

World People's Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth

April 22nd, Cochabamba, Bolivia

PEOPLES AGREEMENT

Today, our Mother Earth is wounded and the future of humanity is in danger.

If global warming increases by more than 2 degrees Celsius, a situation that the “Copenhagen Accord” could lead to, there is a 50% probability that the damages caused to our Mother Earth will be completely irreversible. Between 20% and 30% of species would be in danger of disappearing. Large extensions of forest would be affected, droughts and floods would affect different regions of the planet, deserts would expand, and the melting of the polar ice caps and the glaciers in the Andes and Himalayas would worsen. Many island states would disappear, and Africa would suffer an increase in temperature of more than 3 degrees Celsius. Likewise, the production of food would diminish in the world, causing catastrophic impact on the survival of inhabitants from vast regions in the planet, and the number of people in the world suffering from hunger would increase dramatically, a figure that already exceeds 1.02 billion people. The corporations and governments of the so-called “developed” countries, in complicity with a segment of the scientific community, have led us to discuss climate change as a problem limited to the rise in temperature without questioning the cause, which is the capitalist system.

We confront the terminal crisis of a civilizing model that is patriarchal and based on the submission and destruction of human beings and nature that accelerated since the industrial revolution.

The capitalist system has imposed on us a logic of competition, progress and limitless growth. This regime of production and consumption seeks profit without limits, separating human beings from nature and imposing a logic of domination upon nature, transforming everything into commodities: water, earth, the human genome, ancestral cultures, biodiversity, justice, ethics, the rights of peoples, and life itself.

Under capitalism, Mother Earth is converted into a source of raw materials, and human beings into consumers and a means of production, into people that are seen as valuable only for what they own, and not for what they are.

Capitalism requires a powerful military industry for its processes of accumulation and imposition of control over territories and natural resources, suppressing the resistance of the peoples. It is an imperialist system of colonization of the planet.

Humanity confronts a great dilemma: to continue on the path of capitalism, depredation, and death, or to choose the path of harmony with nature and respect for life.

It is imperative that we forge a new system that restores harmony with nature and among human beings. And in order for there to be balance with nature, there must first be equity among human beings. We propose to the peoples of the world the recovery, revalorization, and strengthening of the knowledge, wisdom, and ancestral practices of Indigenous Peoples, which are affirmed in the thought and practices of “Living Well,” recognizing Mother Earth as a living being with which we have an indivisible, interdependent, complementary and spiritual relationship.

To face climate change, we must recognize Mother Earth as the source of life and forge a new system based on the principles of:

- harmony and balance among all and with all things;
- complementarity, solidarity, and equality;
- collective well-being and the satisfaction of the basic necessities of all;
- people in harmony with nature;
- recognition of human beings for what they are, not what they own;
- elimination of all forms of colonialism, imperialism and interventionism;
- peace among the peoples and with Mother Earth;

The model we support is not a model of limitless and destructive development. All countries need to produce the goods and services necessary to satisfy the fundamental needs of their populations, but by no means can they continue to follow the path of development that has led the richest countries to have an ecological footprint five times bigger than what the planet is able to support. Currently, the regenerative capacity of the planet has been already exceeded by more than 30 percent. If this pace of over-exploitation of our Mother Earth continues, we will need two planets by the year 2030. In an interdependent system in which human beings are only one component, it is not possible to recognize rights only to the human part without provoking an imbalance in the system as a whole. To guarantee human rights and to restore harmony with nature, it is necessary to effectively recognize and apply the rights of Mother Earth. For this purpose, we propose the attached project for the Universal Declaration on the Rights of Mother Earth, in which it's recorded that:

- The right to live and to exist;
- The right to be respected;
- The right to regenerate its bio-capacity and to continue it's vital cycles and processes free of human alteration;
- The right to maintain their identity and integrity as differentiated beings, self-regulated and interrelated;
- The right to water as the source of life;
- The right to clean air;
- The right to comprehensive health;
- The right to be free of contamination and pollution, free of toxic and radioactive waste;
- The right to be free of alterations or modifications of it's genetic structure in a manner that threatens it's integrity or vital and healthy functioning;
- The right to prompt and full restoration for violations to the rights acknowledged in this Declaration caused by human activities.

The "shared vision" seeks to stabilize the concentrations of greenhouse gases to make effective the Article 2 of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which states that "the stabilization of greenhouse gases concentrations in the atmosphere to a level that prevents dangerous anthropogenic inferences for the climate system." Our vision is based on the principle of historical common but differentiated responsibilities, to demand the developed countries to commit with quantifiable goals of emission reduction that will allow to return the concentrations of greenhouse gases to 300 ppm, therefore the increase in the average world temperature to a maximum of one degree Celsius.

Emphasizing the need for urgent action to achieve this vision, and with the support of peoples, movements and countries, developed countries should commit to ambitious targets for reducing emissions that permit the achievement of short-term objectives, while maintaining our vision in favor of balance in the Earth's climate system, in agreement with the ultimate objective of the Convention.

The “shared vision for long-term cooperative action” in climate change negotiations should not be reduced to defining the limit on temperature increases and the concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, but must also incorporate in a balanced and integral manner measures regarding capacity building, production and consumption patterns, and other essential factors such as the acknowledging of the Rights of Mother Earth to establish harmony with nature.

Developed countries, as the main cause of climate change, in assuming their historical responsibility, must recognize and honor their climate debt in all of its dimensions as the basis for a just, effective, and scientific solution to climate change. In this context, we demand that developed countries:

- Restore to developing countries the atmospheric space that is occupied by their greenhouse gas emissions. This implies the decolonization of the atmosphere through the reduction and absorption of their emissions;
- Assume the costs and technology transfer needs of developing countries arising from the loss of development opportunities due to living in a restricted atmospheric space;
- Assume responsibility for the hundreds of millions of people that will be forced to migrate due to the climate change caused by these countries, and eliminate their restrictive immigration policies, offering migrants a decent life with full human rights guarantees in their countries;
- Assume adaptation debt related to the impacts of climate change on developing countries by providing the means to prevent, minimize, and deal with damages arising from their excessive emissions;
- Honor these debts as part of a broader debt to Mother Earth by adopting and implementing the United Nations Universal Declaration on the Rights of Mother Earth.

The focus must not be only on financial compensation, but also on restorative justice, understood as the restitution of integrity to our Mother Earth and all its beings.

We deplore attempts by countries to annul the Kyoto Protocol, which is the sole legally binding instrument specific to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by developed countries.

We inform the world that, despite their obligation to reduce emissions, developed countries have increased their emissions by 11.2% in the period from 1990 to 2007.

During that same period, due to unbridled consumption, the United States of America has increased its greenhouse gas emissions by 16.8%, reaching an average of 20 to 23 tons of CO₂ per-person. This represents 9 times more than that of the average inhabitant of the “Third World,” and 20 times more than that of the average inhabitant of Sub-Saharan Africa.

We categorically reject the illegitimate “Copenhagen Accord” that allows developed countries to offer insufficient reductions in greenhouse gases based in voluntary and individual commitments, violating the environmental integrity of Mother Earth and leading us toward an increase in global temperatures of around 4°C.

The next Conference on Climate Change to be held at the end of 2010 in Mexico should approve an amendment to the Kyoto Protocol for the second commitment period from 2013 to 2017 under which developed countries must agree to significant domestic emissions reductions of at least 50% based on 1990 levels, excluding carbon markets or other offset mechanisms that mask the failure of actual reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

We require first of all the establishment of a goal for the group of developed countries to achieve the assignment of individual commitments for each developed country under the framework of complementary efforts among each one, maintaining in this way Kyoto Protocol as the route to emissions reductions.

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.

We the peoples have the equal right to be protected from the adverse effects of climate change and reject the notion of adaptation to climate change as understood as a resignation to impacts provoked by the historical emissions of developed countries, which themselves must adapt their modes of life and consumption in the face of this global emergency. We see it as imperative to confront the adverse effects of climate change, and consider adaptation to be a process rather than an imposition, as well as a tool that can serve to help offset those effects, demonstrating that it is possible to achieve harmony with nature under a different model for living.

It is necessary to construct an Adaptation Fund exclusively for addressing climate change as part of a financial mechanism that is managed in a sovereign, transparent, and equitable manner for all States. This Fund should assess the impacts and costs of climate change in developing countries and needs deriving from these impacts, and monitor support on the part of developed countries. It should also include a mechanism for compensation for current and future damages, loss of opportunities due to extreme and gradual climactic events, and additional costs that could present themselves if our planet surpasses ecological thresholds, such as those impacts that present obstacles to “Living Well.”

The “Copenhagen Accord” imposed on developing countries by a few States, beyond simply offering insufficient resources, attempts as well to divide and create confrontation between peoples and to extort developing countries by placing conditions on access to adaptation and mitigation resources. We also assert as unacceptable the attempt in processes of international negotiation to classify developing countries for their vulnerability to climate change, generating disputes, inequalities and segregation among them.

The immense challenge humanity faces of stopping global warming and cooling the planet can only be achieved through a profound shift in agricultural practices toward the sustainable model of production used by indigenous and rural farming peoples, as well as other ancestral models and practices that contribute to solving the problem of agriculture and food sovereignty. This is understood as the right of peoples to control their own seeds, lands, water, and food production, thereby guaranteeing, through forms of production that are in harmony with Mother Earth and appropriate to local cultural contexts, access to sufficient, varied and nutritious foods in complementarity with Mother Earth and deepening the autonomous (participatory, communal and shared) production of every nation and people.

Climate change is now producing profound impacts on agriculture and the ways of life of indigenous peoples and farmers throughout the world, and these impacts will worsen in the future.

Agribusiness, through its social, economic, and cultural model of global capitalist production and its logic of producing food for the market and not to fulfill the right to proper nutrition, is one of the principal causes of climate change. Its technological, commercial, and political approach only serves to deepen the climate change crisis and increase hunger in the world. For this reason, we reject Free Trade Agreements and Association Agreements and all forms of the application of Intellectual Property Rights to life, current technological packages (agrochemicals, genetic modification) and those that offer false solutions (biofuels, geo-engineering, nanotechnology, etc.) that only exacerbate the current crisis.

We similarly denounce the way in which the capitalist model imposes mega-infrastructure projects and invades territories with extractive projects, water privatization, and militarized territories, expelling indigenous peoples from their lands, inhibiting food sovereignty and deepening socio-environmental crisis.

We demand recognition of the right of all peoples, living beings, and Mother Earth to have access to water, and we support the proposal of the Government of Bolivia to recognize water as a Fundamental Human Right.

The definition of forests used in the negotiations of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which includes plantations, is unacceptable. Monoculture plantations are not forests. Therefore, we require a definition for negotiation purposes that recognizes the native forests, jungles and the diverse ecosystems on Earth.

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples must be fully recognized, implemented and integrated in climate change negotiations. The best strategy and action to avoid deforestation and degradation and protect native forests and jungles is to recognize and guarantee collective rights to lands and territories, especially considering that most of the forests are located within the territories of indigenous peoples and nations and other traditional communities.

We condemn market mechanisms such as REDD (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation) and its versions + and + +, which are violating the sovereignty of peoples and their right to prior free and informed consent as well as the sovereignty of national States, the customs of Peoples, and the Rights of Nature.

Polluting countries have an obligation to carry out direct transfers of the economic and technological resources needed to pay for the restoration and maintenance of forests in favor of the peoples and indigenous ancestral organic structures. Compensation must be direct and in addition to the sources of funding promised by developed countries outside of the carbon market, and never serve as carbon offsets. We demand that countries stop actions on local forests based on market mechanisms and propose non-existent and conditional results. We call on governments to create a global program to restore native forests and jungles, managed and administered by the peoples, implementing forest seeds, fruit trees, and native flora. Governments should eliminate forest concessions and support the conservation of petroleum deposits in the ground and urgently stop the exploitation of hydrocarbons in forestlands.

We call upon States to recognize, respect and guarantee the effective implementation of international human rights standards and the rights of indigenous peoples, including the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples under ILO Convention 169, among other relevant instruments in the negotiations, policies and measures used to meet the challenges posed by climate change. In particular, we call upon States to give legal recognition to claims over territories, lands and natural resources to enable and strengthen our traditional ways of life and contribute effectively to solving climate change.

We demand the full and effective implementation of the right to consultation, participation and prior, free and informed consent of indigenous peoples in all negotiation processes, and in the design and implementation of measures related to climate change.

Environmental degradation and climate change are currently reaching critical levels, and one of the main consequences of this is domestic and international migration. According to projections, there were already about 25 million climate migrants by 1995. Current estimates are around 50 million, and projections suggest that between 200 million and 1 billion people will become displaced by situations resulting from climate change by the year 2050.

Developed countries should assume responsibility for climate migrants, welcoming them into their territories and recognizing their fundamental rights through the signing of international conventions that provide for the definition of climate migrant and require all States to abide by determinations.

Establish an International Tribunal of Conscience to denounce, make visible, document, judge and punish violations of the rights of migrants, refugees and displaced persons within countries of origin, transit and destination, clearly identifying the responsibilities of States, companies and other agents.

Current funding directed toward developing countries for climate change and the proposal of the Copenhagen Accord are insignificant. In addition to Official Development Assistance and public sources, developed countries must commit to a new annual funding of at least 6% of GDP to tackle climate change in developing countries. This is viable considering that a similar amount is spent on national defense, and that 5 times more have been put forth to rescue failing banks and speculators, which raises serious questions about global priorities and political will. This funding should be direct and free of conditions, and should not interfere with the national sovereignty or self-determination of the most affected communities and groups.

In view of the inefficiency of the current mechanism, a new funding mechanism should be established at the 2010 Climate Change Conference in Mexico, functioning under the authority of the Conference of the Parties (COP) under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and held accountable to it, with significant representation of developing countries, to ensure compliance with the funding commitments of Annex 1 countries.

It has been stated that developed countries significantly increased their emissions in the period from 1990 to 2007, despite having stated that the reduction would be substantially supported by market mechanisms.

The carbon market has become a lucrative business, commodifying our Mother Earth. It is therefore not an alternative for tackle climate change, as it loots and ravages the land, water, and even life itself.

The recent financial crisis has demonstrated that the market is incapable of regulating the financial system, which is fragile and uncertain due to speculation and the emergence of intermediary brokers. Therefore, it would be totally irresponsible to leave in their hands the care and protection of human existence and of our Mother Earth.

We consider inadmissible that current negotiations propose the creation of new mechanisms that extend and promote the carbon market, for existing mechanisms have not resolved the problem of climate change nor led to real and direct actions to reduce greenhouse gases. It is necessary to demand fulfillment of the commitments assumed by developed countries under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change regarding development and technology transfer, and to reject the “technology showcase” proposed by developed countries that only markets technology. It is essential to establish guidelines in order to create a multilateral and multidisciplinary mechanism for participatory control, management, and evaluation of the exchange of technologies. These technologies must be useful, clean and socially sound. Likewise, it is fundamental to establish a fund for the financing and inventory of technologies that are appropriate and free of intellectual property rights. Patents, in particular, should move from the hands of private monopolies to the public domain in order to promote accessibility and low costs.

Knowledge is universal, and should for no reason be the object of private property or private use, nor should its application in the form of technology. Developed countries have a responsibility to share their technology with developing countries, to build research centers in developing countries for the creation of technologies and innovations, and defend and promote their development and application for “living well.” The world must recover and re-learn ancestral principles and approaches from native peoples to stop the destruction of the planet, as well as promote ancestral practices, knowledge and spirituality to recuperate the capacity for “living well” in harmony with Mother Earth.

Considering the lack of political will on the part of developed countries to effectively comply with commitments and obligations assumed under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol, and given the lack of a legal international organism to guard against and sanction climate and environmental crimes that violate the Rights of Mother Earth and humanity, we demand the creation of an International Climate and Environmental Justice Tribunal that has the legal capacity to prevent, judge and penalize States, industries and people that by commission or omission contaminate and provoke climate change.

Supporting States that present claims at the International Climate and Environmental Justice Tribunal against developed countries that fail to comply with commitments under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol including commitments to reduce greenhouse gases.

We urge peoples to propose and promote deep reform within the United Nations, so that all member States comply with the decisions of the International Climate and Environmental Justice Tribunal.

The future of humanity is in danger, and we cannot allow a group of leaders from developed countries to decide for all countries as they tried unsuccessfully to do at the Conference of the Parties in Copenhagen. This decision concerns us all. Thus, it is essential to carry out a global referendum or popular consultation on climate change in

which all are consulted regarding the following issues; the level of emission reductions on the part of developed countries and transnational corporations, financing to be offered by developed countries, the creation of an International Climate Justice Tribunal, the need for a Universal Declaration of the Rights of Mother Earth, and the need to change the current capitalist system. The process of a global referendum or popular consultation will depend on process of preparation that ensures the successful development of the same.

In order to coordinate our international action and implement the results of this “Accord of the Peoples,” we call for the building of a Global People’s Movement for Mother Earth, which should be based on the principles of complementarity and respect for the diversity of origin and visions among its members, constituting a broad and democratic space for coordination and joint worldwide actions.

To this end, we adopt the attached global plan of action so that in Mexico, the developed countries listed in Annex 1 respect the existing legal framework and reduce their greenhouse gases emissions by 50%, and that the different proposals contained in this Agreement are adopted.

Finally, we agree to undertake a Second World People’s Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth in 2011 as part of this process of building the Global People’s Movement for Mother Earth and reacting to the outcomes of the Climate Change Conference to be held at the end of this year in Cancun, Mexico.