

DECLARATION ON CLIMATE JUSTICE

“All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.”¹

Our vision

As a diverse group of concerned world citizens and advocates, we stand in defence of a global climate system that is safe for all of humanity. We demand a world where our children and future generations are assured of fair and just opportunities for social stability, employment, a healthy planet and prosperity.

We are united in the need for an urgent response to the climate crisis - a response informed by the current impacts of climate change and the science that points to the possibility of a global temperature increase of 4°C by the end of this century. The economic and social costs of climate impacts on people, their rights, their homes, their food security and the ecosystems on which they depend cannot be ignored any longer. Nor can we overlook the injustice faced by the poorest and most vulnerable who bear a disproportionate burden from the impacts of climate change.

This reality drives our vision of climate justice. It puts people at the centre and delivers results for the climate, for human rights, and for development. Our vision acknowledges the injustices caused by climate change and the responsibility of those who have caused it. It requires us to build a common future based on justice for those who are most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and a just transition to a safe and secure society and planet for everyone.

Achieving climate justice

A greater imagination of the possible is vital to achieve a just and sustainable world. The priority pathways to achieve climate justice are:

Giving voice: The world cannot respond adequately to climate change unless people and communities are at the centre of decision-making at all levels – local, national and international. By sharing their knowledge, communities can take the lead in shaping effective solutions. We will only succeed if we give voice to those most affected, listen to their solutions, and empower them to act.

A new way to grow: There is a global limit to the carbon we can emit while maintaining a safe climate and it is essential that equitable ways to limit these emissions are achieved. Transforming our economic system to one based on low-carbon production and consumption can create inclusive sustainable development and reduce inequality. As a global community, we must innovate now to enable us to leave the majority of the remaining fossil fuel reserves in the ground – driving our transition to a climate resilient future.

To achieve a just transition, it is crucial that we invest in social protection, enhance worker’s skills for redeployment in a low-carbon economy and promote access to sustainable development for all. Access to sustainable energy for the poorest is fundamental to making this transition fair and to achieving the right to development. Climate justice also means free worldwide access to breakthrough technologies for the transition to sustainability, for example, efficient organic solar panels and new chemical energy storage schemes.

¹ Article 1, The Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Investing in the future: A new investment model is required to deal with the risks posed by climate change – now and in the future, so that intergenerational equity can be achieved. Policy certainty sends signals to invest in the right things. By avoiding investment in high-carbon assets that become obsolete, and prioritizing sustainable alternatives, we create a new investment model that builds capacity and resilience while lowering emissions.

Citizens are entitled to have a say in how their savings, such as pensions, are invested to achieve the climate future they want. It is critical that companies fulfil their social compact to invest in ways that benefit communities and the environment. Political leaders have to provide clear signals to business and investors that an equitable low-carbon economic future is the only sustainable option.

Commitment and accountability: Achieving climate justice requires that broader issues of inequality and weak governance are addressed both within countries and at a global level. Accountability is key. It is imperative that Governments commit to bold action informed by science, and deliver on commitments made in the climate change regime to reduce emissions and provide climate finance, in particular for the most vulnerable countries.

All countries are part of the solution but developed countries must take the lead, followed by those less developed, but with the capacity to act. Climate justice increases the likelihood of strong commitments being made as all countries need to be treated fairly to play their part in a global deal. For many communities, including indigenous peoples around the world, adaptation to climate change is an urgent priority that has to be addressed much more assertively than before.

Rule of law: Climate change will exacerbate the vulnerability of urban and rural communities already suffering from unequal protection from the law. In the absence of adequate climate action there will be increased litigation by communities, companies and countries. International and national legal processes and systems will need to evolve and be used more imaginatively to ensure accountability and justice. Strong legal frameworks can provide certainty to ensure transparency, longevity, credibility and effective enforcement of climate and related policies.

Transformative leadership

World leaders have an opportunity and responsibility to demonstrate that they understand the urgency of the problem and the need to find equitable solutions now.

At the international level and through the United Nations, it is crucial that leaders focus attention on climate change as an issue of justice, global development and human security. By treating people and countries fairly, climate justice can help to deliver a strong, legally binding climate agreement in 2015. It is the responsibility of leaders to ensure that the post-2015 development agenda and the UNFCCC climate negotiations support each other to deliver a fair and ambitious global framework by the end of 2015. Local and national leaders will implement these policies on the ground, creating an understanding of the shared challenge amongst the citizens of the world and facilitating a transformation to a sustainable global society.

As part of global collective action, greater emphasis should be given to the role of diverse coalitions that are already emerging at the community, local, city, corporate and country levels and the vital role they play in mobilizing action. These coalitions are already championing the solutions needed to solve the crisis and their effect can be maximized by supporting them to connect and scale up for greater impact.

Climate justice places people at its centre and focuses attention on rights, opportunities and fairness. For the sake of those affected by climate impacts now and in the future, we have no more time to waste. The ‘fierce urgency of now’ compels us to act.

This Declaration is supported by:

- **Mr Nnimmo Bassey**, Coordinator, Oilwatch International
- **Ms Sharan Burrow**, General Secretary, International Trade Union Confederation
- **Ms Luisa Dias Diogo**, Former Prime Minister, Mozambique
- **Ms Patricia Espinosa-Cantellano**, Ambassador of Mexico to Germany
- **Mr Bharrat Jagdeo**, Roving Ambassador for the Three Basins Initiative, Former President of Guyana
- **Prof Pan Jiahua**, Director General, Institute for Urban and Environmental Studies, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences
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- **Mr Festus Mogae**, Member, African Union High-level Panel for Egypt, Former President of Botswana
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- **Ms Dessima Williams**, Former Ambassador of Grenada to the United Nations

Those listed above are members of the High Level Advisory Committee (HLAC) to the Climate Justice Dialogue, an initiative of the Mary Robinson Foundation – Climate Justice and the World Resources Institute, which aims to mobilize political will and creative thinking to shape an ambitious and just international climate agreement in 2015. For more information visit www.climatejusticedialogue.org.