

Strategising Workshop for Durban's COP17

23-25 September 2011
University of KwaZulu-Natal
Memorial Tower Building, Howard College

The Call issued by leading anti-capitalist and climate justice forces in South Africa to come together and strategise around a common approach and agenda for COP17 has been received positively in different parts of the world and in the country. Besides participation from the Bolivian social movements other important movements like Via Campesina, activists from movements in Brazil engaging the Rio+20 process, Chile, Phillipines and different parts of Africa will be present. Moreover leading transnational NGOs like Friends of the Earth and Climate Justice groups will be present. From within South Africa all leading social movements, community organisations and ngos have confirmed participation.

Forward to the Unity of Anti-Capitalist and Climate Justice Forces for COP17, RIO+20 and Beyond!
Forward to a Common Peoples Agenda to Transform the System! Climate Justice Now!

A Call for global movements and activists to participate in a strategy seminar to prepare for COP 17 and beyond

South Africa will host the forthcoming COP17 in Durban from 29 November to 9 December. Scientific evidence suggests that unless global green house gasses are dramatically cut, runaway climate change will occur with catastrophic consequences for poor, dispossessed and working people around the world.

A number of social movements, popular organisations of civil society, environmental organizations and climate justice networks in South Arica believe that if we are to avoid another disaster at COP 17 we urgently need to discuss the strategic possibilities and priorities for COP 17 and Rio + 20.

As South African movements working locally and globally to stop the climate crisis and struggling for social, environmental and economic justice we call on our comrades in Southern Africa, Africa, the

global South and the global North to participate in a strategy discussion from the 21st to 23rd September 2011.

This will be very important in strengthening our mobilisation towards COP 17 ensuring greater unity of action between South African movements and our counterparts globally as well as preparing for future battles at Rio (June 2012) and beyond.

The Cancun Cop 16 failed humanity and all of nature. It is strongly indicated in the build up to COP 17 that the dynamic of Copenhagen, carried forward at Cancun is defining the Durban COP. The ruling elites of the global North refuse to look beyond naked self-interest and the balance sheets of their predatory corporations. Instead, as in other UN processes, the Climate Summit is seen as an opportunity to drive through agreements that open nature and her environmental services to corporate take over.

In the process not just humanity but all the planet's species and bio-systems are put at great danger. The constant increase in "natural" disasters: US Tornadoes, Arizona fires, droughts in Western and Northern Europe etc provide evidence of the coming impact of runaway climate change.

The clock is ticking and climate change is becoming more disastrous!

Against this background the South African government is not displaying any serious commitment to opening up new options for COP17 negotiations. Its betrayal of Africa at COP15 in Copenhagen, its commitment to massively expanding coal-fired and nuclear energy and its turn to green wash or green neoliberal agendas marked by its commitment to carbon trading, warn us of the dangers of its Presidency of the UNFCCC following the Durban summit.

Strengthening a grassroots critique of the South African government and globalising this is crucial for progressive and anti-capitalist forces in South Africa and for transnational mobilisation.

There is a growing polarisation amongst civil society forces centred on those who still believe a 'progressive deal' can be achieved as part of an 'African COP' by merely focusing on adaptation, REDDS and the 'honest broker' role of the South

African government. These positions are consciously advanced by well resourced transnational NGOs and their proxies in Africa who also talk the language of renewables as part of being against nuclear but who are not willing to commit to sustained popular mobilisation.

It is urgent that a concrete and alternative agenda is mapped out by popular forces. When the COPs deliver so little what priority should we give to the COPs and what and how do we grow the pressure on our national states to seriously transition to a post carbon economy.

The stand of the Bolivian government inside the negotiations and its relationship with pro-Cochabamba, anti-capitalist and climate justice forces is potentially very important for creating a powerful global platform and movement against climate change.

Yet many strategic questions need to be clarified, not least for South African movements planning mobilizations during COP17, namely how to link the “outside strategy of mass popular mobilisation to the “inside” strategy of engagement with the official UNFCCC process. There is also a need to clarify how convergence between the Cochabamba People Summit process, sustained national, regional and global campaigning and the mobilizations and popular processes being planned for the Durban Cop, Rio +20, can be linked to the tactics of progressive regimes like the Bolivian government.

Finally, the role and objectives of street mobilisation during the international day of action in South Africa and beyond has to be more clearly clarified by the progressive, climate justice and anti-capitalist bloc. What are the objectives, messages and extent of mass mobilisation? Is one day of mass mobilisation sufficient? How do we link mobilisation in South Africa and beyond?

These issues can only be addressed through a strategic conversation involving progressive, climate justice and anti-capitalist forces in South Africa and from other parts of the world. This is necessary to ensure a more coherent and focused approach to mass mobilisation during COP17, both in South Africa and beyond.

We are inviting forces linked to the Cochabamba people’s Summit, i.e. the Bolivian government, Bolivian social movements, forces linked to the leading eco-socialist networks, anti-capitalist and climate justice groups to South Africa to have a strategic conversation on the issues raised above.

Your organisation is invited to send delegates to attend a planned three day workshop with 30 activists from international movements and 30 South African activists in Durban from the 23rd – 25th September 2011.

Due to financial constraints attending delegates are requested to pay for their own travel costs and accommodation. Accommodation and conferencing facilities will be organised. Further details will be sent by convening organisations below once your delegates are confirmed.

The attending Bolivian government and social movement representatives are requested to also avail themselves for a speaking tour across the main city centres in South Africa. These speaking engagements will be organised by convening organisations.

- Democratic Left Front
- Alternative Information and Development Center (AIDC)
- Centre for Civil Society Climate Justice Project, Durban
- Trust for Christian Outreach (TCOE)
- Peoples Dialogue – Global South
- Timberwatch
- Keep Left
- African Centre for Biodiversity (ACB)
- Co-operative & Policy Alternative Centre (COPAC)
- Masibambane Unemployed Peoples Movement (MUP)
- Unemployed Peoples Movement (Grahamstown)
- Ivory Park Solidarity Economy Movement
- Mimeline Workers
- Anti Privatisation Forum (APF)
- Vaal Concerned Residents Community Assembly
- Operation Khanyisa Movement (OKM)
- Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee (SECC)
- Tembelihle Concerned Residents (TCR)
- Sequoia
- Greater Westonaria Concerned Residents (GWCR)
- Soweto Concerned Residents (SCR)
- Free State Procession of Youth (FPY)
- Vaal Environmental Justice Alliance (VEJA)
- Socialist Green Coalition
- Women In Action