

Global day of action on climate change (December 6th, 2008)

Government, G8 Leaders Must Act on Climate Change

The world today is fraught with continuous climatic changes which are seriously affecting the environment, economies and lives, especially the poor in the society. These climatic changes have resulted in series of earthquakes, hurricane, drought and floods which has killed and rendered millions of people jobless and homeless.

In view of the continuous threat it poses to the world, it has started receiving international attention. It has become one of the major issues of discussion among the Group of Eight (G8) industrialized nations and, dialogue between developed and developing countries have already begun. The world's primary international agreement on combating global warming is the Kyoto Protocol, an amendment to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) negotiated in 1997. The Protocol now covers more than 160 countries globally and over 55 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions. Scientist have affirmed the warming of the climate system and linked it to human activities. This is justified by the increase in the average surface temperature by about 0.6 C.

The relentless fight against poverty and inequalities is beginning to seem impossible because of the unending threats of climate change across the world. Poor people depend disproportionately on the environment for their livelihoods. Climate change is a threat to these livelihoods and intensifies the impact of other environmental threats and hazards and exposes those who mostly depend on environmental resources namely the poor, indigenous people and women to greater deprivation and economic risk. It has a negative effect on growth through more frequent and intensive environmental stress and disaster. It reduces productivity and diverts resources, which could otherwise be spent on development investment. Many community groups and ethnic minorities lack a voice in the management of shared resources and have little security of tenure over land, forests, fisheries and natural resources. This has resulted in conflict in some areas.

In Ghana and other developing countries, millions of the world's poorest people are already being forced to cope with the impacts of climate change. These impacts do not register as apocalyptic events in the full glare of the world media attention. They go unnoticed in financial markets and in the measurement of the world Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

However, increased exposure to drought, intense storms, floods and environmental stress is holding back efforts of the world's poor to build a better life for themselves and their children. In the last three decades, about 22 countries in Africa have been affected by flood and 1.5 million people have been displaced, whilst at least 300 people have been killed.

People living at the start of the 22nd Century will live with consequences of our emissions just as we are living with the consequences of emissions since the industrial revolution. For instance for the first half of this 21st Century the world in general, especially the poor will have to live with climate change to which are already committed.

The Secretary General of the United Nations in his special contribution in the 2007/08 Human Development Report acknowledged that "we are beginning to see these catastrophes (of climate change) unfold. As sea levels rise and tropical storms gather in intensity, millions of people face displacement. Dryland inhabitants, some of the most vulnerable on our planet, have to cope with more frequent and more sustained droughts. And as glaciers retreat, water supplies are being put at risk".

It's for this reason that the coalition is using this day to launch the Global Day of Action on Climate Change.

Unfortunately Ghana as a country is not doing much to halt the continuous depletion of the ozone layer. Very rare do we hear of any discussion on climate change by the leadership of this country. The consistent human activities in the industrial areas, emission of greenhouse gases, bush fires, felling of trees and the discovery of oil which will lead to the establishment of more oil refineries puts Ghana in a more dangerous position in the coming years.

The recent flood that hit the Northern, Upper East, Upper West and Western Regions in September 2007 revealed the nations vulnerability. The following were the statistics that were recorded by the Ministry of Interior with regards to the flood;

Number of deaths	56
Number Displaced	331,360
Houses Destroyed	34,919
Roads Damaged	655
Farmlands Destroyed	46,851
Dams & Bridges Destroyed	140

The economic, health and social cost of this flood was so enormous that donor agencies, philanthropist and companies had to come in to support the victims.

Climate change is a challenge that needs to be addressed now to reduce the risk it poses to the youth of today and generations unborn. The future generation of this country stands directly in harm's way and they have the least resources to cope.

The Coalition and signatories to the Banners on Climate are using this day to demand that;

- The Government of Ghana sets up an independent secretariat to work on climate change. Lobby the G8 to be accountable to the commitments made at Tokyo (2008) to take strong leadership in combating climate change and implement decisions taken in Bali as the foundation for reaching a global change (UNFCCC) by 2009.
- Government and the G8 pursue technology agreements and related initiatives that will lead to large emissions reductions and to the adoption of appropriate and sustainable farming methods.
- Government undertakes an independent research work on climate change and use research findings to influence policy formulation.

- Raise public awareness of the problem of climate change and build public support for climate policies through the implementation of an effective climate change communication strategy. Build public support for climate policies that will enable the world to meet the objective of limiting global average temperature rise to 2°C above pre-industrial levels. These communication activities should have sufficient funding and a consistent message, including the case for the 2°C objective, sustained over the long-term. Such activities should also be combined with supportive policy measures which enable the public to take action.
- The EU and other developed countries fulfill the "political declaration" they made at the seventh conference of the parties to the UNFCCC in Marrakech in 2001, to provide \$450 million (US) a year, mostly for adaptation.
- Stabilize our atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases at 350ppmCO₂e (ultimately returning to pre-industrial levels). Annex I countries must commit to reducing their emissions by at least 40% by 2020 vs. 1990 levels
- Dramatically increase adaptation funding through the UNFCCC (not the World Bank or IMF) and this must be in addition to existing aid commitments. Equity is key.
- REDD must be first and foremost a mechanism for forest protection and climate stabilization, not off-setting and profit-generation for Annex-1 countries. It must guarantee the security of land and property rights of local and indigenous peoples.

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