

Climate Justice, COP 26 and the Challenge for Community Development

Statement from the International Association for Community Development

The International Association for Community Development stands in solidarity with communities experiencing the impact of climate change and civil society organisations campaigning for climate justice. Underlining the importance of COP26, Anita Paul, Pan Himalayan Grassroots Development Foundation India and IACD Director South Asia, said:

'Climate change has daily and devastating effects for the communities I work with, the region I live in and the world I want my children, grandchildren and their descendants to be able to inherit. We are living our dreams in one of the most climate vulnerable landscapes in the Indian Himalayan Region, but in an existential crisis wherein we often find ourselves as not just the victims of climate crisis but also as the custodians of nature's bounty in terms of biodiversity and water resources. I call on the world leaders at COP26 to shoulder their responsibility for the future and to ensure that community led nature-based solutions for climate adaptation is given its rightful place with real power to the people most affected and with sufficient resources to make a difference.'

IACD recognises that the climate crisis poses major challenges for states, business civil society and community development practitioners which demand immediate, resolute and ongoing responses from all.

We fully endorse recent reports from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change affirming the overwhelming scientific consensus that climate change is occurring and is primarily driven by human-caused emissions of greenhouse gases. We recognise based on this scientific consensus that climate change poses myriad threats to humanity, particularly those most vulnerable and unable to adapt. It has already increased and will continue to increase the frequency and intensity of extreme weather and climate events, including heatwaves, flooding, drought, and storms in many regions.

We further recognise the differential consequences of these for climate vulnerable states, marginalized communities, indigenous peoples and minorities, and the poor globally. Climate change is already accelerating migration and displacement within countries, mostly from rural to urban areas. It will also have social and economic consequences, and effects on women's empowerment and gender equality. The world is faced with a climate emergency that has been disproportionately caused by

multinational industry in the world's richest economies and has exposed low-income countries and communities to some of the most severe impacts.

We are committed to working with others to ensure fair, just and equitable social, economic and environmental development based on climate justice, respect for biodiversity, the protection of our natural environment and all life on earth. We know that one size cannot and will not fit all and support the call for those countries and companies which have profited most from the process of destruction to pay most to address it and now.

All states and government bodies have an inescapable responsibility to ensure that COP26 is a turning point in planning and delivering climate action of the scale and effectiveness required by this global crisis. The very high costs of getting and staying there have created North/South differentials for civil society participation and contributions to the COP. These have been reinforced by essential COVID regulations and the consequences of COVID are already and continue to be, differentially endured globally. However, Scotland and the UK, along with Italy as partner for the conference have a unique opportunity to show leadership both at the conference and in implementing the agreed actions. Civil society globally has called for immediate, reinforced and effective action on the commitments world leaders signed up to in the Paris Agreement. We echo this call and the demands for reinforcement of that Agreement, in particular seeking actions in these key areas:

- Faster and deeper emission reductions in line with commitments already made to limit global heating to 1.5°C; as a starting point: rich countries issue 1.5C aligned Nationally Determined Contributions and Long-Term Strategies; Parties to recognise and reflect the intrinsic relationship between climate change actions and impacts, equitable access to sustainable development and the eradication of poverty.
- Acknowledging that climate change is a common concern of humankind parties should, when taking action respect, promote and consider their respective human rights obligations, the right to health, rights of indigenous peoples, local communities, migrants, children, disabled people and the right to development, as well as their intersections with the rights of women and gender equality.
- States should also ensure that principles for locally led adaptation, which bring finance and decision making to the local level in participatory, inclusive processes, are in place and used with parity of esteem, seeking the inclusion of all whether resident or citizen.
- Increased support for communities impacted by the climate crisis; rich polluting countries should meet the already agreed \$100bn climate finance target commitment and strengthen it, and in particular the UK Government, Scotland and

Italy as the COP26 hosts and partner should take a lead in a global scale-up of financial support and taxing high emitters.

We call on private sector companies and multinational corporations to immediately make the challenging changes essential to ensure that their activities align with climate justice and sustainable development, and to make themselves accountable for the pace of change through maximum transparency, timelines and targets and monitoring processes fully inclusive of all partners including workers and communities.

Communities, in particular those most severely affected by climate change, must and will have a key role in any effective climate action strategy. Their right to participate in decision-making must be consistently recognised and realised, and they must be fully engaged as partners. The actions of states and private companies and corporations must be informed by communities' experience of the consequences of their climate-hostile activities. Community organisations have an essential role in insisting on community involvement in decision making and in mobilising climate action at all levels. Communities must not be made responsible for bearing the brunt of actions they've had no say in designing, developing, implementing or evaluating.

Community development workers, organisations and community leaders have key roles to play in supporting the development of community awareness, analysis and climate action. Community Development now needs to put climate change firmly and clearly alongside our central and well-articulated global concern with poverty, discrimination against minorities and marginalized peoples and the intersections of both with women's and children's rights, gender discrimination and the rights of disabled people. This means that all community development practice, policy advocacy and education needs to incorporate climate justice as a core and key foundation of the discipline.

IACD calls on its members and all community development practitioners to intensify their support for communities to act for climate justice and to join with others in pressing for immediate and urgent action by governments at all levels and by private sector interests.

IACD supports the huge range of climate action being taken by community development organisations in common with others across the world. Particularly important are the actions sought by children and young people whose lives and futures we must seek to guarantee. As expressed at the Children's Parliament in Scotland, *'This is our future, and it's up to you, me – all of us – to take action, now'*.