

A look into Cancun climate justice protests

by Joanna Cabello
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As delegates to the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP16) gathered inside the exclusive installations of the Moon Palace resort in Cancun, social movements raised their voices in protest.

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The Cancun negotiations were held in the luxurious Moon Palace resort, which strongly barricaded from the outside world, established an evident separation from the real solutions that farmers, Indigenous Peoples and grassroots organisations demanded on the streets.

During the first week of the negotiations, six caravans started their route towards Cancun from different points of México (San Luis Potosí, Guadalajara, Acapulco, Chiapas, Oaxaca and Mexico City) with the objective of mapping large socio-environmental struggles. The six caravans crossed the country from the grassroots to expose their struggles, along with the causes and relations to the climate crisis and climate policies.

The different routes depicted dramatic climate and social injustices, such as forced displacements from mining projects and mega-dams; areas with severe soil, water and air contamination; oil and industrial pollution; impacts of monoculture plantations and agrofuels; among many others. The caravans allowed a way to create spaces to share local experiences with farmers, Indigenous Peoples and activists from other parts of the world.

The caravans arrived in Cancun on Saturday 4th December, marking the beginning of the "Global Forum for Life and Environmental and Social Justice" organised by La Via Campesina and other allied organisations. In this same space the group Anti-Cop also converged and contributed to the caravans, forums and ecological camps with a clear anti-capitalistic block.

Simultaneously, the camp Dialogo Climático "Espacio Mexicano, held in the center of the city, was the site of the "International Forum of Climate Justice". Outside the city, another space organised by Klimaforum 10, carried out a Global Eco-Villa with ecological practices, workshops and mobilisations.

On Sunday 5th December, peoples from the different spaces got together on the streets for the first march of the peoples in Cancun. According to reports from the Latin American Coordination of Rural Organizations (CLOC), the main objectives were to oppose market proposals which profit from the crisis; defend the proposals from the Cochabamba Summit; and pay tribute to the compañero Lee Kyung Hae, who died in 2003 during the ministerial meeting of the World Trade Organization (WTO) while carrying a sign that said: "The WTO kills peasants", highlighting the link between the WTO and the UNFCCC agreements.¹

The second week of the Cancun negotiations began with ministerial delegations flying in Cancun, whilst the movements massively demonstrated under the slogan: "Cochabamba yes, REDD no".² Responding to the callout from La Via Campesina to create "A Thousand Cancuns", forums, marches and actions were carried out in more than 35 countries on 7th December. In Cancun, a big march blocked one of the most important highways of the city and arrived just meters away from the official negotiations, where a crowded Peoples Assembly for climate and environmental justice was

carried out.³ Pablo Solón, the head of the Bolivian delegation to the UNFCCC, Miguel Lovera, a climate advisor to the presidency of Paraguay, and other allies, joined the assembly in a walk out of the UN negotiations lead by the Youth for Climate Action. On the same day, there were also actions to demand an end to World Bank involvement in climate finance and a full rejection of the REDD mechanism.

With a heavy police presence, the last days of the Cancún conference intensified repression against the voices of opposition. Some marches were forbidden at the last minute, badges of delegates who openly showed disagreement to the UN process were revoked, and press materials that drew attention to police abuses were confiscated. But, as the Mexican movements shouted on the Cancun streets: “Here and there, the struggle will continue!”

Further reading:

Declaration of Cancún “La Vía Campesina

http://viacampesina.org/sp/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1126:via-campesina-declaracion-de-cancun-las-miles-de-soluciones-estan-en-manos-de-los-pueblos&catid=46:cambios-climcos-y-agro-combustibles&Itemid=79

Cancún Betrayal: UNFCCC Unmasked as WTO of the Sky

Statement by the Indigenous Environmental Network

<http://www.climate-justice-now.org/cancun-betrayal-unfccc-unmasked-as-wto-of-the-sky/>

Declaration of the International Forum of Climate Justice:

<http://alainet.org/active/42955>

Declaration of Klimaforum10:

<http://klimaforum10.org/>

¹ CLOC- Coordinadora Latinoamericana de organizaciones del campo, Marcha se toma las calles de Cancún contra la inercia de la CP 16, <http://www.cloc-viacampesina.net/es/noticias-cumbre-climatica/445-marcha-se-toma-las-calles-de-cancun-contra-la-inercia-de-la-cp-16>

² Via Campesina, Rechazo contundente a la REDD en movilización de La Vía Campesina, http://viacampesina.org/sp/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1121:rechazo-contundente-a-la-redd-en-movilizacion-de-la-via-campesina&catid=46:cambios-climcos-y-agro-combustibles&Itemid=79

³ See photos: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/redroadcancun/5242180113/in/set-72157625427367585/>

