

Climate Justice in Durban:

Climate Justice is the new global movement facing the greatest challenge in human history, because **failure** is the only way to summarize 16 years of talk by United Nations negotiators from national states influenced by fossil-fuel-dependent capital (and the big Environmental NGOs with which they work).

As the world will learn, the **South African state also exemplifies climate injustice**. Vast CO2 emissions are caused by provision of the world's cheapest electricity to the world's biggest mining and metals corporations (BHP Billiton and Anglo American), which in turn permanently degrade our water resources and pollute the air. Opportunities for Green Jobs and renewable energy are ignored. Meanwhile, electricity disconnections affect millions of low-income people each year. And President Jacob Zuma was one of the five 'leaders' who signed the unfair, unambitious and non-binding Copenhagen Accord last year.

Yet from the standpoint of justice, the choice of the International Convention Centre in Durban, South Africa to host the Conference of the Parties 17 (starting on 28 November 2011) is a good one, as some of the country's leading environmental, social and labour struggles are underway here.

Welcome to Durban, where activists' critiques of incompetent global elites are well-rehearsed. The UN World Conference Against Apartheid and Racism was held in 2001 and attracted 15,000 protesters on August 31, because under Washington's influence, the UN refused to put onto the agenda either Israeli racism/apartheid against Palestine or Western reparations for centuries of slavery, colonialism and apartheid.

Exactly a year later, at the Johannesburg **World Summit on Sustainable Development**, 30,000 activists marched 12km to protest the UN's commodification of nature: 'Bluewashing' of corporate polluters through the Global Compact, 'Type Two Partnerships' with multinational capital, promotion of neoliberal social and economic policies, and endorsement of water privatization and 'Clean Development Mechanism' carbon trading.

Other protests were held at the Durban ICC against the World Economic Forum and the neoliberal 'New Partnership for Africa's Development'.

The history of eco-social solidarity is rich. South Africans and our international allies fought racial apartheid until 1994. They next tackled denial

build our movement for COP 17!

of access to cheap anti-retroviral AIDS medicines by Big Pharma, the World Trade Organisation and the Clinton and Mbeki governments.

History was made here even earlier. South Africa's modern **trade union movement** began at Africa's largest harbour in 1973. The rise of South Africa's '**new urban social movements**' began in the Durban neighbourhood of Chatsworth in 1998. The first South African **critiques of AIDS denialism** took form at the Durban ICC AIDS conference in 2000.

Climate is a sore spot because of the **intense emissions and air pollution** in Durban. The **Durban Group for Climate Justice** was founded in 2004 and continues today as a source of critical information about 'false solutions'. One of the highest-profile fights against carbon trading was waged at Durban's **environmentally-racist Bisasar Road landfill** (Africa's largest) in the mid-2000s, resulting in a World Bank retreat from project financing in 2005.

In 2009, a major climate summit was hosted by the **South Durban Community Environmental Alliance**, an activist group which also organized the first protests against the World Bank's 2010 decision to fund the **Medupi coal-fired power plant** with its biggest-ever project loan (\$3.75 billion). Activism continues in South Durban, one of the world's most dangerous petrochemical complexes, including one of the '**1000 Cancuns**' on December 4.

The other main South African cities also have regular protests on climate, energy and related issues. On December 2 there were 14 arrests at an **Earthlife Africa Joburg protest** against the state's energy policy. Regular demonstrations are held at Eskom and Sasol, SA's two largest emitters.

South African activists founded **Climate Justice Now! SA** in 2009, and in early 2011 will announce hosting and activist strategies for the year ahead. The **Centre for Civil Society** at the University of KwaZulu-Natal is hosting several Climate Camps in 2011. **SDCEA, groundWork, Earthlife eThekweni, 350.org, the Diakonia faith and justice centre, Ecopeace and many allied community, environmental and labour groups** will ensure that delegates to the COP 17 get the message: cut a genuine deal or face South Africa's famed social protests, amongst the world's most militant and prolific.

Join us for a crucial moment in socio-environmental history!

For more, see ccs.ukzn.ac.za, www.sdcea.co.za, www.groundwork.org.za

What is Climate Justice?

Principles and demands articulated at Rights of Mother Earth conference, Cochabamba, 2010

- 50 percent reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 2017
- stabilising temperature rises to 1C and 300 Parts Per Million
- acknowledging the climate debt owed by developed countries
- full respect for Human Rights and the inherent rights of indigenous people
- universal declaration of rights of Mother Earth to ensure harmony with nature
- establishment of an International Court of Climate Justice
- rejection of carbon markets and commodification of nature & forests through REDD
- promotion of measures that change the consumption patterns of developed countries
- end of intellectual property rights for technologies useful for mitigating climate change
- payment of 6 percent of developed countries' GDP to addressing climate change



Dennis Brutus

Our local-global inspirations:
Durban was home to eco-social justice visionaries who died in the past year: Dennis Brutus (26 December 2009) and Fatima Meer (12 March 2010). Durban social movements held several memorial ceremonies in 2010. The two would have insisted on the most critical, vigorous engagements with the COP 17 elites.



Fatima Meer