

Landworkers' Alliance Statement on COP26



A swell of disappointment and frustration has emerged in the wake of the COP26 international climate talks in Glasgow. Official announcements from the negotiations show that governments have once again failed to recognise both the scope and nature of the climate crisis. A naive focus on 'net-zero', rather than slashing fossil fuel emissions at their source, has perpetuated the implementation of what can only be labelled as 'false solutions', which, instead of offering any real remedy to the climate crisis, often turn out to be more damaging to people and the planet. However despite our frustration with UN official processes and the ignorance of most of our world leaders, the flame of hope continues to burn bright in the climate justice movement.

COP26 was the 26th annual meeting of countries who are signatories to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). These yearly Conference Of Parties are held as a space for each party (i.e. each country) to lay their commitments to reducing carbon emissions - known as Nationally Determined Contributions - out on the table. But what should have been a multilateral space for negotiation, support and collaboration between state parties, has increasingly become a multistakeholder arena of corporate investment, private-sector involvement and philanthro-capitalist opportunism.

From carbon markets to new gene technologies, the role of the corporate sector in influencing global climate policy is becoming increasingly obvious. AIM4C - an agriculture initiative launched by the U.S. and the United Arab Emirates at this year's COP - offers a perfect example. 'AIM for Climate' is being backed by over 50 private sector giants including the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Pepsi.Co and Syngenta, and will channel billions of dollars of funding into 'climate-smart' (read: 'industrial') agriculture. Public-private initiatives like AIM4C are co-opting the language of small-scale farming to push through hi-tech, corporate-controlled solutions to the climate crisis which will ultimately serve to line the pockets of their shareholders and increase farmers' dependency on big business.

Some consolation can be taken, however, in the steps that are being made towards an increased awareness of climate justice and climate reparations in official negotiations. This year, industrialised nations were forced to acknowledge their responsibility to financially assist those countries most impacted by the damages of global warming; since this drastic change in global temperature is primarily driven by the lifestyles and industries of the Global North. These discussions around adaptation, loss and damage are particularly relevant to landworkers, as it is the food-growers, pastoralists and farmers of this world who are on the frontline of the climate crisis, and who are continuously and severely impacted by changing weather patterns, drought and flooding.

As a result of increasing pressure, further commitment was made towards the Santiago Network for Loss and Damage at COP26, yet the financial commitments fell desperately

short of what is actually needed. UNEP estimates that the amount of money needed by countries in the Global South to cover the cost of loss and damage will amount to \$300 billion a year until 2030, and \$500 billion a year thereafter to 2050. The millions of dollars pledged so far are a mere drop in the ocean.

Another source of hope is a greater recognition of the role of indigenous people in mitigating global warming and protecting forests. In order to help strengthen indigenous land rights, and help these communities defend their land from encroachment and deforestation, governments have pledged a total of \$1.7 billion; money which will allegedly go directly to indigenous people and local communities on the ground.

It's vital to acknowledge, however, that indigenous people's land rights aren't just threatened by deforestation alone. Along with peasants and landworkers across the globe, indigenous groups also face displacement and dispossession from carbon offsetting schemes. Although changes made to Article 6 at this year's COP do make reference to human rights, indigenous rights and the need for social and environmental safeguards, work must now be done to ensure that these safeguards are respected and people's rights are upheld.

So where is real change wrought? On the 'inside' or on the 'outside'? Where is our energy best invested? We believe there is value in both.

This year we received accreditation for 14 delegates - for the Landworkers' Alliance and La Via Campesina member organisations - to participate in the official conference, otherwise known as the 'Blue Zone'. This enabled us to observe official discussions, participate in side-events, and represent the voices of peasants and landworkers in UNFCCC spaces.

This year the Landworkers' Alliance also joined the UNFCCC Farmers Constituency as members. The Constituency was a mix of small and larger farming organisations, and there was room for inputting on and influencing statements that were given, but we will challenge basic structural issues next year with UNFCCC to increase our decision-making power within the Farmers Constituency and the power of the constituencies in the overall negotiations. One small win was that the work of the many constituencies resulted in the concepts of Human Rights, Climate Justice and Just Transition being placed in the [final text](#) of the COP26 agreement.

While being able to observe and participate on the 'inside' was important for us, it also placed into sharp focus the limitations of official negotiations and UN processes. We managed to get inside some of the more official meetings as spokespeople, (with access to the intervention buttons!) but this participation made it clear to us that corporate capture and the lack of accessibility and democratic accountability, alongside the intrinsic snail's pace of international diplomacy are structural flaws embedded in these processes. We believe that grassroots mobilisation on the 'outside' is the only way to push the boundaries of what is possible on the 'inside'.

Having access to the Blue Zone also meant that LWA and La Via Campesina members were able to stage and participate in numerous protests and actions on the 'inside'; and in doing so appeal to the hearts and minds of official negotiators. LWA Youth FLAME delegates also

participated in a mass walk out of the meeting with Alok Sharma (UK president of COP26) to protest against the lack of a meaningful participation of young people in official negotiations.

This COP has been an invaluable moment for organising and building networks of solidarity - both in the UK and with our international allies. LWA were also extremely proud to be part of the COP26 Coalition, organising alongside over a hundred other inspiring climate justice groups, trade unions, environmental groups, youth organisers, and many many more.

There was an enormous amount of pressure - and rightly so - for keeping the target of a 1.5 degrees increase alive at this COP, but the focus on the two weeks of COP alone is misleading. The struggle for climate justice is an ongoing struggle; locally, nationally and globally. Individual actions can only go so far, and what we need is real collective action - and a range of political, cultural and social activities - throughout the coming year and well beyond into the future. The Landworkers' Alliance is a vibrant and growing movement, and being part of the global peasant struggle for agroecology and food sovereignty reminds us that our struggle is a shared struggle, and gives us a united sense of hope for the future.

Moving forward we will strengthen our international solidarity work, pushing for commitments to climate reparations through Loss and Damage and Adaptation Funds alongside directly supporting global networks of peasants and indigenous peoples in their action at the frontline of climate change.

We also will put energy into strengthening the youth movement, whose energy and hope for their future continue to drive us forward, reminding us that this is a struggle we can't afford to lose.

And alongside this we will, of course, continue our work in building climate resilient, agroecological food, forestry and land-use systems here in the UK. So much of our ongoing work is linked to climate justice - from the ELMS trial, to agroforestry and sustainable woodland management to local food systems and seed sovereignty: the struggles for land justice, food sovereignty and climate justice are intimately entwined.

**In solidarity, and holding the flame of hope in our hearts,
LWA Campaigns Team**