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COP25: Crucial two weeks of UN talks to address climate crisis begins

02 December 2019, Madrid Spain: As the UN Climate Change Conference or COP25 starts here in Madrid, Spain, Climate Action Network (CAN) held a press briefing to outline the key expectations from governments. These include finance commitments for loss and damage, stronger commitments on ambition, rules on carbon markets under Article 6 of the Paris Agreement, as well as priorities of the Latin American region.

More and more people are taking their discontent to the streets as governments have failed to deliver on their promises in the Paris Agreement and address social and economic problems. Civil society leaders stressed the need for negotiators to urgently act on the people's demands as the severity of the climate emergency escalates, causing droughts, water and food crises, and displacement of millions of people, and thereby further exacerbating social inequalities.

The next two weeks are crucial in addressing the climate emergency and social justice. Countries, especially major emitters, must agree to a funding mechanism under the Warsaw International Mechanism that would provide loss and damage compensation, including a loss and damage gap report that unpacks the scale by which such support is needed, and a task force to ensure that the funding reaches the vulnerable populations. It is also critical for negotiators to finally come up with a fair deal on carbon markets that should drive an overall reduction in emissions and avoid double counting at all costs.

Climate negotiations were moved to Madrid from Santiago de Chile but that does not stop the civil society in the Latin American region continue to assert their voice - their demands must be heard and people's rights in the region should be protected. Our demands cannot fall on deaf ears: CAN urges our leaders to respond to the people's needs and commit to concrete solutions to the worsening climate emergency.

Reactions from CAN speakers:

Jean Su: *Energy Director, Center for Biological Diversity*

We are in an absolute climate emergency right now. Our house - the planet - is literally on fire. Developed countries are fueling those flames by continuing to burn fossil fuels. We have seen an incredible awakening of the public, Greta Thunberg and millions of people are going to the streets to demand real political change. The culprits are the same: governments are not listening to the people but to the fossil fuel industry.

For far too long, these COPs have not been COPs of the people, but countries are not doing something. They hide behind jargon on mitigation targets and percentages that people on the streets do not understand. We are telling the government to stop burning fossil fuels now, start transitioning to 100% renewables in a fair and just manner and pay for loss and damage to the millions of people who have suffered for decades. It is not a climate emergency of tomorrow that developed countries believe it to be - it is a reality today to millions of people affected by this climate emergency right now.

Harjeet Singh: *Global Lead on Climate Change, ActionAid*
With an increasing number of cyclones, droughts and rising sea levels, 60 million people in Southern and Eastern Africa are facing greater risk, 9 million people experience a food crisis due to droughts, and affected populations are expected to grow to 45 million in the next months. That's why we call it a climate emergency. We will cross the 2°C temperature rise given the current commitments.

The UN system and the countries primarily responsible for this crisis - are they losing sleep? Those impacted but are not responsible for the climate crisis, are they being supported and protected against human rights violations they encounter due to climate migration? No.

The Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage was set up to protect them but the constant bullying from major emitters has blocked finance for them - and that has to change at COP25. There has been some advancement in knowledge generation but that is not enough. No progress has been made on finance. We need an operating system that goes out and helps these people facing the climate emergency. The Paris Agreement is not just about shutting down coal plants and putting up solar panels - it's about people and making sure that vulnerable populations are safe in this climate emergency.

Gilles Dufrasne: *Policy Officer, Carbon Market Watch*
There are many elements in carbon markets and that's why we need to have a comprehensive deal under Article 6 of the Paris Agreement. There must be strong rules that ensure that carbon markets drive new emissions reductions and do not rely on old carbon credits from the Kyoto Protocol representing about 19 billion credits of 19 gigatonnes of carbon emissions.

Proper accounting and transparency are key in protecting the integrity of carbon markets and avoid double counting at all costs. Some countries want to have their cake and it - that is not acceptable. Double counting is cheating the people and that will not help solve the climate emergency. Carbon credits must not be used to justify pollution at home and shift emissions around the world, rather, we need markets that will deliver an overall reduction in emissions.

Adrian Martinez: *Director, La Ruta del Clima*

We have to consider that we are now in Spain and the change of venue has raised serious economic and geographic barriers to civil society in Latin America. As it is meant to be a Latin American COP, we should be able to voice out our priorities in the region. The changes should not infringe our right to participate in the COP and reduce the voice of the people. What is environmental democracy if we cannot access it?
For the few of us who made it here in Spain, we'll remind our leaders of the key issues for the region such as signing the Escazú Agreement to protect the human rights of environmental defenders in Latin America. For us, this COP should keep in mind all the voices that have been left behind who are also executing different activities in Chile to ensure that our priorities are

heard. How civil society participates in the climate negotiations should be taken into consideration and not limit our voice.

ENDS

Contact: Dharini Parthasarathy, Senior Communications Officer, CAN,
dparthasarathy@climatenetwork.org
+918826107830