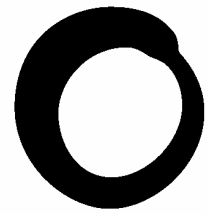


Press Briefing



**Friends of
the Earth**

Climate Change, Crisis and Southern Africa

FRIENDS OF THE EARTH WARNS OF INCREASED FAMINE RISK

Aid agencies say poor harvests have left more than 14 million people in urgent need of food aid in Southern Africa [1]. Past floods and recent drought, coupled with the controls imposed by international agencies, have led to the crop failures [2]. Civil strife and the effects of HIV/AIDS are limiting the capacity of affected countries to cope [3].

The immediate priority is a rapid response to the existing crisis [4]. But the problem could soon get worse. Scientists say man-made climate change is likely to lead to increased droughts, floods and other extreme weather events in Africa [5]. The poorest people in the poorest countries will be worst affected [6]. Further liberalisation of trade rules could hinder northern countries' efforts to stop climate change and stop African countries adapting to it.

The Food Crisis in Southern Africa

The food crisis in South Africa has been caused by low and unseasonal rainfall in Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe. In some places, crop failure has been as high as 90% and maize prices have risen by up to 400% [7].

But, the impending humanitarian disaster is not simply a result of the weather. The impacts of food shortages will be exacerbated by the situation on the ground. In several parts of the area, more than 30 per cent of people aged 15-49 are infected with HIV/ AIDS. This increases their vulnerability to disease and reduces their ability to produce food. Land conflicts have undermined food production in Zimbabwe while civil war has wreaked havoc in Angola.

Furthermore, local incomes in rural areas in the region have fallen as a result of market liberalisation forced on governments by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and World Trade Organisation [8]. The programmes set up by local governments to protect their peoples from famine have been cut back. As recently as May, the IMF warned Malawi that it was spending too much on its agency for food reserves. Zambia stopped subsidies to maize production seven years ago [9]. Prevailing economic ideology and the impositions of international agencies, far from protecting local people, are increasing the likelihood of famine.

Climate Change and food production in Southern Africa

Scientists say that, if current trends continue, average global temperatures could rise by up to 6°C by 2100 [10]. Man-made emissions, particularly of carbon dioxide due to the burning of fossil fuels, are largely to blame [11]. Rising temperatures have knock-on effects on sea-levels and weather patterns. Across Africa, the average number of people affected by coastal flooding could rise from one million in 1990 to, at worst, 70 million in 2080. However, within Southern

Africa, this problem is most likely to affect communities in Mozambique [12]. A more worrying problem for the region is that rainfall may become more episodic – with in places both an increased likelihood of drought and more intense storms [13].

Agriculture is one of the economic sectors thought to be most at risk from climate change. Agriculture is the “prevailing way of life” in Africa [14]. “One-third of the national income in Africa is generated by agriculture” [15]. On average, 70% of the population are farmers and 40 per cent of all exports are agricultural products [16]. The poor in sub-Saharan Africa already spend 60-80 per cent of their income on food [17] – and food represents more than half of all consumption in southern Africa [18].

There is wide consensus that climate change, through increased extremes, will worsen food supply in Africa [19], though some models suggest higher carbon dioxide concentrations will also stimulate crop yields [20]. Climate models suggest temperatures may rise in Africa by 0.2-0.5°C per decade [21]. Central southern Africa is expected to suffer the highest increases. Modelling also suggests that the climate in south east Africa will become dryer.

Friends of the Earth is warning that the impending famine in southern Africa may only be the first of many over coming decades.

Climate change, Kyoto and George W Bush

Ten years ago, 154 nations, including the United States, signed the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change at the Earth Summit in Rio [22]. Five years later, they agreed the Kyoto Protocol which sets targets for industrialised countries to cut their greenhouse gas emissions by at least five per cent from 1990 levels by 2010 [23]. Rules for implementing the Protocol were finally agreed in Marrakech in 2001 and to date, 77 countries representing 36 per cent of industrialised country emissions have ratified it. Poland and Russia are in the process of ratifying and, if they do, the Protocol will enter into force.

But the United States, which is responsible for 36 per cent of the industrial world's emissions has refused to ratify Kyoto. In fact, US Senators say the US President, George ‘W’ Bush, won't even attend the forthcoming Earth Summit in Johannesburg if Kyoto or climate change is on the agenda [24]. Meanwhile, US officials say they need five years to develop scientific forecasts before deciding how best to address global warming [25]. The White House's energy policy clearly pays more attention to the interests of corporations like Exxon Mobil, who oppose the Kyoto Protocol, than to the needs of people in Southern Africa.

Delegates attending the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg must recognise both the growing threat of famine in Southern Africa and the threat that climate change will increase the risk of famine in the future. European nations must stand up to the Americans and demand international action to phase out the use of fossil fuels and increase the provision of clean renewable energy.

Friends of the Earth wants nations at Johannesburg to:

- Call upon all countries to ratify the Kyoto Protocol, and particularly the United States, Russia, Canada and Australia;
- Agree to accelerate negotiations, through the United Nations process, for further emissions reductions, immediately following the entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol.
- Agree a global target and programme of action such that 10 per cent of primary energy be supplied from new renewable sources by 2010.

- Commit to phasing out environmentally harmful energy subsidies in the fossil fuel and nuclear sector.
- Ensure that the principles of sustainable development do not become subservient to the world trade agenda
- Reaffirm the authority and autonomy of Multilateral Environmental Agreements over World Trade Organisation rules.
- Acknowledge the ecological debt that the global North owes to the global South – and abolish the financial debt owed to the North
- Agree to a new global treaty impose global rules on corporations to protect people and the environment

Notes:

[1] Disasters Emergency Committee FAQs - <http://dec.londonweb.net/appeal/news.php>

[2] Oxfam 2002 "Crisis in Southern Africa" Briefing Paper 23

[3] Action Aid - <http://www.actionaid.org/ourpriorities/emergencies/cisa.shtml>. See also Oxfam 2002 "Crisis in Southern Africa" Briefing Paper 23

[4] To donate contact the Disasters Emergency Committee on <http://dec.londonweb.net/appeal/>

[5] Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change 2001 "Climate Change 2001: impacts, adaptation and vulnerability" p. 14

[6] Ibid. p. 8

[7] Oxfam 2002 "Crisis in Southern Africa" Briefing Paper 23

[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change 2001 "Climate Change 2001: the scientific basis" p. 13

[11] Ibid. p. 12

[12] Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change 2001 "Climate Change 2001: impacts, adaptation and vulnerability" p. 515

[13] Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change 2001 "Climate Change 2001: the scientific basis" p. 14

[14] Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change 2001 "Climate Change 2001: impacts, adaptation and vulnerability" p. 502

[15] Ibid. p. 502

[16] Ibid. p. 502

[17] Ibid. p. 502

[18] Ibid. p. 501

[19] Ibid. p. 489

[20]. Hulme M 1996 "Climate change and Southern Africa: an exploration of some potential impacts and implications in the SADC region" p. 48

[21] Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change 2001 "Climate Change 2001: impacts, adaptation and vulnerability" p. 494

[22] United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change "Convention on Climate Change" Introduction

[23] UNFCCC "The Kyoto Protocol to the Convention on Climate Change" Introduction

[24] Senator Jim Jeffords "Opening Statement" Joint hearing into the implementation of environmental treaties by the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works and Senate Committee on Foreign Relations 24 July 2002; Senator Joe Lieberman "Opening Statement" Joint hearing into the implementation of environmental treaties by the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works and Senate Committee on Foreign Relations 24 July 2002 http://www.senate.gov/~epw/stm1_107.htm#07-24-02

[25] Associate Press "Administration officials say climate change forecasts could take five years; people may be a major factor in global warming" 10 July 2002

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which make life better for people

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\$ the UK's most influential , national, environmental
campaigning organisation

\$ a unique network of campaigning local groups,
working in over 200 communities throughout
England, Wales and Northern Ireland

\$ the most effective environmental network in the world,
with almost one million supporters across five
continents and over 60 national organisations

\$ Dependent upon individuals for over 90 per cent of
its income

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