

A CALL FROM THE SOUTH: NORTH NEEDS TO COOL IT

Peoples' Statement on Climate Change

Jointly issued by Tamil Nadu Environment Council (TNEC) and EQUATIONS, India
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Impact of climate change in Indian context - an overview

In India, the key, and surely not exhaustive, impacts of climate change are:

- Because of 2.5 to 5°C rise in mean surface temperature, northern India will be warmer
- 20% rise in summer monsoon rainfall
- All states will have increased rainfall except Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, where it will decrease
- Drought and flood intensity will increase. Krishna, Narmada, Cauvery, Tapti river basins will experience severe water stress and drought condition and Mahanadi, Godavari, Brahmani will experience enhanced flood.
- Crop yield will decrease. Prediction of loss of wheat is more. Rabi crops will be worse hit, which threatens food security. Coastal agriculture suffers most in Gujarat, Maharashtra and Karnataka. Punjab, Haryana, Western Uttar Pradesh will face reduction in yield.
- Frequencies and intensities of tropical cyclones in Bay of Bengal will increase particularly in the post-monsoon period and flooding will increase in low-lying coastal areas. The recent IPCC report has projected a global mean sea level rise of 0.59 m by the end of the 21st century. In the absence of protection, the mean sea level rise itself can inundate a large portion of predominantly agricultural land on the coast, and the surviving coastline faces the threat of extreme storm surges.
- Malaria will continue to be endemic in current malaria prone States of Orissa, West Bengal and southern parts of Assam. It may shift from the central Indian region to the south-western coastal States of Maharashtra, Karnataka and Kerala. New regions - Himachal Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram will become malaria prone.
- The UN panel report warns that glaciers across the Himalayas are melting at an alarming rate and may disappear altogether by 2035. One of the most iconic of Indian glaciers is the majestic Gangotri glacier in Uttarkashi District of Uttarakhand; is a major source of fresh water to the Ganga. In recent times, the 30 km-long glacier has shown considerable recession. Satellite data has shown that the rate of retreat in the last three decades has been more than three times the rate during the earlier 200 years or so.
- In the fast few decades, continuous impact on the environmental landscape particularly in the Himalayas in the form of land-use practices such as water diversions; deforestation, agriculture and industrialisation etc. have caused large scale impacts on the watersheds of the region. Global warming will further accelerate the adverse impacts on these regions.
- The cities of Chennai, Mumbai are in the list of cities to be affected (immersed in the sea) by global warming. India is in fact one of the 27 countries identified by the UNEP as being most vulnerable to sea level rise.
- The world famous Kashmir Dal Lake, which was once in 30 sq. km., has now shrunk to half.
- In the event of any environmental disaster, it has been our experience corroborated by the tsunami of December 2004 that hit the Indian coastline, that the weaker and marginalised sections of the society are the worst hit. First of all the coastal community, comprising of fisherfolks, agrarian communities and others will be the most affected followed by those living in high ranges. Due to climate change, women, children, the aged, Dalits, and indigenous communities will be the ones severely affected.

With impacts of these magnitudes being experienced not only in India but in many parts of the world, it is imperative to review current mechanisms of mitigation and adaptation, and

adopt more viable options that prioritise concerns of affected peoples and changing ecological landscapes over all other considerations economic and so on. It is a question of the very existence and survival of humans and other living organisms, which is threatened by climate change. Climate change should be addressed by weighing existence against unrestrained development.

A CRITIQUE OF MECHANISMS TO COMBAT CLIMATE CHANGE & PROPOSAL OF VIABLE OPTIONS

Market Based Measures

- **Carbon trading:** We reject the claim that carbon trading will halt the climate crisis. This crisis has been caused more than anything else by the mining of fossil fuels and release of their carbon to the oceans, air, soil and living things. The excessive burning of fossil fuels is now jeopardising Earth's ability to maintain a liveable environment.
- Carbon trading falls in line with a "market history" that has been created to construct the carbon market and it is attempting to turn the earth's carbon-cycling capacity into property to be bought or sold in a global market.
- The natural processes that can support a climate conducive to life and human societies are now passing into the same corporate hands that are destroying them. Carbon trading will not contribute to achieving climate protection; it is a false solution which entrenches and magnifies social inequalities in many ways.
- Further, delays are being caused in ending fossil fuel extraction by corporate, government and United Nations' through attempts to construct the "carbon market", which has also seen attempts to commodify land, food, labour, forests, water, genes and ideas.
- **Carbon-offsets:** such as large scale tree monocultures are not solutions; moreover they worsen the loss of biodiversity.
- **Tourism:** Other market based conservation mechanisms like ecotourism need to be regulated and discouraged. First of all, it is yet to be seen that these mechanisms aid conservation and benefit communities. In addition, such measures lead to more tourists taking long-haul flights to reach exotic destinations that are more often located in ecologically sensitive areas. Aviation industry currently contributes to 5% of total GHGs. However, with expanding fleets of national & private carriers, and entry of cheap fare domestic carriers, the aviation industry is set to go well beyond the 5% mark. It is often argued that there are many communities in the world whose livelihoods depend on tourism thereby attempting to provide a justification to increased air travel. Local communities dependent on tourism as the main economic activity should rethink their disproportionate reliance on tourism that leaves them extremely vulnerable and revert to sustainable forms of livelihoods.

We seek an end to all market based mechanisms, including those for conservation, and especially to the carbon markets and carbon credit mechanisms. The solution to climate change cannot be left to the market system or to an artificial carbon market, which is infested with vested interests

Promotion of Agrofuels

- Along the lines of other developing countries like Brazil, the Govt. of India has stated that 14 million hectares of *jatropha* plantations will be created for producing agrofuels on "degraded" and "barren" lands. Many rural communities, especially pastoralists peoples are being threatened as their lands are being classified as "degraded" lands and subsequently destined for large-scale agrofuel plantations.
- Apart from large scale use of pesticides and fertilisers that may cause irreversible damage to precious land resources, these plantations are bound to use up already

strained freshwater resources. Demand for water is growing along with the economy. Agrofuel plantations will only increase competition for water, and ultimately impact food resources.

We demand that degraded lands be allowed to regenerate and restored to their original forms, rather than handing over to private corporations or being planted with monocultures and plantations.

We seek a ban on any scale of monocultures and plantations for the sake of agrofuel production.

We recognize that the local production and consumption of biomass plays an important role in sustainable livelihood strategies of, in particular, rural women in developing countries. Certain small-scale and strictly regulated sustainable forms of agrofuel production can be beneficial at the national level.

However, the modalities of biomass consumption and production must be carefully analyzed in conjunction with communities. Adaptive measures need to be introduced to maintain and enhance sustainability patterns. Negative impacts on health and adverse effects of increased demands when socio-economic settings change should be avoided.

Polluter Pays Principle

- Principles such as polluters pay have not worked for us. Industries continue to pollute the environment, for which they pay a price for it. In almost all cases, the amount is a pittance compared to the long term damage that continues to damage the environment and lives of people that depend on the resources for their subsistence.

We seek alternative mechanisms that really ensure clean development and rigorous implementation of process like environmental impact assessments, public hearings and consent of local governing bodies in the ambit of constitutional provisions.

Clean Development Mechanism

- The CDM was put into place to help achieve sustainable development but it is in fact an 'aid' to enable industrialised countries to fulfil their commitments to reduce emissions as established in the Kyoto Protocol. It allows afforestation, reforestation and avoided deforestation from 1990, to be exchanged for emissions. The mechanism also accepts large hydropower projects as "clean development" despite their notorious adverse impacts on forests and traditional communities, who have often been displaced from their original forestlands.
- The CDM allows greenhouse gas reduction projects, including carbon sinks, to get carbon credits which can then be used by countries to comply with their Kyoto obligations or by companies to comply with emissions trading schemes, such as the EU scheme.
- India is one of the top destinations globally in the growing carbon market. In exchange for carbon trade projects in India, wealthy polluters in the North are able to avoid restrictions on their own emissions. Rather than financing "clean development" projects as promised, many of these trades are cheap, dirty, and harmful to the rural poor. Fast-growing eucalyptus plantations are displacing farmers from their land and tribals from their forests. These carbon trades are not helping finance clean energy and development for India's rural poor.

Different approaches for North and South countries needed

- As has been said again and again in various spaces, we wish to reiterate that there has to be an agreement on the "burden-sharing" principles between the North and South in mitigating climate change impacts. North countries have a primary responsibility for historical and continuing greenhouse gas emissions. In addition, the North countries also need to take responsibility for the emissions of developing countries since they made developing countries adopt their model of economic development.

The fundamental injustice caused by polluters that have damaged the global ecosystems held in common and the detrimental effects of uncurbed “development” and consumption of industrialised countries on some of the poorest countries and communities needs to be recognised. Therefore, Northern countries that have sufficient wealth, also through appropriating resources from the South, need to contribute funds for improving conditions of affected peoples. This is a human rights issue and needs to be looked beyond notions of charity and aid.

- Wealthy north countries continue to consume a disproportionate share of the world’s energy resources and are most responsible for global climate change impacts. However, the developing countries of south are most likely to bear the brunt.
- International trade policies worsens poverty and increases inequity e.g. through displacement of small and medium scale enterprises in agricultural and other economic sectors. They also increase loss of control and access over natural resources to large, foreign and multinational companies. The ‘free trade’ policies thus enhance vulnerability of the poor to adapt or be resilient to climate change impacts because they lose out on or lack resources. Therefore, there is a need to have coherent policies at both the international and national levels.
- In relation to the international level, policy coherence is critical in the WTO, IMF and the World Bank with the fulfilment of human, civil, politics, economics, social, and cultural rights as well as with the climate change regime and sustainable development. Coherence should be around sustainable development and climate change and not around trade. This also requires coherence in developed country policies as well.
- Instead of advancing such coherence, mercantilist policies are being pursued through the international financial institutions with aid conditionalities, and in the WTO and Free Trade Agreements to open up the economies of developing countries that undermine sustainable development.
- There is a need to solve the problem of debts of developing countries. The payments of these debts have long been done by damaging natural resources and social support systems of communities leaving them vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.
- Moreover, for developing countries to undertake a mitigation pathway that enables the rapid domestic deployment of climate friendly technologies, requires changes to the way in which technology transfer is managed and governed. Many people in the south believe that there cannot be a strict requirement to comply with intellectual property rights that profits monopolies if they are to succeed. A way must be found to breakdown the barriers to rapid deployment of clean technologies that the poor can afford.
- It is also fundamental to undertake lifestyle changes especially in the North and among the elites of the South at the expenses of natural resources and majority of poor populations. We cannot afford to maintain the position that lifestyles of the rich are not up for negotiation.
- In relation to the technology options for mitigation, we have very serious concerns over nuclear energy, genetically modified trees, carbon capture and storage and agrofuels for environmental and safety reasons. We consider that these are not ways out to combat global warming, but endangering environment and poor populations.

Adaptation means promoting human development and social justice amongst those most affected while concurrently tackling the detrimental effects of global warming. The really vulnerable are those already living on the edge, those who are excluded from various political practices and processes and hoodwinked in the way that international policies and national mitigation practices and polices are being drafted and implemented. We call upon all Governments, export credit agencies, corporations and international financial institutions that continue to support and finance fossil fuel exploration, extraction and other activities that worsen global warming, such as forest degradation

and destruction on a massive scale, while dedicating only token sums to renewable energy, to discontinue their support with immediate effect. We call upon wealthy nations to reduce consumption of energy through strict and extensive conservation measures, and to develop more benign energy alternatives, such as solar and wind.

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Tamil Nadu Environment Council (TNEC) is an advocacy and campaigning network of about 600 NGOs, peoples' organisations, consumer organisations, academicians and scientists based in South Indian state of Tamil Nadu. TNEC emerged as a response to the call of the Rio Declaration in 1992 and has played an active role in the last decade to bring environmental issues both in People's Organisations and Governments' agendas. Its focus has been to promote a holistic perspective of sustainable development. It has been involved with monitoring and creating alternative discourses on the implementation of the Rio Declaration and Agenda 21 in the context of Tamil Nadu. TNEC has been active in areas of building awareness on unsustainable practices and mobilising grassroots campaigns against environmental pollution and degradation, and protection of important landscapes. TNEC is involved in publishing and disseminating status reports on Tamil Nadu's State of Environment. It is currently engaged in documenting status of rivers and wetlands in Tamil Nadu. TNEC has also planned to focus on the issue of climate change / global warming and in the coming years, it is planning to organise a state level *Yathra* (peoples' rally) focussing on the environmental issues, especially climate change. The purpose is to highlight inter-linkages between hills, plains comprising of such ecosystems as grasslands, wetlands, agro and coastal ecosystems, which are contiguous.

In the context of climate change, TNEC has been working with other civil society organisations at state and national level and is currently active in facilitating awareness and capacity building at grassroots and governance levels.

EQUATIONS was founded in 1985 in response to an urge to understand the impacts of development particularly in the context of liberalised trade regimes, the opening up of national economy, New Economic Polices and structural adjustments and the beginning of economic reforms.

Our Vision

We envision tourism that is non-exploitative, where decision-making is democratised and access to and benefits of tourism are equitably distributed. We endorse justice, equity, people centred and movement centred activism, democratisation and dialogue as our core values.

Campaigning and advocacy on tourism and development issues in India, in recent years our work has focused on women and tourism, the child and tourism, ecosystems, communities and tourism and globalization. We have made policy interventions at the micro and macro level in these areas.

Our interventions have been intensive in the Southern states of India, and we have made significant interventions in the newly emerging tribal states and the North Eastern parts of India, rich in natural resources, where an unbridled tourism is often banked on as the inevitable engine of growth without heed to its consequences.



Tamil Nadu Environment Council (TNEC)

98A, Kooturavu Nagar

Dindigul - 624005

Tamil Nadu, INDIA

Phone: +91 451 2431090

Fax: +91 451 2431040

Mobile: +91 94430 32424

E-mail: tneindia@yahoo.com, tonyind13@yahoo.com



Equations

#415, 2-C Cross, OMBR Layout

Banaswadi, Bangalore 560075

Karnataka, INDIA

Tel: +91 80 25457607 / 25457659

Fax: +91 80 25457665

Email: info@equitabletourism.org

URL: www.equitabletourism.org