Women voices in the climate change negotiations

This month a new UN round of climate change negotiations took place in Bangkok - the first session after the Cancun conference last December. Many key pending issues over which there was not agreement in Cancun had to be negotiated in the talks.

In a context where alternatives have gone from bad to worse, women groups have raised their voices to strongly ask for real solutions.

GenderCC denounced that (2) “the commitments of developed countries continue to evade their historical responsibility, the heavy reliance on false and risky solutions and the other pending tasks to avert the current climate crisis.” As an example, "clean energy" “still includes large-scale hydropower, despite its long history of forcibly evicting communities in the Mekong and other areas, and degrading river flows and biodiversity, regardless of the ‘safeguards’ funding agencies particularly the multilateral development banks have adopted.” They also highlighted the danger of REDD Plus projects as “false solutions which can lead to a poisonous scramble for resources and engender danger, displacement and disempowerment”.

Also a group of women from social organizations and women groups from the Asia Pacific (2) demanded “real, bold, urgent and gender- sensitive commitments for climate justice!” Teresita Vistro, Focal Person for Climate Change of the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD) warned that “poor people, especially women in rural and urban disaster prone areas have been confronting climate change aggravation of difficulties in their daily lives because of climate change. They are frontline casualties of these weather disasters”. After almost two decades of talks, the rich industrialised countries who are the main responsible for the present climate crisis bretray “the primacy of business interests in their countries over the lives and welfare of peoples across the planet, poor women and children most especially”, stated Frances Quimpo of People’s Action on Climate Change (PACC) and International Council on Adult Education (ICAE). And she added:“Global warming is affecting everyone across continents now and it is the majority of the world who are poor are the ones paying the dearest price with their lives”

Besides women, the peasant movement La Via Campesina called in Bangkok (3) for “all governments to stand for climate justice and uphold the people's solutions and demands listed in the Cochabamba People's Agreement which upholds the rights of the people and of Mother Earth and is a concrete solution to the climate crisis” while it “reiterates its call that a concrete and genuine solution to climate change is sustainable small-scale and family farmer agriculture. Many studies have shown that agro-ecology will not only feed the world but it will also cool the planet.”

Furthermore, several NGOs sent a letter (4) to Mexican Secretary of Foreign Affairs Patricia Espinosa and UNFCCC Executive Secretary Christiana Figueres challenging the Green Climate Fund (GCF) – allegedly established to respond to the urgent needs and rights of peoples and communities throughout the global South - for the involvement of multilateral development banks as well as the World Bank as interim trustee. The organisations based their opposition on “past experience of the devastating social and environmental impacts of these institutions’ activities and

policies, and their ongoing role in financing climate destruction. In spite of the climate and economic crises, the World Bank continues to finance fossil fuel projects at an alarming rate, promote false solutions to the climate crisis, and use funding instruments that increase the indebtedness of developing countries. Thus, the World Bank is not suited to advise in the design of a fund that must ensure fair and effective long-term financing based on the principles of environmental integrity, equity, sustainable development, and democracy", and furthermore "able to respond to the urgent needs and rights of peoples and communities throughout the Global South".

Article based on information from :

(1) "Still A Frozen Pie: GenderCC on the Bangkok Intersessional Meeting 2011", GenderCC press statement, April 7, 2011,http://www.gendercc.net/metanavigation/press.html

(2) "Decommission the Fukushima nuclear plants and nuclear plans all over the world", Asian Rural Women's Coalition (ARWC) Resolution Adopted on 30 March 2011 in Chennai, India, During the Conference on 100 Years of Women's Resistance: Rights, Empowerment and Liberation, http://www.asianruralwomen.net

(3) "La Via Campesina opposes the inclusion of agriculture in carbon markets", La Via Campesina Press Release, April 11, 2011, http://tinyurl.com/68n388z

(4) "Global Civil Society Wary of World Bank Role in New Funds", April 5, 2011,http://tinyurl.com/6ke4ws2