
G8 and the climate crisis: Will deeds match words?

The governments of some of the world's most powerful countries (1) recently met in Italy and produced a document titled "Responsible Leadership for a Sustainable Future". In their statement, they inform the world that they are "determined to ensure sustainable growth and to tackle the interlinked challenges of the economic crisis, poverty and climate change."

It could be funny, were it not because the current situation is so tragic.

The world is facing a major economic crisis, poverty is increasing worldwide –and also in those 8 countries- and the climate crisis is nearing disaster. All as a direct result of the "responsible" leadership provided by the governments of those –and a few other- countries over many decades.

It is obvious that no-one can blame countries like Tuvalu, Fiji, Laos, Cambodia, Papua New Guinea, Gambia, Namibia, Uruguay, Cuba or most of the 192 member states of the United Nations for having created those problems. However, most of them are already heavily impacting on their peoples.

The G8 now promises that they will take "the lead in the fight against climate change", but reality shows that they are doing exactly the opposite: protestors are being criminalized in the UK for trying to prevent the use of coal, oil is planned to be drilled in Alaska, oil and gas companies from G8 countries continue to profit from fossil fuels while consumption in G8 countries result in further rainforest destruction.

Countries already suffering from climate change have never expressed their desire to be "led" by the G8. On the contrary, they are demanding them and a few other powerful governments to accept their responsibility for the problems they have created and to do something about it. Not by 2050 but right now. Not with declarations but in concrete actions. Not through "market mechanisms" but through stringent legislation.

The world –its peoples and ecosystems- can no longer tolerate a system where a few governments –based on economic, political and military power- use and destroy the planet for their own benefit. In that respect, the G8 needs to be reminded what democracy means and to accept that they are a tiny minority with no leadership mandate from anyone except themselves.

The world does not want or need their "leadership" but it does need them to act in a "responsible" manner to address the climate disaster they have created. The world needs them to match their words with deeds.

(1) The G8's members are Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States. The European Commission attends as well.

