

Meeting of the Council of the Socialist International
Luanda, 27-28 November 2015

Declaration on climate change and COP 21

Following discussions on climate change and the COP21 Summit at the Council meeting of the Socialist International in Luanda, delegates recognised the growing acknowledgement of climate change as the single greatest threat to the future of humanity, and the need for urgent and meaningful action from all the nations of the world. The Paris Summit may well be the last opportunity to avert a global catastrophe and the Council outlined the vision of the Socialist International for a universal binding agreement, common commitments, differentiated demands and precise objectives, calling for:

1. More ambitious emissions targets to restrict global temperature rise to 2C;
2. An outcome centred on climate justice;
3. Financing for the Green Climate Fund to 2020 and beyond;
4. Extra assistance for adaptation measures in countries already suffering the effects of climate change;
5. An end to fossil fuel subsidies;
6. Concerted action to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation;
7. Initiatives in favour of more efficient agriculture and responsible consumption;
8. The introduction of a global carbon tax;
9. A climate agreement in harmony with the Global Goals;
10. Robust measurement, reporting and verification of progress towards emissions reduction targets.
11. The Socialist International, its member parties and Council delegates to take concrete actions to reduce their own environmental impact.
12. Representatives of SI member parties to take the lead in Paris.

1. Current commitments are not enough

The UN has received emissions targets in the form of Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) from countries responsible for more than 90 per cent of global emissions, which indicates a willingness from the majority of nations and governments to work towards a global agreement in Paris. However, the pledges made are only enough to limit the global rise in temperature to 2.7° to 3°C, a level far in excess of the goal of 2°C set out in the Copenhagen agreement. Ambition needs to be raised, and any agreement in Paris needs at a minimum to include mechanisms for the upward revision of emissions targets if we are to have any chance of meeting the 2°C target for global temperature rise. This means the establishment of a five-yearly cycle under which countries have an obligation to ratchet up their commitments, making progressively tighter emissions reductions. Countries need to supplement their commitments by developing and adopting Deep Decarbonization Pathways (DDP) in order to guarantee a zero carbon future for the planet.

2. Climate justice and common but differentiated responsibilities

The principle of climate justice originates within our movement and has always been at the heart of our climate policy. The SI continues to support the principle of common but differentiated

responsibilities, in recognition of the duty of developed countries to do more and go further in their commitments as a result of their historical responsibility for greenhouse gas emissions.

3. Financing and the Green Climate Fund

One potential obstacle to ambitious targets is the issue of finance. The Green Climate Fund (GCF), which sets aside finances for climate change mitigation and adaptation, is therefore a crucial plank of any climate agreement. Though important steps have been taken to secure initial funding for the GCF, the total pledged is nowhere near enough and the agreements reached in Lima at COP20 do not set out a clear time frame for the scaling up of funds. The gap between the amount currently pledged and the \$100 billion per year promised after 2020 needs to be bridged. The lack of a clear pathway has been interpreted by some developing country partners as a sign of a lack of commitment to the GCF by Annex I parties. Without significant progress, the negotiations in Paris will take place in an atmosphere of mistrust from those countries that will be depending on the fund in the years to come. An agreement on where the funding will come from post-2020 is therefore indispensable for an agreement with the necessary level of ambition.

4. Extra help for adaptation where it is already needed

It is important to recognise that the effects of climate change are already being felt in many countries, and disproportionately so in the world's least developed economies. It is therefore necessary to ensure that adequate funding is given not only to climate mitigation, but also adaptation. The regrettable need to invest in costly measures to mitigate against the effects of climate change in vulnerable areas should serve as a wake-up call that failure to act now, while there remains a chance to avert extreme climate change, will prove much more costly in the long-term.

5. End fossil fuel subsidies

If goals to reduce carbon emissions are to be met, it is imperative that our dependence on fossil fuels is ended. For this to be achieved, it will be necessary to begin the process of systematically abolishing all fossil fuel subsidies, which encourage overconsumption of energy and are a great obstacle to progress. This needs to be a carefully managed process, implemented in such a way as not to harm development. The objective should be to replace fossil fuel subsidies with clean energy subsidies, through investments in the green economy that will provide long-term benefits both economically and environmentally.

6. Reduce emissions from forestry (REDD+)

The agreement reached at COP21 must bring about reductions in greenhouse gas emissions from all sectors, including deforestation and forest degradation, which account for nearly 20 per cent of the global total. We reiterate our support for the REDD+ mechanism, which aims to create a financial value for the carbon stored in forests, and offer incentives for developing countries to reduce emissions from forested lands through investment in low-carbon paths to achieve more sustainable development. REDD+ further includes the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks.

7. Reduce emissions from agriculture

Reducing emissions from agriculture has a significant environmental benefit, as the sector is directly responsible for more than 10 per cent of all human-caused greenhouse gas emissions. Emissions reduction measures can also improve efficiency, which reduces costs and saves money. Work also needs to be done on public awareness of the importance of emissions from the production of the food we eat, in order that consumers are able to make better and more environmentally sound choices.

8. A global carbon tax

A global tax on carbon would encourage governments, businesses and citizens to reduce their reliance on carbon emitting resources. The proceeds of such a tax could be used to enormous benefit, for reducing the cost of energy from alternative sources, financing climate change mitigation and adaptation measure and promoting sustainable development as a route to ending poverty. Creating a relationship between the carbon cost of the food we eat and its monetary cost would also be an effective tool to encourage the switch to a more environmentally sustainable diet.

9. An outcome that reflects the Global Goals

Our vision of a sustainable future equally includes the pursuit of the Global Goals, which were agreed at the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit in New York in September. Achievement of goals on eradicating poverty, reducing inequality, achieving gender equality and building a more secure world go hand in hand with a willingness to tackle climate change, which can exacerbate many of the difficulties faced in the developing world.

10. Measurement, reporting and verification

Previous attempts to reach an agreement have met difficulties in part because of a lack of confidence that countries are sincere in their commitments to reduce emissions. For this reason a robust system of measurement, reporting and verification (MRV) is needed, Where developing economy nations lack the capability to effectively and accurately measure their emissions, technological and logistical resources and expertise should be shared to enable MRV.

11. Individual responsibility

The SI Council feels that the fight to prevent irreversible climate change is important from a personal as well as a political and governmental perspective. For this reason, SI member parties resolve to take concrete actions to reduce their impact on the environment and encourage their members to do the same. In this way, our movement can lead by example in its actions as well as its policies. In line with this commitment the Socialist International will seek to reduce the environmental impact of its own meetings, exploring ways to reduce the use of printed materials through electronic distribution of documents.

12. Taking the lead at COP21

Without strong commitments in Paris, the future of the planet looks bleak. We believe that by following the above framework, COP21 can be the moment when the world unites to move towards a sustainable world society. The Council therefore particularly calls on SI member parties who are in government to work tirelessly at the summit for an outcome built on social democratic ideals.
