

Why we question COP17*

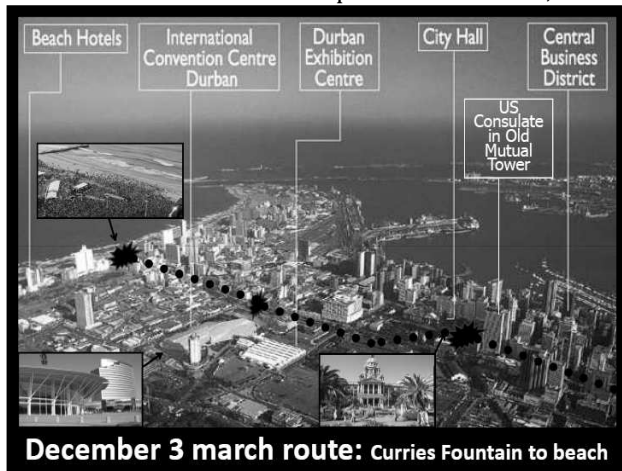
The Climate Justice movement in Durban is trying to ensure the COP17, from Nov 28 to Dec 9, isn't simply **another failed, elite summit-hop**. It will be that, because:

- the *Kyoto Protocol's* binding commitments to reduce carbon will be trashed and replaced by Washington's 'pledge and review' voluntary hot-air non-commitments;
- the so-called *Green Climate Fund* will be captured by private for-profit interests;
- carbon trading* will be heavily promoted, even though it is failing in practice; and
- urgent emissions cuts* – 50% by 2017, as science requires – will be scoffed at.

Our expectations are terribly low because 16 years of talk by procrastinating, paralysed **UN Framework Convention on Climate Change negotiators**, guided by fossil-fuel-addicted big business, have left us no strategy to save the planet.

Likewise, **South Africa's energy and climate policies** are set by the corporate **Minerals-Energy Complex**. SA's already-vast CO2 emissions will soar, with the world's third and fourth largest coal-fired power stations now under construction. Who wins? **Eskom** still supplies the world's cheapest electricity supplied to the world's biggest mining and metals houses – **BHP Billiton and Anglo American** – which in turn permanently degrade our water resources and pollute the air. Opportunities for Climate Jobs and renewable energy are practically ignored. Meanwhile, power disconnections affect millions of low-income people each year as a result of a 130% electricity price increase since 2008, making it unaffordable and inaccessible to the poor, who are returning to dirty paraffin, coal and firewood. And in 2009 President Jacob Zuma was one of the five 'leaders' who, led by the US White House, signed the non-binding **Copenhagen Accord**, leaving Africa to fry.

Given the adverse balance of power, an estimated 20,000 COP17 delegates will *waste their time* inside Durban's **International Convention Centre (ICC)**. The last such tragic event here was the **UN World Conference Against Racism**, where more than 15,000 of us demonstrated on August 31, 2001 because under Washington's thumb, conference chair Mary Robinson refused to table civil society concerns: Israel's racist occupation of Palestine; and reparations due for centuries



of slavery, colonialism and apartheid.

A year later, at the UN's Johannesburg **World Summit on Sustainable Development**, more than 30,000 marched against UN commodification of nature: 'Bluewashing' in the UN 'Global Compact' with big corporations, and UN privatization of water and even the air (known as 'emissions trading').

Climate Justice for Durban?

Our traditions of fighting social and climate injustice

Durban always surprises powerful visitors. Two centuries ago, political history was made by Zulu **King Shaka's resistance** to British settlers. A century ago **Mahatma Gandhi** developed *Satyagraha*: 'truth-force' non-violent civil disobedience. Other Durban **anti-apartheid** campaigning was intense, and the modern **trade union movement** began here, in Africa's largest harbour, with the 1973 dockworker strike. A decade later the United Democratic Front bravely resisted apartheid-aligned Inkatha and the Third Force.

The country's **environmental justice movement** has one of its strongest pillars in South Durban, dating to 1995. The rise of SA's '**new urban social movements**' began in the Chatsworth neighbourhood in 1998, and shackdwellers in Abahlali baseMjondolo organized in 2005. The first **critiques of Thabo Mbeki's AIDS denialism** took form at the Durban ICC, at the International AIDS Conference in 2000, and the Treatment Action Campaign celebrated victory over Mbeki, the US government, Big Pharma and the World Trade Organisation within four years.

Climate is crucial for our people in part because **greenhouse gas emissions** equate to **air pollution** in many parts of the city. Things are getting much worse, because Durban's government – the eThekweni Municipality – is run by irresponsible, pro-industry planners and engineers intent on maintaining the city's **high-carbon growth path**, while destroying poor and working communities.

Unprecedented subsidies for long-distance air transport, shipping, recreation and sports tourism infrastructure have been sunk in recent years and more are planned, with a \$35 billion price tag: the hugely under-capacity **King Shaka airport** and next-door **Dube TradePort** white elephant; the World Cup 2010's 'alien's handbag' **Moses Mabhida Stadium** (now mostly empty – and across the road from a fine rugby stadium nearly as large); vast expansion of the existing **harbour** and of Africa's largest **petro-chemical complex** within Clairwood, Wentworth and Merebank neighbourhoods; the doubling of Durban-Johannesburg **oil pipeline capacity** through black communities; and a potential **dug-out port** for fuel/freight where the old airport was located, with mass residential displacement threatened.



**Conference of Polluters'*, held in 2009 in Copenhagen and 2010 in Cancun

Meanwhile our **provincial rail lines have been degraded** while thousands of damaging freight trucks have taken their place. The city's **bus system was privatized** and its subsequent collapse made local transport miserable and more expensive for tens of thousands of poor and working people. **Water prices soared** (38% in July 2011), while **neglect of sanitation for the poor and of stormwater drainage** led in 2008 to the city's 'Blue Flag' clean beach status being revoked.

The city's **ex-mayor** set up a dangerous, so-called **waste-to-energy incineration project**, now under investigation for corruption because his daughter got the tender. The **city manager's employment** was recently terminated, but he remains in his position while investigations continue into \$80 million worth of housing fraud under his watch. On his way out he **demolished the municipal air pollution unit**. Yet official **greenwash strategies** appear regularly, such as tree-planting 'offsets', a 'Green Hub' on the E.coli-infested Umngeni River, and the August 2011 book *Towards a Low Carbon City*, a farce given the city's higher-carbon trajectory.

What is 'Climate Justice'?

*Principles and demands articulated at Rights of Mother Earth Conference
Cochabamba, Bolivia, April 2010*

- *50 percent reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 2017*
- *stabilising temperature rises to 1C and 300 Parts Per Million*
- *acknowledging the climate debt owed by developed countries, 6% of GDP*
- *full respect for Human Rights and the inherent rights of indigenous people*
- *universal declaration of rights of Mother Earth to ensure harmony with nature*
- *establishment of an International Court of Climate Justice*
- *rejection of carbon markets and commodification of nature & forests through REDD*
- *change the consumption patterns of wealthy countries*
- *end intellectual property rights for technologies useful to mitigate climate change*

We resist, with your solidarity

The spirit of climate justice is growing in Durban. The movement began when the international **Durban Group for Climate Justice** research/advocacy network was founded in 2004, continuing today as a source of critical information about 'false solutions'. A high-profile fight against SA's first 'Clean Development Mechanism' carbon trading project was waged at Durban's **environmentally-racist Bisasar Road landfill**, Africa's largest, in the mid-2000s, resulting in a World Bank retreat from project financing in 2005 – although community leader Sajida Khan died in 2007 after two cases of cancer, after which the city sold European firms rights to pollute in exchange for methane-to-electricity emissions reduction credits.

In 2009, a major climate summit was hosted by the **South Durban Community Environmental Alliance (SDCEA)**, an activist group which also organized the first protests against the World Bank's April 2010 decision to fund the **Medupi coal-fired power plant** with its biggest-ever project loan (\$3.75 billion). Protests continue in South Durban, one of the world's most dangerous petro-chemical sites, including one of the '**1000 Cancuns**' in December 2010.

The other main South African cities also host regular protests on climate, energy and related issues. In December 2010 there were 14 arrests at an **Earthlife Africa Joburg protest** against the state's energy policy. Regular demonstrations are held at Eskom and Sasol, SA's two largest CO2 emitters.

South African activists founded **Climate Justice Now! SA** in 2009; a KwaZulu-Natal provincial body is active; and many organizations are making hosting preparations: **SDCEA, groundWork, the Centre for Civil Society, Earthlife Africa, Timberwatch, Streetnet, Ecopeace, Geosphere, Umphilo waManzi, Amandla! magazine, the Million Climate Jobs! campaign, Abahlali baseMjondolo, 350.org, the Diakonia faith centre, Durban Sings!, IndyMedia, Democratic Left Front, and many more allied community, environmental and labour groups**. Especially important are **Congress of SA Trade Unions** demands for a 'Just Transition' and the faith community's mobilizations on Nov 25 and Dec 4.

An even larger 'C17' grouping was tasked with organizing the venue for the alternative civil society space at the **Durban University of Technology (DUT)** and the **Global Day of Action**. On **Dec 3**, we will march from DUT's **Curries Fountain** past the US Consulate, City Hall and ICC, to a '**going away party for the beach**.'

Fusing red and green, Durban can be different

Climate activists across the world are putting bodies on the line with **civil disobedience**, while campaigns to leave fossil fuels in the soil and halt fracking are intensifying. The Durban Climate Justice community welcomes local and international friends to visit, to understand and amplify our – and your – struggles, since targets for the weeks ahead are now being chosen: **consulates and corporations will be warned not to make the COP a Conference of Polluters**.

With Latin American indigenous activists from the Andes teaching us about **buena vivir** (living well) and **pachamama** (Mother Earth), we know our survival relies upon adoption of transformative policies and laws that respect natural systems. These must also stimulate green, local, innovative, resilient, sustainable, job-rich political economy, at a time the fossil-dependent, consumer-centric, financially-chaotic, ecologically-insensitive, capitalist economic model has reached dead-end.

Join us in Durban, where more than **300 toxic, high-polluting, extraction-based industrial plants** are destroying the health of residents and all life, and also contributing 45 percent of our city's greenhouse gases. These hangovers of apartheid tight relationship between state and capital need urgent transformation, so we can increasingly replace fossil fuels with renewables. *What else do we want?*

- to sustainably use and preserve **water drawn from natural cycles**;
- to breathe **clean air** untainted by toxins, carcinogens and particulates;
- to live in a **climate unaltered by fossil fuel emissions**; and
- **fundamental rights for our natural communities and ecosystems**.

For more information about events, hosting strategies, accommodation and analysis of why Durban needs Climate Justice, visit some of our websites and stay tuned for advisories to be issued in coming weeks:

www.sdcea.co.za • ccs.ukzn.ac.za • www.groundwork.org.za