

# 1<sup>st</sup> Colombian Social Forum on Climate Change

Bogotá, 28<sup>th</sup> & 29<sup>th</sup> September 2009

## Final Declaration<sup>1</sup>

More than 40 social organisations representing *campesinos*<sup>2</sup>, indigenous, women's, afro-Colombian, student, environmental and urban groups came together as the 1<sup>st</sup> Colombian Social Forum on Climate Change which took place in Bogotá on the 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> September 2009. Through a process of sharing knowledge, experience and alternative models of resistance towards climate change, investigating false solutions and the economic model that has created this situation, we recognise that climate change in Colombia is expressed within the frame of human rights, cultural and environmental abuses, forced displacement, war over natural resources, and the lack of food sovereignty that affects the ability of men, women and above all children to meet their basic needs.

The population of Colombia has faced murder and forced displacement from vast areas of the country that are rich in environmental and cultural heritage. Many of these areas have been subject to deforestation due to the cultivation of biofuel crops and livestock, deterioration of ecosystems and natural resources, intensive fossil fuel extraction for the benefit of the few, destruction of ecosystems by industrial and illicit farming techniques, flooding, thawing and drought.

We recognise that governments, corporations and other protagonists that favour unjust economic and power relations are a part of this system. We denounce the current Colombian government and its biased support of this model. It proposes to; expand the area under biofuel cultivation to 3.5 million hectares; expand national oil production so it surpasses 1million barrels per day by 2013; expand the coal mining industry with 108,000 hectares of new mining operations – doubling the nation's coal output from 40 to 80million tonnes per year; and finally construct 6 new hydroelectric projects in the next 5 years making a total of 37 nationally.

Sources of energy, natural resources and territory are the objectives of the current model of development, which in turn generates war, pain and death. Colombia, with its militarization of civil society, is an example of this. The model that directs these interventions is economically, socially, environmentally and culturally unsustainable and has led us to a human crisis that is unparalleled in recent human history. We believe that no financial measure can solve this crisis.

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<sup>1</sup> Translation by Espacio-Bristol Colombia, [www.espacio.org.uk](http://www.espacio.org.uk)

<sup>2</sup> Translator's note: a 'campesino' is a small-scale farmer and can be translated as 'peasant'. Since 'peasant' tends to be used as an insult in English, we have avoided this translation in the report in order to avoid the negative connotations which might be interpreted erroneously by some English-speakers.

The measures that are presented as solutions to the environmental problems of the planet represent vested interests which perpetuate unsustainable models without solving the problems that they are supposed to be addressing. Governments, like the Colombian government, have found in the climate crisis yet another opportunity to promote projects that only benefit the few and that are detrimental to both human society and nature. Examples of this are biofuel crops, the implementation of which leaves a trail of human rights abuses, environmental crimes and food scarcity, and Carbon bonds that snatch away land and cultural rights from our indigenous communities, amongst others.

In this context of conflict and dispossession we have concluded that:

1) Climate Justice demands a dialogue over who are the groups that are directly responsible, and who are the principal victims of climate change, as those who are responsible must transform their consumerist lifestyles and the economic model they have imposed on society. Wealthier countries and sectors of society have created a huge ecological debt to the poorest countries and social sectors. We demand that this debt should be recognised! Indigenous, peasant and afro-Colombian communities have not needed so much energy and technology to live, in fact on the contrary they have developed their own sustainability projects that are 'living actions' on the road to climate justice.

2) Public and community policies should be planned and developed based in and on urban and rural community knowledge, in line with the principals of autonomy and community sovereignty over land and natural resources. Thus, plans and policies for sustainable and territorial development drawn up by communities must be respected and promoted, thereby recognising the cultural, social and environmental rights of these communities. Local, regional and national government must meet and be guided by these mandates, prioritizing the welfare of the most vulnerable groups.

3) Conservation and compensatory guidelines free from market mechanisms must be developed, recognising the environmental and social conditions necessary for mitigation and adaptation.

4) We urge government and civil society to promote, push forward and support in a clear way, the resistance to and transformation of the current socio-economic paradigm and its model of consumption, including energy, which has destroyed the balance between humanity and nature.

Bearing in mind these tendencies we demand:

1) Respect for and conservation of our cultural heritage, and life itself. We must avoid any negotiations over the ownership of nature and corporate abuse of rights. The interests of industry cannot be put before community rights!

2) A halt to dispossession legislation<sup>3</sup> that affects our sustainability; as is the case with the Mining Code, the Statute of Rural Development, The Forest Law and The Waters Law, amongst others. These laws must be revoked in order to construct a new vision that respects our rights.

3) Local and National government must comply with their obligations to defend natural resources for the good of society, and guarantee community sustainability and food sovereignty. Water and other natural resources are not a product, they are a right!

4) CO2 emissions should be reduced to a zero balance. We demand that the economic model be changed in such a way as to truly guarantee social and environmental sustainability.

5) Community initiatives for the protection of life and land, such as humanitarian zones, humanitarian refuges, biodiversity zones, areas of permanent assembly and Plans for Life should be respected and defended.

Thus we undertake to:

1) Promote educational strategies and strategies to find common ground in order to construct alternatives of justice with regards to climate change, we will strengthen the sense of ownership of the land, and recuperate our historical memory.

2) We shall seek to make visible, educate and appropriate on behalf of those communities, governments and individual protagonists who are denied a perspective of climate justice: Climate change fundamentally affects all of us, and we shall not leave our fate in the hands of technocrats and business.

3) Promote local community leadership; we shall employ strategies conceived of in our alternative proposals for the defence of life and land such as the humanitarian zones, humanitarian refuges, biodiversity zones, areas of permanent assembly and Plans for Life<sup>4</sup>.

4) We shall oppose all false solutions for climate change and continue to strengthen our rural and urban organisations and social networks, recovering the knowledge and practices of our ancestors that allow us to mitigate and avoid climatic disaster in our territory.

5) We shall seek mobilisation and to share experiences in order to construct strategies for climate justice now! To this end we have decided to create an open and transitory coordinating committee in order to promote, push forward and facilitate these processes and to actively integrate new communities and organisations into this process. Provisionally these organisations are: Asprosig, Asocampo, El Comun, La Comision de Vigilancia de Paramo El Almorzadero. Supported by: Asociacion Minga, Censat Agua Viva, Comision intereclesial de Justicia y Paz, Red Europea de Hermandad y Solidaridad por Colombia, el Colectivo de Abogados Luis Carlos Perez, and the support of Christian Aid.

6) This declaration will be conveyed to the Climate Justice Court in Cochabamba, Bolivia in October 2009. It will also be conveyed to the Minga of Social and Community

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3 Translator's Note: In Colombia, laws that cause dispossession are so common that they are called "dispossession legislation"

4 Translator's Note: Plans for Life (Planes de Vida) are community based proposals for local level models of society and economy, created in response to violently imposed external models of "development".

Resistance, 12th-16<sup>th</sup> October, which will be the first instance of national mobilisation for climate justice. The 12<sup>th</sup> December 2009 will be the second instance of mobilisation in conjunction with other international processes.

7) We call on all community and social organisations to participate in this initiative through the renewal of local, regional and national communications and in the promotion of and participation in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Gathering for Climate Justice which will take place in November 2009

Signatories:

Consejo Regional Indigena del Cauca (CRIC), Cabildo Genaro Sanchez, Pueblo Coconuco-CRIC, Ludoteca el Uval, Ascatidar, Asociacion Minga, Asouwa, Asocampo, Cabildo Poblazon-CRIC, Waya Wayuu, Agrovida, Cisca, Comité Prodefensa Taganga, Cabildo de Quintana, Cabildo Indigena de Purace, Corporacion Cactus, Asocampo, Red Distrital de Salud de las Mujeres, Christian Aid, Corporacion para la Asesoría y Capacitación Comunitaria COSPACC, Fundacion Huellas de Arte, Funsgo, Fedeagromisbol, Federacagrominera, Organizaciones Sociales de Arauca, Corporacion Colectivo de Abogados Luis Carlos Perez, Grupo Focal, Fundacion Filoikos, El Comun, Comision Paramo El Almorzadero, Comision Intereclesial de Justicia y Paz, Programa, Programa Conjunto de Adaptacion al Cambio Climatico del Macizo Colombiano, Asodemuc, CEPA, Red ITOCO – Pueblo Awa, Red Local Mujeres de Suba, Alcaldia de Sevilla, Union Sindical Obrera, Corporacion Aury Sara, Red de Hermandad y Solidaridad con Colombia, Fuerza Comun, Territorio Sur, DIAL, Lutheran World Relief, Asprocig, Observatorio de Conflictos Ambientales – Universidad de Caldas, Ascarnat, HJC, Asprocepaz, Acadips, Comunidad Vida y Trabajo La Balsita, Resguardo Indigena Bajo Atrato, Mesa de Organizaciones de Mujeres de Soacha, Curvarado, CAVIDA- Cacarica, Jiguamiando, Censat Agua Vida, Asored Alimentaria, Fundanhelo, Resguardo Indigena Peletara, Campaña Globalizacion, Niñez, Diversidad Cultural y Biológica, Acción Climática, Movimiento por la Defensa de Sogomasa.