these excesses.

The competition among global corporations and rich nations for resources and greater market shares, as well as trade agreements and treaties, have led to a neo-colonial suppression of southern peoples, denying them rightful ownership and control of their resources. The World Trade Organization (WTO) and international financial institutions, as well as the European Union (EU) and United States (US), using bilateral trade agree-

ments, are increasing the privatization and commoditization of public resources, intensifying the plunder of natural resources of underdeveloped countries, and imposing conditions that increase their dependence.

### ***Prevailing patterns of thought and alternatives***

The development model promoted by these institutions is not only a question of "economics." The prevailing economic paradigm is strongly related to a system of thought that is based on an imagination conception of the human being as "economic man." This ideology is reinforced by corporate media and marketing firms that promote egoism, competition, material consumption, and boundless accumulation of private wealth in utter disregard of the social and ecological consequences of such behaviour. This system of thought is intimately intertwined with patterns of patriarchy and paternalism.

If we really want to address this crisis, we need to recognize that the human species is part of both nature and society and cannot exist without either. Therefore if humanity is to survive, we need to respect the integrity of Mother Earth and strive for harmony with nature and for peace within and between cultures. We are at once citizens of different nations and of one world. Everyone shares responsibility for the present and future well-being of the human family and the larger living world. The spirit of human solidarity and kinship with all life is strengthened when we live according to the principle of "One among many."

## **4. A just and sustainable transition**

It is clear that solving the climate crisis requires far-reaching transformations, which are currently excluded from the agenda of policy-makers in governments and multilateral institutions. People are calling for system change, not "business-as-usual" and the uncritical use of technology and market fixes to which powerful interests have confined the climate agenda.

People's movements embrace a number of alternative visions for society and concrete steps that

must be taken in order to move towards a sustainable future while addressing the climate, water, food, and economic crises at the same time. Such a sustainable transition will begin by many different initiatives. Some of these steps towards sustainable transition are:

- \* **Food sovereignty and ecological agriculture:** Uphold the rights of people, communities, and countries to determine their own systems of production, including farming, fishing, food, forestry, and land policies that are ecologically, socially, economically, and culturally appropriate to the circumstances. People's, especially women's access to and control over productive resources such as land, seeds, and water must be respected and guaranteed. Agricultural production must rely principally on local knowledge, appropriate technology, and ecologically sustainable techniques that bind CO<sub>2</sub> in the diverse and native plant systems, bind water, and return more nutrients to the soil than were taken out. Food and agricultural production must be primarily geared towards meeting local needs, encourage self-sufficiency, promote local employment, and minimize resource use, waste and GHG emissions in the process.
- \* **Democratic ownership and control of economy:** The reorganization of society's productive units around more democratic forms of ownership and management, in order to meet people's basic needs, such as employment creation; access to water, housing, land, health care, and education; food sovereignty; and ecological sustainability. Public policy must make sure that the financial system serves public interests and channel resources for the sustainable transformation of industry, agriculture, and services.
- \* **Energy sovereignty:** A dramatic reduction of energy consumption especially in the enriched countries, combined with a mix of renewable and public energy sources such as solar, wind, geothermal, mini-hydro, wave, and tidal; the development of off-the-grid electricity distribution to secure energy supplies to communities; and public ownership of the grid.
- \* **Ecological planning of urban and rural zones:** The aim is a radical reduction in the inputs of energy and resources and the out-

















