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Climate disaster

Mobilize now against climate disaster

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The week of 20-27 September saw a historic mobilization for climate justice. With more than 7.5 million demonstrators in 185 countries, it is the largest coordinated global mobilization since the 2003 Iraq war.

A new generation is emerging, born from collective and political action. Its strength and determination are leading other sectors of society - trade unionists, scientists, parents...

The climate and social disaster is now.

The 1.1°C increase in the earth's average temperature since the middle of the 19th century is already having dramatic effects. The multiplication and aggravation of extreme phenomena – fires, floods, droughts, hurricanes and typhoons... – devastate entire regions. Famine, which has increased for the third consecutive year, affects more than 820 million people worldwide. A quarter of humanity is threatened by a water shortage. There are more than 2500 conflicts over access to fossil fuels, water, food and land.

Environmental inequalities further aggravate social, racist and gender inequalities. If the rich destroy the planet (the richest of the richest countries can emit up to 2000 times more GHGs than the poorest of the poorest countries), it is the working classes, the peoples of the South, the racialized people and women who suffer most from climate disasters, who live in the most polluted areas, who suffer from the lack of drinking water and the degradation of agricultural land.

Lands, oceans and frozen areas: vicious circles to be broken urgently!

A quarter of the land area is already degraded by industrial agriculture and livestock farming, which also contribute a third of greenhouse gas emissions (IPCC report of 8 August 2019). The more the climate crisis worsens, the more land is degraded. However, the more degraded the land is, the less CO₂ it absorbs and therefore the less it participates in the fight against climate change.

Melting ice, warming seas and rising sea levels threaten a quarter of the world's population in coastal areas, high mountain regions or the Arctic region, particularly indigenous peoples (IPCC Report of 25 September). The expansion of water under the influence of heat and the melting of ice caps (Greenland, Antarctica) are causing sea levels to rise by as much as one metre at the end of the century. The oceans play a major role in the fight against climate change, absorbing a quarter of the CO₂ emitted and 90% of the heat due to greenhouse gas emissions since 1970. But their warming and acidification, in addition to destroying biodiversity, reduce their absorption capacity and thus aggravate climate change.

The IPCC Special Report (SR15) confirms what those concerned in the front line who imposed the reference to 1.5°C in the Paris Agreement have long known: the 2°C increase in the average temperature of the earth is far from being a safe limit.

Inaction is killing the climate

COP25 was scheduled to take place in Santiago, Chile. It would have been cynical and caricatural to organize it under the threat of an army that made a name for itself under Pinochet's dictatorship. It will finally take place from 2 to 13 December in Madrid. Self-baptized "COP of Action", like every new international meeting, it has the ambition "to increase countries' commitments". The Paris Agreement at COP21 in 2015 recorded the Determined Contributions at the National level, the addition of these commitments, even if they were met, which is far from being the case, leads to an increase in the average temperature well above 3°C. It is therefore necessary to promise new and revised upward commitments for... COP26 in Glasgow in 2020.

Climate-negationists Trump and Bolsonaro boycotted the UN Climate Summit in September 2019 and are guilty of the worst ecocides. However, the rhetoric of the leaders of the other powers is no better. The objective of "carbon neutrality by 2050" promoted by Antonio Guterres and adopted by some 60 countries including Germany, Canada, France, Italy, Japan and the United Kingdom is a dangerous fraud. Carbon neutrality or "zero net emissions" does not imply zero GHG emissions. Emissions can continue to grow, as they are doing now, under the condition that they are "offset" by negative emissions – in other words, carbon removals. Behind these "negative emissions" lie risky and destructive technologies such as BECCS (bio-energy with carbon capture and sequestration) which, in order to significantly absorb excess carbon, would require devoting the equivalent of the land area of India to growing biomass at the expense of food crops and biodiversity, in defiance of the rights of peoples and peasants.

Market or technological responses are inefficient, dangerous and unfair, but they are the only ones that can be envisaged within the capitalist system.

This system is unable to respond to the climate challenge because it is unable to take the problem at its root: fossil fuels.

To have a 50-50 chance of keeping global warming below 1.5°C, carbon emissions must be drastically reduced by 2030 (-58% compared to 2010). However, 80% of GHG emissions are due to fossil fuels, which in the current system covers 85% of energy needs. This is not a transition, but an energy revolution. However, the fossil energy system and oil, gas and coal reserves are concentrated in the hands of capitalist groups (or states) and represent huge masses of capital (1/5 of the world GDP for installations alone). Capitalists will not voluntarily renounce their capital and no government at their service will compel them to do so.

The only way out is to mobilize youth and peoples.

We need a programme of ecosocialist transitional measures that combines real democracy, social justice and climate change, that meet needs while respecting ecological constraints: Produce less, share more.

Expropriation without compensation or repurchase, and socialization under the control of employees and populations of the energy system as well as the banking system, are essential conditions to get out of fossil and nuclear energies and move to a 100% renewable, decentralized, economical and socially just energy system. It is not only a question of changing energy sources, but of breaking with the productivism inherent in capitalism, of eliminating unnecessary and harmful production, the waste of energy, resources and labour due to advertising and programmed obsolescence. An ecological, peasant agriculture, supplying short circuits is a weapon of social and climatic justice, it supposes the end of the agro-industry which destroys the land and ruins peasants. Transport is responsible for one fifth of greenhouse gas production. Air or container transport must be drastically reduced, car traffic must tend to

disappear in favour of free public transport and by redeveloping cities and territories.

Overall, it is a question of democratically defining what should be produced and under what conditions. The massive and collective reduction in working time without loss of pay or intensification of work must be accompanied by a change in the organization and content of work. Sharing must include the social reproduction work that is now largely invisible and carried out by women. This requires public health services, early childhood care, care for the elderly and dependent people....

The historical responsibility for GHG emissions is disproportionate between imperialist countries that have long based their industrial development on fossil fuels and dominated countries. The Green Fund promised since 2010 to finance the transition and adaptation of the countries of the South is still awaited. Carbon accounting, on which the negotiations are based, erases the recognition of this "common but differentiated responsibility". Trading, marketing and compensation mechanisms consider that all tonnes of carbon are equal in all places and under all social and historical conditions. Far from acknowledging climate debt, they are the basis of a new environmental imperialism that places the burden of reparation on the first victims of climate change. On the other hand, the reparation of colonial crimes requires the abolition of debt, freedom of movement and settlement for migrants, and the recognition of the rights of indigenous peoples.

Capitalism plunges the whole world into a global, climatic and ecological, social and economic, political and democratic crisis, a crisis of civilization. However, this system will not collapse on its own. Increasingly authoritarian and militarized, it causes war, ruins millions of lives and destroys biodiversity, the Earth and the climate... and will continue to do so as long as it remains in control. But everywhere people are rising, and in these uprisings young people are in the majority and women are in the vanguard.

The simultaneous emergence of a global climate movement and the new feminist wave responds to the fact that capital, in addition to exhausting workers, also exhausts and destroys all life, that of humans and that of nature inseparable. This provides the basis for a 99% convergence to change the system by abolishing capital and building a democratically planned economy and a social system that is based on democratic, feminist and ecological principles. A democratically planned economy is the only way to protect the employees of companies that are to be eliminated (mines, oil wells, etc.) by giving them the opportunity to change jobs without losing their status.

This convergence can only be built in the heat of real mobilizations, in debates, self-organization, strikes and blockages.

Executive Bureau of the Fourth International

4 November 2019

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