



Sri Lanka Civil society communication to the Government of Sri Lanka

on Climate change and proposed solutions

November 2010

Introduction

Civil society in Sri Lanka is very much concerned about climate change impacts not limited to increases of global temperature, unexpected natural disasters such as cyclones/typhoons/ hurricanes, sea level rise, high intensity rainfall, increases of warmer and drier days, melting glaciers, impacts on biodiversity which create negative consequences for life and livelihoods of the local communities in Sri Lanka as well. These impacts inequitably affect poor communities due to the lack of strong structures and facilities.

We also understand that most of the warming observed in the last 50 years is due to human activity that releases large amounts of carbon dioxide by burning of fossil fuel, mostly by the developed countries and industrial gases such as Nitrous oxide etc. Hydrocarbons are the main driving force of the globalized economy, where the extraction and control of fossil fuels has an intrinsic relationship with the networks of power that control the world through control over energy.

We are further aware that Sri Lanka currently releases only small quantities of Green House Gases compare to Annex 1 countries, but increasing its contribution by various development activities, including coal power plants proposed and under construction.

It is clear that climate change has adversely affects nature, environment, communities and the economy. The solutions are two folds i.e to reduce the emission of greenhouse gases and adapt to the impacts. We believe that only a radical global change from the current economic and development paradigm will be able to prevent the worst consequences of climate change, which threatens the lives of the world's most impoverished peoples first.

We believe Sri Lanka can gain many benefits by actively engage in Climate negotiations process.

- However, Sri Lanka has not played an adequate and active role at the Conference of Parties to the United Nations Conference of Climate Change (UNFCCC) held so far and;
- The process and the quality of the necessary communications to the UNFCCC, especially the quality of the second communication, is not satisfactory;
- We are further concerned about the lack of transparency and participation of civil society, local communities or their representatives at climate decision making in Sri Lanka.

We the undersigned representatives of the civil society organizations, community representatives and individuals call on the Government of Sri Lanka and the National delegation to the 16th Conference of Parties to the UNFCCC:

- To set up an independent Climate Change Commission or similar body directly under His Excellency the President to give the highest possible recognition to the climate plans and engagements, climate negotiations and involvement of all ministries relevant to affected sectors, mitigation, adaptation, disaster management, climate financing etc
- To involve a broad spectrum of civil society organizations, community representatives, academics and other relevant agencies and persons in responding to the climate impacts and producing climate solutions, Mitigation and adaptation strategies;
- To expand Sri Lanka's national delegation to future Conference of Parties(COP) by bringing in other line ministries, local experts and civil society members in order to obtain maximum benefits from the ongoing climate negotiations and lobby and work together with like minded countries and institutions;
- To properly study different proposals arising around the world such as Cochabamba Agreement which call for accepting recognition and defense of the Rights of Mother Earth to ensure harmony with nature and adopt supportive or opposing positions in consultation with the experts and civil society organizations in a transparent and participatory manner ;
- Fight for Climate Justice considering the fact that the reversal of the historical responsibility for human induced climate change through massive emission reductions in the Global North, reparation of the climate debt and equitable sharing of the Earth's resources in recognition of all peoples' and future generations' right to a dignified life within ecological limits;
- Adopt the position that developed countries should recognize that the failure to tackle climate change will result in massive human rights violations impacting on the world's most impoverished people and future generations. These include violations of such fundamental rights as the rights to life, food and property;
- To reject any market solution to climate change as any solution that will not mitigate the emission of green house gases; and



We further believe following positions with regard to the climate solutions

REDD: While understanding the role of Forests in absorbing CO₂ emissions, we question the Reduction of Emission from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD) or REDD plus in the light of its effectiveness to prevent dangerous climate change and land degradation, conserve biodiversity and safeguard the sustainable use of forests by local communities, Indigenous Peoples, and future generations. Any agreement must be designed to stop deforestation and degradation, not simply reduce or defer emissions.

Respect Indigenous People's Rights: Any agreement on forests that is not fully and explicitly in line with the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD) Expanded Program of Work on Forest Biodiversity and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and integrated with international and national implementation policies under these instruments, undermines good forest practice. Any agreement must be developed through a joint process with other relevant Forest Conventions and Human Rights Instruments and ensure full and effective participation of Indigenous Peoples and local communities.

Agro Fuel: Producing agro fuel is harmful to food sovereignty. The political proposal of community movements is the 'Defence of Food Sovereignty', expressed in the right of the Peoples' to control and decide on their food production, distribution and consumption policies, and whether or not to trade their agricultural surplus once the needs of the population had been secured. This should be done in accordance with their cultural and environmental practises.

Climate Finance: We support the legitimate demands from developing countries to get funding and technology transfer from developed countries to support developing country mitigation and adaptation needs. Climate finance should be used to create climate justice and foster people's sovereignty – communities' ability to sustainably manage their local resources including energy, forests and water. It should also prioritize local technologies and knowledge, and empower Indigenous Peoples, women, youth and other vulnerable populations.

Adaptation Funds: The establishment of the Kyoto Protocol Adaptation Fund in 2007 was an important step in terms of governance of a multilateral fund, with regional representation with the majority from developing countries. Additionally, the Fund allows direct access by eligible parties to funds so that they do not have to go through implementing agencies. However, the Global Environment Facility is not an appropriate Secretariat for the Fund, and a new Secretariat, such as the UNFCCC, should be identified immediately. Adequate monitoring and evaluation, by affected communities, of the operations of the Adaptation Fund are critical to ensuring that funds actually reach and assist the most vulnerable communities.

Ensure Human Rights: To protect the individuals, communities and peoples most vulnerable to climate change now and in the future, human rights protections must be integrated into all aspects of the climate agreement. The agreement should affirm that human beings have the fundamental right to freedom, equality and adequate conditions of life in an environment of a quality that permits a life of dignity and wellbeing, and recognize that the adverse effects of climate change have a range of direct and indirect implications for the full and effective enjoyment of human rights.



- **Climate Refugees:** Climate induced migration poses a massive and as yet unrecognised challenge for human kind. In addition to environmental factors, impacts of climate change would increase global migration flows significantly. The scale of migration and associated socio-economic disruptions goes far beyond the territorial limits and capacity. A mechanism to address the displacement of large numbers of climate refugees must be incorporated into adaptation funding, with Annex I countries providing the funding for relocation of displaced persons. People who are displaced from their homes as a result of climate change, either within their own country or into a different country, should also be given legal protection – including establishing of a legal definition - through the negotiation of a new international convention if necessary.
- **Emission cuts:** The obligations under both the Kyoto Protocol and the Convention are to be met without bargaining one against the other. We demand that industrialized countries must reduce their emissions domestically – without offsetting - by at least 40% by 2020. At the December 2007 climate talks in Bali, the Ad-hoc Working Group on the Kyoto Protocol recognized that to achieve the lowest stabilization level, Annex-1 parties as a group would be required to reduce emissions by a range of 25-40% below 1990 levels by 2020 which is based on the scientific findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).
- **Climate Debt:** Industrialized countries have accrued a climate debt to developing countries which must be reflected in ambitious emission reduction targets in Annex I countries, as well as financial and technology transfer support for mitigation and adaptation requirements in southern countries. The Convention recognizes the historical and current responsibility of developed countries to “take the lead” and also that developing countries’ ability to reduce emissions is dependent on developed countries meeting their commitments under the Convention related to financial resources and transfer of technology (Article 4.7).
- **Climate Justice:** In order for emission reductions to be fair, equitable and sustainable, excessive consumption must be reduced and lifestyles changed, especially by rich countries and rich elites. The political framework for these necessary genuine lifestyle changes must be set now in order to not increase the burden for impoverished people and future generations to tackle the problem of climate change and face its consequences.

