

COP 17 in Durban: A Largely Empty Package

By Lili Fuhr, Liane Schalatek and Kulthoum Omari

Summary Assessment of the Durban Package

The gains we got – from a perspective of climate equity – are:

- A second commitment period of the Kyoto-Protocol that secures the continuation of the only international legally binding mechanism we have to cut greenhouse gas emissions – albeit with no concrete targets, generally very low ambition and many loopholes.
- A political agreement to work towards a legally binding global climate regime that - in acknowledging the shifts in the global economy over the course of the past 20 years - will cover all emitters. This legally binding approach is much different and much better than the pledge and review world we have been heading for since Copenhagen. It represents an acknowledgement of the fact that a global problem requires a global solution. The spirit of multilateralism was thus kept alive. However, the language in the Durban package is very weak and open to any attack to change the course of this pathway in the upcoming years.
- A repeated recognition of the gigaton gap and the need to close it in light of the review process, recent climate science and the existing low ambition of Annex-1 countries. However, there is still no concrete mechanism on how to do this. A work programme is simply not enough.
- The implementation of the Green Climate Fund (GCF) under the guidance of and accountable to the COP with a balanced and comprehensive governing instrument as well as an intermediary process to get the Fund up and running as quickly as possible. However, there was neither a decision nor a political commitment to guarantee sustained financial contributions for the Fund. Specifically, with the issue of long-term finance and its sourcing unresolved in the UNFCCC process, the Green Climate Fund is in danger of becoming an empty shell.

Some key issues we failed to achieved are:

- Raising ambitions globally to ensure a peak of emissions by 2015 – which science demands. While the second commitment period with low ambition will last until 2017 or 2020 and a new deal will bind everyone from 2020 onwards, we don't have a good plan for the next 8 years – the crucial period to prevent run-away climate change. The process to raise ambition in the coming years is supposed to be informed by the 5th assessment report of the IPCC and the review process on the 1,5 °C target – both due in 2015. Without a global goal and concrete effort sharing formula, the legally binding approach will remain a bottom-up one.

- One of the core principles of the UN framework convention, “common but differentiated responsibilities (CBDR) and respective capabilities” is not in the new mandate. But without a clear formula for effort sharing and implementation of climate equity in the global climate regime we will fail to raise the necessary ambition and also risk a complete breakdown of the process.
- While we have a new Green Climate Fund getting ready to start its important work in a transitional period until 2013, it is nothing more than an empty promise unless we secure reliable sources of new and additional, predictable and adequate financial resources beyond voluntary pledges in the long term. The Durban Package only repeats some of the commitments of Copenhagen and Cancun, but fails to indicate a trajectory for scaling up financial commitments from the fast start finance period ending by 2013 to the \$100 billion per year by 2020 in long-term finance promised. It also fails to secure at least 50 percent of all new funding commitments for adaptation, including for financing flowing through the GCF. This is at the same time that current impacts of global warming are already acutely felt by the most vulnerable groups and countries with urgent adaptation needs remaining structurally underfunded on the global level.

“It always seems impossible until it’s done.”¹

Expectations were lower than low for the seventeenth conference of the parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) that took place in Durban, South Africa. A year ago, parties celebrated the Cancun Agreements as a set of COP decisions that set the process back on track after the failure of Copenhagen, which had only produced a political agreement not supported by all COP parties and had threatened to fatally weaken the multilateral climate talks. ‘Process saved, but not the climate’ summarises the outcome of last year’s meeting.

With the end of the first commitment period of the Kyoto-Protocol just a year away, with global emissions having reached an all time high and continuing to grow and with global warming impacts being felt around the world, at COP 17 delegates were under a lot of pressure to seal a Durban package. This package the South African presidency aimed to secure for the “African COP” was supposed to:

- a) secure a second commitment for the Kyoto Protocol and thereby safeguard the only international legally binding mechanism we have to combat climate change (but also to raise ambition to peak global emissions by 2015);
- b) since Kyoto is not enough: get a clear mandate to negotiate a comprehensive legally binding agreement for all countries (ideally to enter into force by not later than 2015); and
- c) implement the Cancun Agreements with a number of important processes and the establishment of new mechanisms and institutions under the COP for adaptation, technology and finance, including the operationalisation of the Green Climate Fund.

There was hardly any progress on any of these issues by the time ministers arrived in the second week. What then followed were intense over-night negotiations for several days that only finished early Sunday morning, more than 30 hours behind schedule. Finally, a Durban package was agreed. But what exactly does it contain? How comprehensive and forward looking is it? Did the global community manage to secure a deal that will keep us on a path to prevent dangerous global warming? Who were the deal-makers and deal-breakers, the winners and losers? Could the world have done better? And most importantly: Where does the global community go from here?

“There is no such thing as part freedom.”

Here’s a first assessment of the content of the three elements of the Durban package:

The Future of the Kyoto-Protocol

Kyoto is not dead – yet –, but it is on serious life-support with a number of internal systems irrevocably damaged and failing. There will be a second commitment period after all and as agreed in Durban, it will start on January 1, 2013. However, while this in itself is a better outcome than observers had feared following the negotiations in the first week of Durban, it is no reason for optimism or complacency. The second commitment period’s length, for instance, in the end could not be agreed upon. The period will end either 2017 or 2020 – to be decided next year. Additionally, Canada has already announced that it will leave the Kyoto Protocol – and might signal the beginning of a stampede that others (Japan?) could follow. The USA is not a signatory to Kyoto anyway, and all the large emitters in the developing world are not captured by this instrument. Therefore, the effect this second commitment period will have on cutting emissions globally is bound to be weak. Concrete numbers are not referenced in the text, but will be worked in from the pledges that have been already put on the table in Copenhagen and Cancun. But from that has been submitted it is obvious that global society is heading towards a world that is 3 or 4 degrees warmer – dangerously exceeding the 2 degree goal that the Durban package in its shared vision continues to pay lip service to.

Delegates in Durban agreed to launch a work plan to identify options for closing the gap between countries’ current emissions reduction pledges for 2020 and the goal of keeping global warming below 2 degrees Celsius. But how exactly that will be achieved is unclear. Also, some of the key problems in the existing commitment period have not been resolved properly: Overall-located emission allowances (AAUs) will continue to allow countries to blow ‘hot air’ into the second commitment period, partially because the EU was unable internally to come to an agreement (with Poland, which currently holds the EU presidency not ready to give up its share of hot air). Furthermore, emissions in the forest sector of the Annex-B (Kyoto Protocol) parties are allowed to continue to grow with only a very loose cap under rules for land use, land use change and forestry (LULUCF). Governments basically also agreed on a new form of subsidies for fossil

fuel production by allowing carbon capture and storage (CCS) to be included in the Kyoto Protocol's Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), the methodology for which still has to be finalised.

A Mandate for a Legally Binding Agreement by 2015

Durban saw the birth of the so called "Durban Platform for Enhanced Action", a working group that will develop "a new protocol, another legal instrument or agreed outcome with legal force" (agreed by 2015 to enter into force 2020) that will be applicable to all Parties to the UN climate convention, including those not currently bound under the Kyoto Protocol. This compromise language, in effect giving a couple of options with respect to the legality and binding form of a future agreement, is what kept negotiations running much longer than planned. The final language adopted – that everyone could live with – is weak and open to interpretation. While the EU together with the least developed countries, the small island states and some other developing countries pushed strongly for a "legal instrument or protocol", India was the frontrunner of those striving for a less concrete version, a mere "legal outcome", in the plenary meetings invoking equity and CBDR as the reason for less strict language. Interestingly, language on CBDR – which some observers think the EU had kept out of the text deliberately to use as a bargaining chip to later offer to India for a legally binding agreement – was never included in the Durban package text. This piece will be left for negotiations next year.

The interests on both sides are clear: The EU was ready to launch a second commitment period if all large emitters agreed to move towards equally legally binding commitments by 2015. India, however, felt that their development needs as a country with a substantial part of its population still living in poverty were threatened by this prospect, especially since actions by Annex-1 countries in a second commitment period are unclear and international finance and technology support (including question on restrictions imposed on technology transfer by the issue of intellectual property rights) are not forthcoming. The difference between the EU and the Indian position in the end lay in the issue of enforceability. A "legal outcome" (that India wanted) could result in a set of COP decisions that might turn out to be merely political statements of intent, but not necessarily binding commitments under international law for which parties could be held accountable.

Climate Financing under the Durban Package

A key component of a Durban package and politically for the South African COP presidency and the African COP probably the most important decision was the one accepting the design recommendations of the Transitional Committee (TC) to operationalize the Green Climate Fund (GCF). Without such a decision, any Durban outcome would have had to be considered a failure.

South Africa went into COP 17 determined to avoid a re-opening of the draft governing document, the outcome text that the TC, with the United States and Saudi Arabia not willing to sign on to the text, had forwarded to the COP for its consideration and approval. While the South African presidency succeeded in keeping the text together, agreement on the Fund was still far from assured as parties attempted to renegotiate some of the key disagreements in the text of the cover decision, which remained open until the very last hours. Among those issues were the

relationship of the Fund to the COP, which developing countries wanted tighter than existing arrangements with the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the process of determining the permanent trustee of the Fund (with the World Bank serving in an interim role for three years to the chagrin of most developing countries), establishing the Fund as an independent international entity and the role of the private sector in drawing on public financing channeled through the Fund. Developing countries as recipients of GCF funding and industrialized countries as main contributors to the GCF were also arguing about the future host country for the GCF and the composition of its interim secretariat. At the heart of this discourse was of course the question to what extent the Fund would be an instrument in fulfilling the financial obligation of industrialized countries under the convention and putting developing countries in the driver seat of decision-making on the use of these funds according to their priorities and preferences.

In the end, developing countries secured some key concessions from contributor countries for the Fund, for example a restriction on the ability of the private sector to access GCF financing inconsistent with country preferences as well as securing the fund as an institution independent of existing international financial institutions and with some oversight by the COP. A key role in this oversight is also to be played by a newly established Standing Committee which was given the mandate to provide independent evaluations of the Convention's financial mechanism. However, these developed countries concessions might come at the expense of long-term sustained and predictable industrialized country distributions to the Fund, which could condemn the Fund to an immediate future as a clearly elaborated and carefully constructed, but largely empty shell. The GCF decision itself does address the issue of sources of financing for the Fund only very generically, but without a mandated financing obligation, for example through a process of accessed budget contributions. And while some developed countries, including Denmark, Switzerland and Germany, did make some pledges for smaller contributions to get the Fund started for an interim period and to allow a new Board of 24 members to come together for their first meetings in 2012, the larger financial commitments as well as an indication of how much of the promised long-term finance of US\$ 100 billion annually by 2020 should flow through the GCF and how much of it will be in form of public contributions are still missing.

Similarly, a corresponding decision on long-term finance as part of the Durban package is pretty tooth-less. It does not even provide for language urging developed country parties to upscale their financial commitments from the US\$10 billion per year in fast start finance to end by 2013 to the promised US\$100 billion per year by 2020 and fails to set sign posts and financial benchmarks from 2013 to 2020. It also does not contain any concrete elaborations on alternative and innovative financing sources, such as levies on international maritime and air transport, the so called bunkers, nor does it give the mandate for the international community to develop these further. An earlier text provision from week 1, which proposed charging international shipping taxes for the carbon emissions it generates faced such opposition, it did not survive in the final text. The concern for many developing countries is the question of "incidence" (impact) on their economies which would necessitate some rebate mechanism, while some developed countries are just not fond of any international taxation scheme.

Instead, the text on long-term finance now only contains a promise for a one-year work program of workshops to determine potential sources of sustained financing for climate action – but without mandating that the results of the work program are put to a decision at COP 18. Although many considered the survival of such a work program in the final text already a success – the United States for example felt that the UNFCCC had no mandate to discuss financing sources – the most likely outcome is that COP 18 will “take note” of the work done – without consequence of a legal obligation for Annex II countries. With the text on long-term finance, the UNFCCC has barely managed to hold on to the right to discuss the sources of climate financing at all. The real decisions will most likely be made by the G20, where Mexico, an early proponent of a Green Climate Fund, holds the presidency in 2012 and as already indicated that climate financing to be one of its priority issues.

Other Issues

Other issues decided in Durban include the establishment of the Technology Executive Committee (as part of the Technology Mechanism) and – a political victory – the establishment of a work programme on loss and damage. On REDD, there was not much progress on the remaining open question. A decision on sources of finance was left open with market based approaches as one potential option. The text on implementation of the safeguards that were agreed in Cancun is very weak.

“It is better to lead from behind and to put others in front, especially when you celebrate victory when nice things occur. You take the front line when there is danger. Then people will appreciate your leadership.”

One thing is clear: Collectively, our governments have failed to deliver an outcome in Durban that ensures a pathway into a safe climate future. The road ahead is more than bumpy and some exits have now been closed off. The most difficult question of all of course is: would we have been better off without this agreement? Is an imperfect agreement with fallacies and evasions better than no agreement? Has coming to an agreement strengthened the process sufficiently or further underlined its shortcomings? But maybe these are the wrong questions to ask. Could the international community have done better? Of course, it is better to do little than to do nothing, to move forward, even incrementally, than to stagnate or regress. But heads of state, especially the European ones, were busy dealing with the financial and economic crisis, and most environment ministers came to Durban with a clear mandate to secure some deal in order to not create diversion from that important task. Pressure was high, but ambitions were low. In this context, it could have been possible to achieve more.

The **South African presidency** – and their foreign minister Maite Nkoana-Mashabane as the COP president – had high ambitions for a success in Durban, for the ‘African COP’ – and a very difficult COP with high political stakes. If it had not been for the determination of the presidency,

the international community might not have seen any outcome in the end. Quite aware that process does matter and drawing from lessons learned both at Copenhagen and Cancun, where especially developing parties lamented a negotiation policy of a selected few behind closed doors, an innovative inclusive informal negotiation process was introduced at COP 17 that resorts to traditional African decision making. An *Indaba* is a meeting of the wise of a community to discuss a problem that concerns everyone and can only be solved jointly. In theory, that certainly sounds like the right approach to deal with the urgent demands to combat global climate change...

The Durban *Indaba* took some time to take off. It was quite apparent that those delegates present in the first week were no such 'wise men and women' and had only a limited mandate to negotiate. But the *Indaba* process continued throughout the second week and indeed allowed for a more open and transparent process with the involvement of all parties and observers. The presidency also convened for the first time ever a joint informal of the parties of the UN framework convention and the Kyoto Protocol members in the early hours of Sunday morning to demonstrate as much transparency as possible and to give parties a possibility to vent their disagreements – thus, preventing a possible blocking stance of a few countries in the formal concluding sessions of the COP and the CMP respectively. This was yet another lesson learned from previous summits such as Cancun and Copenhagen.

In the end, however, high ambition to secure a deal no matter what the costs in combination with a hesitation to firmly steer the process and time pressures (some delegations were already leaving) resulted in a certain level of panic on the side of the host government. Working to beat the clock, decision texts were not finished and presented to delegations without enough lead time to consider and discuss, which led to some resentment and bad will growing amongst delegates in the last and decisive hours of the COP.

A remarkable outcome of the negotiations in Durban was the emerging progressive alliance between the **EU, AOSIS, the LDCs** and some other developing countries, and with it a clear dissolution of a strong and united G77 voice. In their first ever joint statement on the last official day of the negotiations, this new alliance not only demanded a second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol and the operationalisation of the Green Climate Fund, but also a robust mandate and roadmap to negotiate a legally binding instrument for all countries. That sent a clear message to the **BASIC countries** (South Africa, Brazil, India and China), which each had negotiated with their own national interests taking priority over a joint developing countries' interest. While China's red line was the date (beyond 2020), accepting that by then domestically binding policies will become internationally accountable, India feared the legally binding nature of a future global treaty. Brazil did its best to make sure that the debris of this meeting did not land on its doorstep for the Rio+20 conference.

The **USA** got what they wanted (legal parity with China), but throughout the negotiations played a very obstructive role – however often less publicly visible than in the previous COPs. The **Umbrella Group** (key members: USA, Canada, Australia, Japan, New Zealand) managed to slow down the process considerably – with time being a key factor of success in the last few days – by introducing a fake text into the process that caused much confusion and delay.

The **African Group** was very clear that negotiations in Durban must produce two outcomes in line with the Bali Roadmap, that is, an agreed outcome to implement the Convention and a second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol with clear mitigation ambition. These outcomes must be ambitious, balanced and based on science, equity and in full conformity with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities. This legal instrument would bind all parties, especially the bigger emitters, to reduce their emissions to keep global warming well below 2oC as predicted by science. The Africa Group, although considering the EU proposal to be introducing a legal gap, did not offer an alternative proposal to address both the mitigation and legal gap. As a result, the Africa Group supported the EU proposal, fully realizing its ambiguity. With the COP being hosted on African soil, and moral leadership clearly on Africa's side, including in public perception, this was certainly a missed opportunity for the African Group to clearly articulate their demands and be more forceful in forging strategic issue-oriented alliances with like minded groups.

What became very apparent in Durban was yet another repeat of missing leadership by almost all governments. This was in equal parts leadership missing in political terms (striving for urgent and ambitious actions at home support abroad) and diplomatic terms (urging others to do more instead of hiding behind the inactivity of those who have no interest in moving ahead while pointing fingers).

The real winners of the Durban climate summit are thus the big polluters and the fossil fuel producers, who have secured a package that guarantees largely business as usual in the brown economy while opening up new opportunities for them to make profits in what is termed a slowly growing green economy – often very narrowly defined and leaving equity consideration among and within countries aside. They have once again through effective lobbying of and infiltration of government delegations in Durban secured an outcome that serves their interests over the interests of the planet and all its people.

“We must use time wisely and forever realize that the time is always ripe to do right.”

If there is one thing that **NGOs** could have learned from the failure of Copenhagen it is that they can collectively make a difference – but they can also remain without major impact if they are not cooperating, coordinating and coalescing enough among themselves, with a clear understanding of the respective roles and strengths different groups bring to the negotiations and a strategy that plays on these differentiated contributions in a clear division of labor. In the light of this, what role did civil society organisations play in Durban?

One of the key elements that prevented a more forceful joint and therefore louder voice from civil society groups both inside and outside the Durban conference centre was – just like in Cancun – the geographic distance between the formal negotiation space and the C17 NGO space organised by South African civil society. The location of C17 at a university campus approximately

7 km away from the conference centre prevented a sufficient mass of back-and-forth exchange and thus once again a failure to strengthen advocacy attempts in the conference corridors with the moral force of social mobilisation on the streets.

But Durban, unfortunately, also saw a renaissance of conflicts between different spectrums of civil society that in the end – due to uncoordinated and contradictory lobbying efforts - contributed to the weak outcome of the conference. Once again, much effort and time was wasted on diverging views on the self-perceived role of NGOs in this process. Should civil society groups play along with the hide-and-seek game of their own governments in order to remain “politically relevant” in their domestic political contexts and internationally? How can they truly and effectively challenge their governments on issues of key concern in a middle of a very complex and politically charged diplomatic domain? And how can and must they realign radical demands from “outside” with lobbying tactics “inside” to achieve as much impact and momentum as possible?

This is of course a dilemma that each of the various civil society constituencies within the UNFCCC process does need to consider and resolve individually as well as in cooperation with other groups. Altogether, the UNFCCC recognizes nine constituencies in its process – and was able to welcome for Durban the Women and Gender Constituency as its newest member. **Women and gender groups** – although with a diversity of views and also fundamental policy differences – had engaged in the UNFCCC process with renewed joint efforts since Bali in 2008, working in the past several years primarily to secure some key text reference to gender equality and women as a relevant stakeholder group in COP decisions. Several key references in the Cancun Agreements, including an acknowledgement that gender equality is necessary for effective climate action, did result from this targeted coordination and cooperation.

While in the last few years a discourse on gender and climate change was still perceived to be sufficiently an outsider topic, it received plenty of attention in side events at Durban COP17. The fear among gender specialists in the climate talks is that instead of a real integration of gender equality concerns in climate action, a superficial “gender-washing” might be used by many groups to draw attention and resources. Gender advocacy groups in Durban, working with friendly governments mostly from Africa and the Nordic countries, succeeded in including a number of gender references in the Durban package, including related to the composition of the Adaptation Committee and the Standing Committee as well as capacity building efforts and new Technology Centres. However, gender equality as a cross-cutting issue was not prioritized in the Durban elaboration of a shared vision for long-term cooperative action, indicating the need for sustained advocacy efforts of the constituency both with governments, but also with other civil society constituencies.

Attempts at coordinating an NGO lobby process by **South African civil society** should be viewed against a background marked by at least three very important historical events: i) The gross inadequacy of civil society in Cancun to coordinate a united civil society engagement with COP16 – even for one march; (ii) near delegitimization of the UN process by Copenhagen; (iii) lingering distrust between local NGOs, grassroots social movements, labour and international NGOs emanating from a fractured relationship at the World Summit on Sustainable Development

2002 (WSSD) in Johannesburg, South Africa. This history meant that civil society had very little base from which to construct a strong, united political response to COP17. Collaboration was on a lowest common denominator basis and resulted in a mandate geared towards facilitation of actions and provision of a platform from which individual organisations attempted to engage with the COP in whatever way they saw fit.

Thus, the People Space, with its fair share of logistical challenges was availed to NGOs by South African civil society. However, events at the Space tended to present a fragmented, uncoordinated message and no political engagement with the COP due to the fact that organisations mostly worked in isolation and with individual mandates. Also, working from a very weak political base, it is not likely that South African civil society were ever going to be able to mediate a convergence of thinking and strategy between those NGOs that prefer to work inside and those that prefer to work from outside the UN process. That having been said, South African civil society were hugely successful, if read against this background, in bringing together all CSOs to one Global Day of Action march. The general feeling is that South African civil society did what they could within their means and to reasonable success in enabling engagement of civil society with the COP. Politically, though, a greater discussion still needs to be conducted on how best to bring about convergence of civil society strategy on climate issues or if at all a convergence of strategy is desirable.

“When the water starts boiling, it is foolish to turn off the heat.”

Climate change is indeed a problem that affects everyone and can only be solved in a joint effort. An *Indaba* can be successful in such a case if the process manages to actually gather those men and women wise enough to perceive it as a global problem and with a clear mandate and the political power to find a solution. The UNFCCC process – and bringing an *Indaba* approach to the COP -- has by necessity very clear limitations because it has turned into an increasingly complex technical negotiations forum in which not even the most involved are able to deal with all the political and technical interlinkages effectively any more. Meanwhile, the real political decision-making has evaded the climate negotiations and power switches are worked elsewhere, such as in the G20 process.

How can the global community agree to curb global emissions if the twenty most powerful economies at the same time plan to build their future on increased production, consumption and growth with no consideration of climate change impacts? How can people globally secure a low carbon and climate resilient development pathway for the eighty least developed countries when the G20 Development Action Plan proposes a business as usual and climate blind future for key economic sectors such as infrastructure (including energy) and agriculture (food and water)?

The key issues in international climate politics – emission reduction targets, climate finance, technology – have to do with a lot more than just carbon metrics and are being influenced, challenged, undermined or supported in other – often more powerful – fora than the

UNFCCC. The apolitical nature of the UN climate talks – taking place in a bubble, far away from the financial crisis, the Euro crisis, the trade negotiations, the reform of the IFIs or the G20 – is a key constraint for substantive progress.

As a global community of climate change advocates, we need to urgently find an answer to the following question: How can we secure the UNFCCC as the relevant and prominent global forum for climate politics with all countries present (and not just the big emitters negotiating amongst themselves) while at the same time tackling the causes of climate change at the roots – that lie in failed economic, financial and development politics?

“After climbing a great hill, one only finds that there are many more hills to climb.”

Where does the world go from here? COP 18 will take place at the end of 2012 in Qatar. That is both a worry and a hope. Some of the Arab countries, most importantly Saudi Arabia, are forever playing a blocking role in the negotiations. The region is both rich in fossil fuels and highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change – and stricken, as a region, with the same inequities among and within countries that are also a characteristic of the larger global context. Yet, in the past year, the region has also mobilised hundreds of thousands of its citizens to strive for freedom, democracy and a better life. This democratic energy and the involvement of dissatisfied citizens demanding change of the business-as-usual growth and power scenarios have to play a crucial role in the transformation that the global community so urgently needs in tackling the climate crisis.

Next year will witness the twentieth anniversary of the Rio Earth Summit of 1992. The gathering of heads of state and government at the Rio+20 Summit in Rio at the end of June will provide an excellent opportunity to remind them of what they have failed to deliver.

Shortly before the Rio+2012 summit, Mexico will be hosting the G20 summit in Los Cabos.

The Mexican government has put “green growth” and climate finance on the agenda. Climate advocates from all over the world need to jointly challenge the Mexican presidency and other G20 leaders on how they define the green growth agenda. They need to demonstrate how they see existing G20 politics and action plans contributing to the 2 °C goal and sustainable, climate resilient, and equitable, including gender-equitable, development pathways globally.

With the global public attention on climate issues fading, our governments unfortunately are unlikely to listen to an advocacy message solely focused on the climate crisis. What climate advocacy needs is a much more powerful message. One that stops the artificial sequestration of climate issues as largely technical exercise and succeeds in linking global warming to unfair resource exploitation and distribution, failed governance and economic inequality as a response to a failed narrowly defined growth paradigm. For a real change, the global community needs full accountability of the ruling elites – both in developed and developing countries – for the benefit of all citizens.

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¹ All quotes in this text are by Nelson Mandela. This quote was used by NGOs in Durban as a statement on their conference badge ribbons.

