

The Manila Initiative on the Rights of Climate Migrants

We, members of migrants and people's organizations and civil society groups, assembled at the International Solidarity Conference on the Rights of Climate Migrants held on September 17-19, 2019 to deliberate and share experiences and strategic responses and perspectives on the realities of the climate crisis and its relation to human rights social justice, international migration and development, hereby acknowledge that:

Displacement is the pinnacle of the worst impacts of climate change. Millions of people daily, most notably those living in the Global South, are forced to leave their homes because of a lack of choice in terms of economic and environmental survival. By 2050, the United Nations estimates that up to one billion people will have been displaced because of environmental factors;

The climate crisis is the culmination of centuries of resource plunder and environmental destruction of the Earth by wealthy nations and corporations. Many people on the ground, particularly those who contributed the least or not at all to the causes of this crisis, are experiencing the worst of its impacts, and have also exacerbated their exposure to a myriad of structural inequities. They lose access to their lands, food and water and other sources of livelihood and their ability to manage them.

Intensified neoliberal globalization has been driving this crisis.

Corporate activities such as large-scale mining in particular fossil fuel extraction, mega-dam projects, commercial logging and agricultural mono-plantation expansion are aggravating the causes of climate change and displacing hundreds of millions of people, primarily the most marginalized sectors of society such as indigenous peoples and rural folk. Thus, the human rights of communities are continuously being violated, especially their right to a safe and healthy environment. Facing the impacts and overlaying social conflicts are often women and youth including members of the LGBTQI. The impetus to act has never been more urgent.

Developed countries, whose wealth and progress had been predicated on histories of resource exploitation of conquered nations and the unabated combustion of fossil fuels for energy, must bear the onus of climate action.

However, commitments from these governments have been lacking owing to the refusal to acknowledge their historical and current responsibilities and the strong lobbying of corporations. As corporations and financial institutions benefit from the status quo, governments and international bodies are predisposed to favor proposals to operate on a "business as usual" scenario by employing false solutions to the climate crisis. We strongly oppose these measures as they do not address the real causes of climate change and threaten to derail the little progress made in solving this catastrophe.

Based on the above, we:

Declare that the climate crisis is rooted in an unjust economic system characterized by extractivism and capital accumulation without regard for the rights of people and the limits of the planet. It is high time to reshape our economies and financial infrastructures towards

supporting the transformation of energy systems into clean, renewable and democratic systems for the people, regulating the overproduction of commodities, and phasing out of extractivist industries.

Urge governments and intergovernmental agencies to recognize that climate change will be the key driver of human migration and displacement in the next years. In recognition of their specific vulnerabilities, we call on leaders to heed the call and demands of the people in the frontlines and uphold and defend the rights of displaced people in various platforms of governance and policymaking in light of intensifying impacts of the climate crisis. Protocols and laws must be implemented to protect climate induced migrants, specifically indigenous peoples, rural communities and migrants, women and children;

Hold historical polluters to account. We urge governments and corporations that have benefited from the unabated burning of fossil fuels for energy to acknowledge their ecological debt by implementing a human rights based as well as gender-sensitive approach to solutions that address climate change and its impacts on human migration;

Commit to build the capacities of peoples on the ground, fortify solidarity among communities, movements and networks from the local to the global level through knowledge sharing and supporting one another's campaigns and other initiatives. Evidence-based policy recommendations through scientific research shall be developed in close partnership with grassroots communities and sectors.

Only through a comprehensive restructuring of the economy and the society can climate justice be achieved. We must address the root causes of climate change, social inequality and injustice, and forced displacement. ■