

The People's Test on Climate 2015

Nothing less than a systemic transformation of our societies, our economies, and our world will suffice to solve the climate crisis and close the ever-increasing inequality gap.

After over 20 years of stunted and ineffective action to reduce climate pollution by governments – particularly in wealthy countries that have failed to meet their legal and moral responsibilities – only urgent and transformative and systemic change that can address the root causes of the crisis and deliver what is needed to keep global temperature rise below 1.5 degrees Celsius, the limit beyond which climate impacts will become potentially catastrophic.

The urgency to keep temperatures down is not just about the planet and the environment. It is about *people*, and our capacity as humanity to secure safe and dignified lives for all.

As social movements, environmental non-governmental organizations, trade unions and other civil society organizations with deep roots in communities around the world struggling to cope with the climate crisis, we take hope from the fact that while the scale of the challenge is enormous, *people already have solutions and alternatives that work at the scale we need*. From decentralized community-owned renewable energy for mitigation, poverty reduction and sustainable development, to agro-ecological methods for adaptation, there already exists a wealth of proven ideas and experience from which to build a global transformation – and it is booming.

People's demands and solutions are based in our vision of the world that recognizes the need to live in harmony with nature, and to guarantee the fulfillment of human rights for all, including those of Indigenous Peoples, women, youth and workers.

These people's solutions upset "business as usual" because they must, in order to lead us towards a more equitable, just and sustainable world – but for this very reason, they face serious barriers. This is why the demands of our Southern people's movements, which represent the world's communities that are most vulnerable to climate impacts yet have had no role in creating the problem, are so critical if we want a better, more just, and sustainable society. These demands include, but are not limited to:

- **Sustainable energy transformation** – redirecting finance from dirty energy to clean, affordable, reliable and safe renewable energy, supporting people's solutions including decentralized community renewable energy systems, banning new dirty energy projects, ensuring that access to clean, affordable, reliable and safe renewable energy is a public good, reducing energy consumption particularly by wealthy elites, and ensuring that reducing poverty and achieving justice is prioritized throughout the transformation;
- **The right to food and water** – ensuring people's access to water and to land for climate resilient food production, stopping land grabs and the ongoing conversion of land from food to commodities like biofuels that are falsely presented as solutions to the climate crisis, and supporting sustainable agro-ecology and climate resilient food production systems;
- **Justice for impacted people** – securing and building the resilience of impacted people including reparations for the world's impoverished and marginalized people who have no role in causing climate change, yet whose lives and livelihoods are endangered by its effects, supporting a just transition for workers into the new environmentally sustainable and socially inclusive economy, and supporting people- and community-driven adaptation and rehabilitation solutions.

Securing our vision in a just and equitable manner cannot be left to governments' voluntary "good will." Our governments are too heavily influenced by the entrenched interests whose power, profits and lifestyles would be impacted by the transformation. The poorest, most vulnerable and worst impacted are often excluded entirely from decision-making processes; for any just outcome, space must be created for inclusive people's participation in decision-making and in implementation of those decisions at all levels.

With all that said, history is full of examples of people's power overcoming the power of a few narrow interests.

This year will bring governments back to the climate negotiations, in Paris, to scale up climate action in the immediate short term, and to agree upon a new global climate agreement to come into place post-2020. When measured against the people's demands above, as well as the imperatives of science, the Paris Summit looks like it will be very far from what is needed by people or the planet. Instead, it risks legitimizing the current unjust and unsustainable balance of power in favor of elites, while only making minor tweaks around the margins of the status quo.

Yet the balance of power can and will change, because people across the world are prepared to fight to protect their homes, their right to energy, their right to food, and their right to a decent job. That power can be mobilized to come together and make clear demands of the Paris Summit, to force it to be signal that the real transformation we need has arrived.

To meet that test, the Paris Summit must:

- **Catalyze immediate, urgent and drastic emission reductions** – in line with what science and equity require, deliver urgent short-term actions, building towards a long-term goal that is agreed in Paris, that shift us away from dirty energy, marking the beginning of the end of fossil fuels globally, and that keep the global temperature goal in reach;
- **Provide adequate support for transformation** – ensure that the resources needed, such as public finance and technology transfer, are provided to support the transformation, especially in vulnerable and poor countries;
- **Deliver justice for impacted people** – enhance the support to adaptation in a new climate regime, ensure that there will be a separate mechanism to provide reparations for any loss and damage that goes beyond our ability to adapt, and make a firm commitment to secure workers' livelihoods and jobs through a Just Transition; and
- **Focus on transformational action** – ensure that renewable and efficient solutions are emphasized rather than false solutions that fail to produce the results and protection we need, such as carbon markets in land and soil, dangerous geoengineering interventions, and more.

Governments and the Paris Summit outcome will be judged on this fundamental litmus test. But Paris will not only be about a long series of negotiations under the UNFCCC. Paris will not only be about what our governments achieve – or fail to achieve. Paris will also be the moment that demonstrates that delivering concrete actions for the global transformation will come from people and not our politicians.

We see Paris as a beginning rather than an end – an opportunity to start connecting people's demands for justice, equality, food, jobs, and rights, and strengthen the movement in a way that will force governments to listen and act in the interests of their people and not in the vested interests of elites. Paris will launch us into 2016 as a year of action – a year when people's demands and people's solutions take center stage.

Climate change needs our urgent commitment and action, in global solidarity. We are continuing to hold corporate and political elites accountable for their actions on climate change. And our numbers will grow as the climate movement of movements becomes more and more united and linked beyond the COP in Paris. We will encourage more and more citizens to support people's solutions. We will continue our struggles at local, national, regional and global levels to ensure that it is people that spearhead the just transformation of our society.

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