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REINFORCING the shift towards climate justice

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Climate change is intensifying. Record-breaking global temperatures, atmospheric greenhouse gas (especially CO₂) concentrations, and rising sea levels and temperatures, as well as increasing ocean acidification, are constantly being reported. Global mean temperature has approximately increased by 1.1°C above the pre-industrial level. Climate change impacts are now undermining and will pose significant constraints on meeting sustainable development and poverty eradication in many developing countries due to the loss and damage that they bring to critical economic and human infrastructure but also to the long-term shifts in economic production that they will entail.

At the same time, development convergence between developed and developing countries largely has not taken place, despite improvements largely due to rapid economic growth over the past four decades in China, India, and Southeast Asia, and in some parts of Latin America in the early 2000s. Since the 2008 global financial crisis, reductions in poverty levels have slowed or in some cases reversed. The economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on developing countries' economies is already causing poverty rates to go up as the global economy falls into recession and there is a sharp drop in GDP per capita, erasing the progress in poverty eradication since the tepid recovery from the 2008 crisis started in the mid-2010s.

Income inequality and enduring poverty exacerbates the impact of climate change on the poor, particularly those in developing countries. These make the extremely poor, virtually all of whom live in developing countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America,

much more vulnerable to the losses and damage that climate change results in. The lower levels of financing, technology, physical infrastructure and disaster preparedness and resilience that most developing countries experience due to their development circumstances pose greater challenges to climate change adaptation and long-term development resilience for these countries.

Both climate change and the global development gap have long historical roots stretching back to the Industrial Revolution in the global North that led to new productive industrial technologies powered using fossil fuels. This triggered rapid increases in industrial production which in turn led to rapid improvements in the living standards and incomes of people in those countries. However, this process was marked by increased levels of natural resource destruction and consumption, driving forward and subsequently sustained by colonial expansion and exploitation of the natural resources, territories and peoples of today's global South, and powered by a rapid shift to reliance on and the consumption of fossil fuels.

This is the reason why, in terms of historical contributions to the cumulative stock of anthropogenic emissions since 1850, today's developed countries (accounting historically for around 1/6 of the global population) emitted most (from more than half of all GHGs or around three-fourths of CO₂ emissions) of the anthropogenic GHGs in the atmosphere while today's developing countries (accounting historically for 5/6 of the global population) accounted for around one-fourth of CO₂ emissions or less than half of all GHG

emissions. Additionally, developed countries have fallen short in complying with their commitments to reduce emissions and to provide support to developing countries under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

Today, even as countries continue to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic and, in some cases, start to deal with the post-pandemic recovery phase, the urgency and the scale of the need to continue actions to combat climate change has remained. At current rates of anthropogenic greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from fossil fuel production and use, the remaining emissions budget commensurate with the 1.5°C aspiration under the Paris Agreement on Climate Change will be exceeded between 2025 and 2030. At the same time, the COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare and, in many cases exacerbated, long-standing structural economic conditions coming from colonization and deepened by globalization since the 1980s that have kept most developing countries continuously fossil-fuel dependent (whether in terms of imports, exports, or energy use) and with substantial levels of chronic poverty among their population.

International cooperation on climate change is supposed to take place on the basis of the UN Framework on Climate Change Convention (UNFCCC), which explicitly specifies:

The extent to which developing country Parties will effectively implement their commitments under the Convention will depend on the effective implementation by developed country Parties of their commitments under the Convention related to financial resources and transfer of technology and will take fully into account that economic and social development and poverty eradication are the first and overriding priorities of the developing country Parties.¹

This is rooted in the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities (CBDR) that is embedded in the Convention and which continues to be reflected in the Kyoto

Protocol and the Paris Agreement. CBDR reflects and seeks to make operational the concept that the global North has significant historical responsibilities for anthropogenic emissions stemming from their fossil fuel-powered development pathways over the past three centuries (including through colonialism) that enabled them to develop their economies. It recognizes that the economic, social, political and ecological inequities that both result from and characterize historical and current global economic and power relationships between developed and developing countries need to be adequately reflected and then addressed as an integral part of the climate change regime. This is the underlying conceptualization of climate justice.

Against the backdrop of increasing climate change impacts that inordinately adversely affect the poor, especially in developing countries and a potential deepening of the development gap and global inequality due to such climate change impacts, the COVID-19 pandemic and global economic recession, a more just and equitable approach to addressing climate change has to be undertaken. This approach is exemplified in, for example, the People's Demands for Climate Justice.²

First, developed countries should start phasing out and shifting subsidies and investments away from fossil fuel exploration, extraction and production (keeping fossil fuels in the ground) by 2020 and commit to transition rapidly to 100 percent use of clean and renewable energy by 2030; ban fracking and have a global moratorium on new fossil fuel exploration and extraction and on new coal projects; shut down fossil-fuel power plants as rapidly as possible and replace them with clean and renewable energy power plants; use both new and traditional technologies and methods to enhance energy efficiency in production and consumption; and increase electrification through clean and renewable energy. Their more diversified and developed economies, higher standards of living, higher consumption levels, and with greater levels of financial and technological resources to undertake economic diversification

1 UNFCCC, art. 4.7.

2 See <https://www.peoplesdemands.org/#read-the-demands-section>

better position developed countries to take the lead in this regard. Developing countries should be assisted through finance and technology from developed countries to make the transition as rapidly as possible within their own context, consistent with their sustainable development goals and with a just transition in terms of compensation for job loss.

Second, false solutions and narratives should be avoided in favor of real, just, feasible and essential solutions to the climate change crisis. Unproven or ineffective technologies such as geoengineering or the use of bioenergy with carbon capture and storage (BECCS) should be avoided; the use of clean and renewable energy technologies, appropriate to local conditions should be scaled up; energy efficiency should be enhanced; non-market regulatory and voluntary approaches to promote less per-capita energy and resource consumption and waste should be used; community-oriented and people-first approaches with respect to clean and renewable energy use, sustainable transportation, urban planning and design, sustainable agriculture (including for agroecology and food sovereignty), community-based ecological restoration and natural resource control and stopping the conversion of local agricultural lands to non-food production purposes should be prioritized; the use of carbon offset or trading arrangements or other corporate-driven market-based mechanisms that are not likely to deliver real-world emission reductions and which undermine human and indigenous rights should be avoided.

Third, long-standing emissions reduction, financing and technology transfer commitments by developed countries under the UNFCCC, the Kyoto Protocol, and the Paris Agreement must be fulfilled as soon as possible, ensuring that they are honoring their “fair share” in doing so. In particular:

- Developed countries should recognize and act on their greater historical responsibility for GHG emissions and greater capacity to undertake action through showing and implementing more ambitious domestic mitigation targets that are in accordance with science, equity, and the 1.5°C temperature limit, including through the rapid phase out of fossil fuels extraction and subsidies,
- with a view towards having negative emissions by mid-century;
- Developed countries should scale up the provision of climate financing to developing countries to at least US\$ 100 billion by the end of 2020 and increase that rapidly between 2020 to 2030, through new concrete pledges of public climate finance with a definite timeline for delivery, to approach a substantial fraction of the climate financing needs indicated by developing countries in their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs); provide increased resources to the Green Climate Finance and the Adaptation Fund to support developing countries; and provide scaled up adaptation financing and ensure protection to climate migrants and those impacted by climate change. Developed countries should also commit to provide reparations to those most affected and least responsible for climate change;
- Developed countries should support the creation, freeing up and mobilization of domestic financial resources in developing countries, including through, among other things, debt cancellation, controlling speculative and illicit financial flows, undertaking structural reforms in multilateral trade policies to support and enhance the policy space of developing countries to meet their sustainable development goals, and avoid unilateral trade protectionism and unilateral coercive economic measures;
- Developed countries should support changes to international policies and rules that create barriers to the access to and the faster dissemination of needed climate change-related technologies from developed to developing countries; enhance their provision of financing to support such transfer to and the endogenous development of climate change-related technologies in developing countries; ensure participatory and transparent assessment of all proposed climate technologies; rejecting barriers to technology transfer such as intellectual property rights and respecting and enabling non-corporate, community-led climate solutions that recognize and respect indigenous knowledge and rights. Additionally, a multilateral

technology framework should be adopted that recognizes the importance of endogenous and indigenous technologies and innovations in addressing climate change, and enables developing countries and communities to develop, access and transfer environmentally sound, socially acceptable, gender responsive and equitable climate technologies.

Fourth, multilateral climate change negotiations should be free from the influence of the profit-oriented multinational corporate sector. At the multilateral level, community and civil society organizations play important roles in providing information and context about the real-life and grassroots impacts of climate change and multilateral rules to the negotiators, and their spaces to do so should be fully supported and maximized. Corporate influence in the multilateral climate change negotiations should be curbed through advancing a conflict of interest policy to prevent corporations that profit from fossil fuels and the climate crisis from influencing international and national climate policy forums and from inserting themselves into the negotiations.