

CJN Statement

Call for “system change not climate change” unites global movement

Corrupt Copenhagen ‘accord’ exposes gulf between peoples demands and elite interests

The highly anticipated UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen ended with a fraudulent agreement, engineered by the United States and dropped into the conference at the last moment. The "agreement" was not adopted. Instead, it was "noted" in an absurd parliamentary invention designed to accommodate the United States and permit Ban Ki-moon to utter the ridiculous pronouncement "We have a deal."

The UN conference was unable to deliver solutions to the climate crisis, or even minimal progress toward them. Instead, the talks were a complete betrayal of impoverished nations and island states, producing embarrassment for the United Nations and the Danish government. In a conference designed to limit greenhouse gas emissions there was very little talk of emission reductions. Rich, developed countries continued to delay any talk of deep and binding cuts, instead shifting the burden to less developed countries and showing no willingness to make reparations for the damage they have caused.

The Climate Justice Now! coalition, alongside other networks, was united here at COP15 in the call for System Change, Not Climate Change. In contrast, the Copenhagen climate conference itself demonstrated that real solutions, as opposed to false, market-based solutions, will not be adopted until we overcome the existing unjust political and economic system.

Government and corporate elites here in Copenhagen made no attempt to satisfy the expectations of the world. False solutions and corporations completely co-opted the United Nations process. The global elite would like to privatize the atmosphere through carbon markets; carve up the remaining forests, bush and grasslands of the world through the violation of indigenous rights and land-grabbing; promote high-risk technologies to restructure the climate; convert real forests into monoculture tree plantations and agricultural soils into carbon sinks; and complete the enclosure and privatisation of the commons. Virtually every proposal discussed in Copenhagen was based on a desire to create opportunities for profit rather than to reduce emissions, and even the small amounts of financing promised could end up paying for the transfer of risky technologies.

The only discussions of real solutions in Copenhagen took place in social movements. Climate Justice Now!, Climate Justice Action and Klimaforum09 articulated many creative ideas and attempted to deliver those ideas to the UN Climate Change Conference through the Klimaforum09 People's Declaration and the Reclaim Power People's Assembly. Among nations, the ALBA countries, many African nations and AOSIS often echoed the messages of the climate justice movement, speaking of the need to repay climate debt, create mitigation and adaptation funds outside of neoliberal institutions such as the World Bank and IMF, and keep global temperature increase below 1.5 degrees.

The UN and the Danish government served the interests of the rich, industrialized countries, excluding our voices and the voices of the least powerful throughout the world, and attempting to silence our demands to talk about real solutions. Nevertheless, our voices grew stronger and more united day by day during the two-week conference. As we grew stronger, the mechanisms implemented by the UN and the Danish authorities for the participation of civil society grew more dysfunctional, repressive and undemocratic, very much like the WTO and Davos.

Social movement participation was limited throughout the conference, drastically curtailed in week two, and several civil society organizations even had their admission credentials revoked midway through the second week. At the same time, corporations continued lobbying inside the Bella Center.

Outside the conference, the Danish police extended the repressive framework, launching a massive clampdown on the right to free expression and arresting and beating thousands, including civil society delegates to the climate conference. Our movement overcame this repression to raise our voices in protest over and over again. Our demonstrations mobilized more than 100,000 people in Denmark to press for climate justice, while social movements around the world mobilized hundreds of thousands more in local climate justice demonstrations. In spite of repression by the Danish government and exclusion by the United Nations, the movement for system change not climate change is now stronger than when we arrived in Denmark.

While Copenhagen has been a disaster for just and equitable climate solutions, it has been an inspiring watershed moment in the battle for climate justice. The governments of the elite have no solutions to offer, but the climate justice movement has provided strong vision and clear alternatives. Copenhagen will be remembered as an historic event for global social movements. It will be remembered, along with Seattle and Cancun, as a critical moment when the diverse agendas of many social movements coalesced and became stronger, asking in one voice for system change, not climate change.

The Climate Justice Now! coalition calls for social movements around the world to mobilize in support of climate justice.

We will take our struggle forward not just in climate talks, but on the ground and in the streets, to promote genuine solutions that include:

- leaving fossil fuels in the ground and investing instead in appropriate energy-efficiency and safe, clean and community-led renewable energy - radically reducing wasteful consumption, first and foremost in the North, but also by Southern elites - huge financial transfers from North to South, based on the repayment of climate debts and subject to democratic control. The costs of adaptation and mitigation should be paid for by redirecting military budgets, progressive and innovative taxes, and debt cancellation - rights-based resource conservation that enforces Indigenous land rights and promotes peoples' sovereignty over energy, forests, land and water - sustainable family farming and fishing, and peoples' food sovereignty.

We are committed to building a diverse movement – locally and globally – for a better world.

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www.climate-justice-now.org