Women speak out on climate change, demand climate justice

BANGKOK - Today, women leaders from various social movements and civil society organizations from across the world sounded a warning at the direction of the United Nations climate negotiations.

In a press conference chaired by the Thai Working Group on Climate Justice, and held at the current round of the talks in the UN headquarters in Bangkok, Wardarina of Jubilee South-Asia Pacific Movement on Debt and Development, Anne Maina of the Pan African Climate Justice Alliance and Meena Raman of the Friends of the Earth International said women are more harshly affected by the climate crisis.

“Impacts of climate change are not gender neutral. The impacts of climate change, and the solutions currently being negotiated, come into existing social relations that are subordinating women. Climate change and the false solutions being offered have prolonged the gender injustices and feminization of poverty,” said Wardarina, of Jubilee South Asia-Pacific Movement on Debt and Development (JSAPMDD).

“Women need to challenge and be actively engaged in the climate negotiations and hold the US and rich countries accountable for their historical responsibilities. We are here to stop the negotiations heading further in the wrong direction.” Wardarina said.

“A top-down approach, with binding targets, like that envisioned in the Kyoto process, must be agreed this year. Women of the South reject the pledge and review system being pushed by rich developed countries, as it makes further climate impacts inevitable, and shifts the burden of cutting emissions to poor women across Asia, Africa and Latin America.” Meena Raman, of Friends of the Earth International (FoE I), said.

“Consigning the responsibility for cutting emissions to developing nations, while rich industrialized countries are free to pollute, is an affront to us women in the South.” Wardarina said.

“As part of the reparations for the climate debt they owe us, we demand rich countries commit to drastic and deeper cuts in carbon emissions through domestic measures.” Wardarina said.

Anne Maina, of the Pan African Climate Justice Alliance (PACJA), said that: “In climate change induced disasters it is primarily the poor who have suffered the most, the majority of which are women. This is the result of women's marginalized status and dependence on local natural resources, which in turn increases their domestic burdens.”
Maina added that due to the resource and employment shortages induced by climate change, the phenomenon of “male-out migration” has been introduced.

“More women are left behind with agricultural and household functions. They are left with less access and control over natural resources, technologies and funds to cope with the devastation of the climate crisis,” Maina said.

“There is a real need to put a strong emphasis in the discussions on climate change to include women’s specific needs and women’s rights.” Maina said.

“We demand climate justice. The women of the south demand no less,” all three woman concluded.

Echoing civil society demonstrations in the streets of Bangkok, the leaders said that the women of the South demand no less than a full integration of gender perspective and women's meaningful active participation in all aspect of climate change, including in asserting climate justice on the issue of mitigation and climate finance, with the call for:

- Polluters to pay their dues;
- A rejection of the pledge and review system that deregulates emission controls.
- The reparations of ‘climate debt’ owed by rich countries for over-consuming atmospheric space and causing climate harms to women.

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