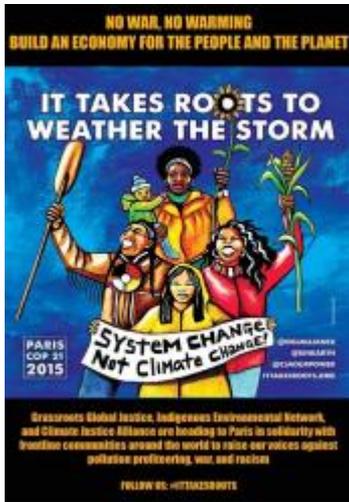


Paris Deal: Epic Fail on a Planetary Scale



The Paris Agreement is being hailed as a great success. But will it deliver climate justice? After two weeks of tortuous negotiations – well, 21 years, really – governments announced the Paris Agreement. This brand new climate deal will kick in in 2020. But is it really as ‘ambitious’ as the French government is claiming? Before the talks began, social movements, environmental groups, and trade unions around the world came together and agreed on a set of criteria that the Paris deal would need to meet in order to be effective and fair. This ‘People’s Test’ is based on climate science and the needs of communities affected by climate change and other injustices across the globe. To meet the People’s Test, the Paris deal would need to do the following four things: 1. Catalyze immediate, urgent and drastic emission reductions; 2. Provide adequate support for transformation; 3. Deliver justice for impacted people; 4. Focus on genuine, effective action rather than false solutions; Does the deal pass the test? The 15,000 people who took to the Paris streets today (Dec 12, 2015) to condemn the agreement clearly didn’t think so. Here’s New Internationalist’s (NI) assessment. Test 1. Catalyze immediate, urgent and drastic emission reductions: ‘In line with what science and equity require, deliver urgent short-

term actions, building towards a long-term goal that is agreed in Paris, that shift us away from dirty energy, marking the beginning of the end of fossil fuels globally, and that keep the global temperature goal in reach.' NI assessment: Fail. The Paris Agreement aims to keep the global average temperature rise to 'well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C.' But the emission cuts contained in the agreement are based on voluntary pledges called 'Intended Nationally Determined Contributions' (INDCs) that governments drew up individually before the talks, based on what they were prepared to deliver, not what science or equity demanded. These cuts have now become an official part of the deal, but go nowhere near far enough to achieve a 1.5°, or even a 2° goal, and the agreement does not require these targets to be re-examined until 2020. In the words of Asad Rehman from the Global Campaign to Demand Climate Justice, 'This agreement is a great escape for the big polluters, and a poisoned chalice for the poor. We've got some warm words about temperature levels, but no concrete action. Rich countries aren't pledging to do any more about their inadequate emissions reduction targets which are going to lead us to 3.7° warming of the planet. None of the developed countries are doing their fair share to reduce their emissions and move away from dirty energy.' This agreement is a great escape for the big polluters, and a poisoned chalice for the poor According to Kevin Anderson, Deputy Director of the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research, 'The Copenhagen text included aviation and shipping emissions, that together are as large as the emissions of Britain and Germany combined, but they are not mentioned in the Paris text.' Overall, he says, the agreement 'is weaker than Copenhagen' and 'not consistent with the latest science'. The Paris deal requires no emissions reductions from countries before 2020. Steffen Kallbekken, Director of the Centre for International Climate and Energy Policy, explains that 'by the time the pledges come into force in 2020, we will probably have used the entire carbon budget

consistent with 1.5°C warming. If we stick with the INDCs we will have warming between 2.7°C and 3.7°C.’ In order to have a decent chance of reaching that 1.5° target, we need to keep at least 80 percent of known fossil fuels in the ground, and urgently halt the exploration and extraction of new sources. We need to stop deforestation and reduce other greenhouse gases such as methane, by tackling major drivers such as the growth of animal agriculture. But the Paris agreement contains no mention of the words ‘fossil fuel’ – no coal, no oil, no gas – and not a whisper about the livestock, palm oil and other industries driving deforestation either. ‘Our survival is non-negotiable. But after all the hype about high ambition and the 1.5°C aspirational limit for global warming, the final version of the climate agreement is sentencing us to even more deaths and destruction’ said Lidy Nacpil, coordinator of the Asian Peoples’ Movement on Debt and Development (APMDD).

Test 2. Provide adequate support for transformation: ‘Ensure that the resources needed, such as public finance and technology transfer, are provided to support the transformation, especially in vulnerable and poor countries.’ NI assessment: Fail. According to the International Energy Agency, the transformation to a fossil-free world will require \$1,000 billion per year by 2020. Around two-thirds of this – so \$670 billion – will need to be spent in developing nations, hence the need for a significant transfer of finance from North to South. This is only fair, because industrialized nations have grown so wealthy by burning fossil fuels for the last 200 years; countries containing just 10 percent of the world’s population are responsible for around 60 percent of the greenhouse gases currently in the atmosphere. However, the Paris Agreement only commits to ‘mobilizing’ \$100 billion per year by 2020, to cover not just emission cuts but also adaptation (see 3, below). This is far short of the support required, and there is no firm commitment to increase this figure, merely an aspiration to review it by 2025. Meanwhile, the definition of ‘mobilize’ is purposefully broad, to include loans, private finance, grants with strings attached, and the

reallocation of aid budgets. There has even been talk of calling the money sent home by migrants working in richer countries a form of climate finance, and counting it towards the total 'mobilized' by those rich countries. This is inadequate and mean, especially given that governments spend an estimated \$5,300 billion per year on direct and indirect subsidies to fossil fuels. Janet Redman, Director of the Climate Program at the Institute for Policy Studies, puts the finance required in perspective: 'We spend \$2,000 billion a year on our military and mobilized \$14,000 billion to bail out banks. Wealthy nations have to shift money from banks and tanks to clean energy and climate resilience.' Test 3. Deliver justice for impacted people: 'Enhance the support for adaptation in a new climate regime, ensure that there will be a separate mechanism to provide reparations for any loss and damage that goes beyond our ability to adapt, and make a firm commitment to secure workers' livelihoods and jobs through a Just Transition.' NI assessment: Fail. According to the UN Environment Programme, on top of the \$670 billion needed for emissions cuts per year by 2020, vulnerable countries will also need around \$150 billion per year for adaptation measures to protect them from the worst impacts of climate change. That's more than \$800 billion per year in total – so the \$100 billion 'finance floor' represents less than 15 percent of what is actually needed. Developed countries have done the most to cause the problem, and therefore have the responsibility to solve it, but this crucial principle (known as 'Common but differentiated responsibility') has been watered down in the Paris text at the behest of the US and other industrialized nations. Rather than a clear statement that richer countries should provide finance to poorer nations for adaptation, the Paris deal just says that developed countries should 'take the lead' on providing finance, as part of a 'shared effort' by all parties. While the US and some NGOs have been quick to blame developing countries for not pulling their weight in the agreement, the 'Fair Shares: A Civil Society Equity Review of INDCs' report, from climate

justice organizations, social movements, faith groups, trade unions, environmental and development organizations, shows that the opposite is true. Many developing countries are pledging to do more than their 'fair share' to cut emissions while rich countries are dragging their feet. The US and its allies do not want to pay for loss and damages which countries like mine are already experiencing. Furthermore, as climate change is already happening, many countries are already being hit by devastating floods, storms and droughts. These will continue – and worsen – for many years, even if the world succeeds in keeping temperature rises below 1.5 degrees. They deserve compensation and financial support to deal with the loss and damage caused by rich countries' pollution. But the Paris Agreement denies them this by introducing a clause that says the deal provides 'no basis for any liability or compensation'. Many climate-vulnerable nations fought hard for the right to compensation, but were bullied, bribed and browbeaten by the US and EU into accepting this clause. As Asad Rehman puts it, 'the EU, the US, and the umbrella group of rich countries have imposed a clause which absolves them of the legal, moral and political responsibility for the carbon pollution that they've created and that has devastated the lives and livelihoods of millions of people.' Magline Peter, an Indian fisherfolk leader whose flight to Paris was delayed because of the floods in Chennai, also denounces this clause. 'The US and its allies do not want to pay for loss and damages which countries like mine are already experiencing, whether through rising sea levels or freak floods, like the latest in Chennai. It's absurd to see these developed countries continue to blame India for blocking a fair and just climate agreement.' The concept of a just transition – that governments should provide training and financial support to ensure that workers in the fossil fuel industry can find alternative employment in the shift to a zero-carbon world – is mentioned in the preamble but not in the core, agreed text of the Paris deal. And the requirement that human rights should be taken into account has been stripped from the text.

This means that the rights of Indigenous peoples has also been removed from the binding part of the text. As Dallas Goldtooth, of Indigenous Environmental Network, explains: 'It's hard to take as an Indigenous person that our ability to decide and self-determine our futures, where we get our food from, where we get our water from is not legally recognised by the nations of this world. It's destructive, it's hurtful, and it shows that this agreement is a failure.' Test 4. Focus on transformational action: 'Ensure that renewable and efficient solutions are emphasized rather than false solutions that fail to produce the results and protection we need, such as carbon markets in land and soil, dangerous geoengineering interventions, and more.' NI assessment: Fail. The agreement talks vaguely about 'technologies' and 'actions' without defining what these are, leaving the door open to all kinds of false solutions. Renewable energy is mentioned just once, in relation to Africa. The deal aims to 'achieve a balance between anthropogenic emissions by sources and removals by sinks of greenhouse gases in the second half of this century'. This could mean anytime between 2050 and 2100, when a 1.5 degree target would require a definitive end to fossil fuel use by 2050; and the purposefully slippery language allows for the possibility of continued fossil-fuel burning 'offset' by 'removals' via dubious carbon capture, geoengineering or forestry schemes. The door is left open for carbon trading mechanisms – which have so far been wildly ineffective at cutting emissions – with 'internationally transferred mitigation outcomes' recognised in the text as a legitimate solution. Meanwhile, there is no mention of effective and fair solutions such as respecting the land rights of forest peoples, promoting clean democratic energy or ensuring food sovereignty for communities and small farmers, all of which would keep carbon safely locked up underground and in trees and soils. Regulations to rein in destructive industries, halt deforestation and keep fossil fuels in the ground are not even hinted at. Worse, there is no language in the deal to give it precedence over imminent trade agreements such as

Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership and Trans-Pacific Partnership, which are threatening to give corporations the power to overturn environmental regulations that affect their profits. In the words of Dallas Goldtooth, 'The Paris agreement is a farce. Any discussion of carbon markets and carbon trading is a false solution. The truest solution, which is backed up by science, is that we have to keep fossil fuels in the ground. We must see a moratorium on fossil fuel development, and we must see a just transition for all those communities that are dependent on fossil fuel economies. Whether we're from the global north or the global south, we need help and support to create a future that has renewable energy for 100 percent of people on this planet.' NI Final score: 0/4. Scored in this way, the Paris Agreement is a disaster for the world's most vulnerable people. The headline target of 1.5 degrees and eventual decarbonization look good on paper but there's no sign that governments are willing to make them a reality yet. Paris could mark the beginning of the end of the fossil fuel industry, but much more needs to change before that becomes a reality. So what next? None of this comes as a surprise to climate justice campaigners. As Asad Rehman puts it: 'When we came into these Paris talks we had very low expectations. These expectations have been exceeded in how low they are. It's what happens on Monday that's the most important thing. Do we return to our capitals, do we build a movement, do we make sure our countries are doing their fair share? Do we stop the dirty energy industry, do we invest in new climate jobs, do we invest in community-owned decentralized energy? And most importantly, do we stand in solidarity with the millions of people across the world who are struggling for climate justice?' Dallas Goldtooth agrees: 'The decision-makers of the world can't make the changes that we want. It's on us as people to make that change. And we're already seeing the power of the people. Look at North America – the Keystone XL pipeline was taken down because of people organizing. It wasn't the governments who made that choice, it was the ranchers and farmers, the Indigenous peoples on the

frontline in the heartland of America that made that choice, and the politicians adjusted accordingly.' People shouldn't be surprised that the deal is bad, Goldtooth says. 'Industry has heavily influenced these negotiations. We have nation states who are dependent on a fossil fuel economy influencing these negotiations. Grassroots people who are advocating for the alternatives are not allowed in those negotiations. So we shouldn't be surprised. Instead we are using this moment to reinvigorate our base, to continue forward demanding climate justice, and to show the world, show the countries, show the corporations what people can do when we unite for climate justice.'

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