

Memorandum

National Civil Society Coalition for Climate Justice and Equitable Development

This document is prepared from the perspective of safeguarding the interests of the marginalised majority in India

Civil Society Perspective and Position on the vital issue of climate justice

We, representatives of organizations and networks believe that the discourse on Climate Change cannot and must not be delinked from:

The life and livelihoods of rural women and men, especially those who are economically and socially disadvantaged. It is a fact that climate change is impacting and would impact the poor communities first and worst. Amongst poor communities, economically and socially marginalized women bear the greatest brunt of climate change.

The current debate over the development path, that has in more than one ways contributed to the crisis, should now be used as an opportunity to adopt a new development paradigm.

We call upon Government of India to:

Proactively pressurize the industrialized countries, in particular the United States, to immediately take binding targets for substantial reduction of their emissions using the 1990 baseline because there are limits to adaptation for the poor people

Keep their Bali promise, take binding targets and reduce their emissions by at least 40% by 2020 and 90% by 2050 with 1990 as the reference point.

Assist the developing countries by finance and technology in order for them to pursue a low carbon pathway.

Nationally, we call upon the Government of India to:

1. Climate Change is increasingly being recognized as a development issue for many reasons. From a macro perspective it questions the fossil fuel based development model that the world has been pursuing since the industrial revolution. This current development model is threatening the earth's sustainability and could have irreparable consequences. From a micro perspective the impacts of climate change affects those that are most vulnerable: the marginalized majority of the world.

2. Given that around 70% of India's population depends on climate sensitive sectors like agriculture for survival, climate change implications are enormous. Climate change will affect the water sector the most. This is also the core of development for rural communities dependent on agriculture and hence the need for focus on water security.

Women will be especially vulnerable to the climate phenomenon. The rural communities, especially the women being the victims of climate change, should form the base for understanding the climate change impacts and should provide the perspective to plan a new development paradigm to mitigate and adapt climate change.

3. There is ample evidence to indicate that water resources are increasingly going to be affected by climate change. We are in a country already where safe water availability, even for domestic and livestock needs is in a crisis situation. When resources are scarce, it is the historically marginalized, the dalits, adivasis and the other minorities who face the burden the most. Women, who shoulder the responsibility of meeting domestic water, needs face even more challenges in meeting these needs. Given the basic requirement for safe drinking water and sanitation for health and overall socioeconomic development, this lack of availability amounts to a violation of human rights. This needs to be corrected.

4. The key issue then is how to integrate the development needs of the poor with a reduction of levels of emissions in the atmosphere? This implies that unless we adopt a model of development that takes into consideration the carrying capacity of the Earth we will not be able to address the climate issue.

5. While it is true that it is the developed countries that are the cause of the climate change problem because of historical emissions, it is also true that the developing nations are going to be the future large emitters because they need to respond to the development needs of their populations. This calls upon us as a large developing nation to play a leadership role in advocating the development of a fair climate agenda that recognizes the issues of equity both at the international and national levels. This is all the more important at this juncture since global negotiations for the post Kyoto scenario is to be decided by 2009.

6. Lives of India's rural communities - residing in coastal, mountainous, forest, arid and semi-arid - are low in carbon intensity and low in energy use. They live on the margins under the current development model and are the reason for the country's overall low carbon footprint that is being used as an argument for making developed countries to commit to emissions reduction. So, they are the protectors of the environment. Especially women, in different parts of the country, have developed and adopted adaptations to the impact of climate changes for sustaining their lives and livelihoods. Women are often the custodians of traditional knowledge and skills. Yet, their voices and practices have not been factored into national and international policy and they are not considered change agents. We believe that these communities provide solutions for sustainable development. And these must be recognized and adopted.

7. Climate change related employment loss and livelihood destruction as well as non – involvement of workers in production process are matters of concern. Workers in sectors like mining or manufacturing may inadvertently contribute to climate change. However, workers are not responsible for climate change as they are not controlling the means of production. Workers have the right to be informed about the production process and to be allowed to bargain for a production process based on lower carbon footprints. Fish

workers, subsistence farmers and others dependent on livelihood sectors become victims of climate change and they need justice. Livelihood systems need to be protected.

8. Neither uncontrolled growth nor the government-promoted intensive technologies holds solutions to long-term sustainability. The search for a solution has to be in the direction of environmentally and socially conducive technologies and lifestyles.

9. The Clean Development Mechanism, among the three flexible mechanisms finalized at Kyoto, needs to be re-examined. The practice and implementation of this mechanism defeats the very limited purposes for which this mechanism was proposed. The ethical aspect of such an instrument can be questioned in as much as the polluters can continue to pollute provided they buy their way out. As a market mechanism CDMs in India have benefitted the industrial elite in the developing countries allowing very little space for low carbon consuming communities to enter the market on their terms.

10. The technology and market driven response of the government needs to be questioned and the rights of the communities, whose lives and livelihoods are linked with climate dependent resources, need to be placed at the centre of such responses. There is a need to recognise and value the sustainable strategies of adaptation and mitigation that are used for survival by a large majority of rural farmers, men and women. The need of the hour is that research and development and science add value to this existent traditional wisdom. It is important that the insights generated must be disseminated without technological or Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) barriers within larger communities. The right to resources of communities marginalized by identity, work and descent, in particular women from such communities, need to be recognized and upheld in evolving a development paradigm for adaptation and mitigation of climate change.

11. Differentiated responsibilities of non-Annex 1 countries call upon countries like India to pursue a path to development that does not follow the same perilous path of Annex 1 countries. A low-carbon pathway to development is a desirable and achievable end in itself; and India can, and must be obligated to play a critical role in innovating towards such a development paradigm.

12. While India is rightly pursuing an ethical position based on equity, and the right to development of its large majority, this position needs to be translated into its domestic policies on energy, infrastructure and public services. This is not happening. There is a disconnect between its international stance on equity and inclusive development, and the national policies and practices it promotes at the domestic level. Hence the National Action Plan on Climate Change must reflect measures that while adapting will lead us to a low-carbon path to development.