

# Climate Justice in Durban:

Climate Justice is the new global movement facing the greatest challenge in human history, because **failure** is the only way to summarize 16 years of talk by United Nations negotiators from national states influenced by fossil-fuel-dependent capital (and the big Environmental NGOs with which they work).

As the world will learn, **South Africa also exemplifies climate injustice**. Vast CO2 emissions are caused by provision of the world's cheapest electricity to the world's biggest mining and metals corporations (BHP Billiton and Anglo American), which in turn permanently degrade our water resources and pollute the air. Opportunities for Green Jobs and renewable energy are ignored. Meanwhile, electricity disconnections affect millions of low-income people each year. And President Jacob Zuma was one of the five 'leaders' who signed the unfair, unambitious and non-binding Copenhagen Accord in 2009.

Yet from the standpoint of justice, the choice of the International Convention Centre (ICC) in Durban, South Africa to host the Conference of the Parties 17 from 28 November–December 9 is a good one, as some of the country's most intense environmental, social and labour struggles are underway here.

**Welcome to Durban**, where activist critiques of incompetent global elites are well-rehearsed. The UN World Conference Against Racism was held here in 2001, and 15,000 demonstrated against the event at the ICC because under Washington's influence, the UN refused to put onto the agenda either Israeli racism/apartheid against Palestine, or Western reparations for centuries of slavery, colonialism and apartheid.

Exactly a year later, at the Johannesburg **World Summit on Sustainable Development**, 30,000 activists marched 12km to protest the UN's commodification of nature: 'Bluewashing' of corporate polluters through the Global Compact, 'Type Two Partnerships' with multinational capital, promotion of neoliberal social and economic policies, and endorsement of water privatization and 'Clean Development Mechanism' carbon trading.

Other protests were held at the Durban ICC against the World Economic Forum and the neoliberal 'New Partnership for Africa's Development'.

This history of **international eco-social solidarity** is rich. South Africans and our overseas allies fought racial apartheid until 1994, and then demanded

## What is Climate Justice?

*Principles and demands articulated at Rights of Mother Earth conference, Cochabamba, 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
- 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
- promotion of measures that change the consumption patterns of developed countries
- end of intellectual property rights for technologies useful for mitigating climate change
- payment of 6 percent of developed countries' GDP to addressing climate change

# build our movement for COP 17!

access to anti-retroviral AIDS medicines by Big Pharma, the World Trade Organisation and the Clinton and Mbeki regimes, winning in 2004.

Political history was made here with resistance by Zulu **King Shaka** to British settlers in the early 1800s and with **Mahatma Gandhi's political development** in the early 1900s. The modern **trade union movement** began here, in Africa's largest harbour, with the 1973 dockworker strike. The rise of South Africa's '**new urban social movements**' began in the neighbourhood of Chatsworth in 1998. The first local **critiques of AIDS denialism** took form at the Durban ICC, at the 2000 International AIDS Conference.

Climate is a sore spot because of **intense emissions and air pollution**. The **Durban Group for Climate Justice** was founded in 2004 and continues today as a source of critical information about 'false solutions'. One of the highest-profile fights against carbon trading 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.

In 2009, a major climate summit was hosted by the **South Durban Community Environmental Alliance**, 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 bn). Activism continues in South Durban, one of the world's most dangerous petrochemical complexes, 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, and in early 2011 will announce hosting and activist strategies for the year ahead. The **Centre for Civil Society** at the University of KwaZulu-Natal is hosting several Climate Camps in 2011. **SDCEA, groundWork, Earthlife eThekweni, 350.org, the Diakonia faith and justice centre, Ecopeace and many allied community, environmental and labour groups** will ensure that delegates to the COP 17 get the message: cut a genuine deal or face South Africa's famed social protests, amongst the world's most militant and prolific.

## Join us for a crucial moment in socio-environmental history!

For more, see [ccs.ukzn.ac.za](http://ccs.ukzn.ac.za), [www.sdcea.co.za](http://www.sdcea.co.za), [www.groundwork.org.za](http://www.groundwork.org.za)

### **Our local-global inspirations:**



*Durban was home to eco-social justice visionaries who died in the past year: Dennis Brutus (26 December 2009) and Fatima Meer (12 March 2010). The two would have led critiques of the COP 17.*

Dennis Brutus



Fatima Meer