

# Fighting Climate Change, Creating Jobs

## COP 17 - Durban, South Africa

At the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Durban, the BlueGreen Alliance urges U.S. negotiators to commit to aggressive emissions reductions while also urging action at home to facilitate the transition to a clean energy economy that creates good jobs while meeting our nation's commitment to address climate change.

The seventeenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties for the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change will take place at the end of this year in Durban, South Africa. In order to build on the momentum of last year's Cancun Agreements, the Durban negotiations should fully operationalize the political agreements reached in Cancun, and initiate more ambitious efforts to truly and justly fight climate change as a world working together.

The world's leading scientific organizations have been unambiguous that climate change is a dire and urgent threat. These peer-reviewed reports, resulting from multiple, years long-working groups of scientists across the world, have emphasized that the longer we delay, the more urgent and drastic our course of action must be. Moreover, as scientific evidence of the scale and rapidity of climate change and its impacts continues to accumulate, the prognosis is likely to only get worse. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Fifth Assessment Report in 2014 is shaping up to be the clearest and most drastic call to action we have had.

The labor and environmental partners of the BlueGreen Alliance strongly advocate for international climate action grounded on science-based greenhouse gas reduction targets. While we are cognizant of the challenges we face in the United States, in light of the current political climate, we urge the U.S. to pursue emission reductions as aggressively as possible by taking all feasible steps to meet current near term targets. Additionally, we encourage investments and policies that will create a strong clean

energy economy and jobs for workers. These efforts will help lay the groundwork for meeting the global goal of reducing emissions to 85 percent below 1990 levels by the year 2050. This can be achieved through investments and policies that will build a strong clean energy economy, create new jobs for American workers, and improve U.S. competitiveness.

While committing to international efforts this December in Durban, the U.S. must buttress its position with work at home. The BlueGreen Alliance has already proposed a clean energy economy blueprint titled *Jobs21!*, which lays out vital steps towards reducing domestic emissions. Our *Jobs21!* proposal recommends growing the production of U.S. clean energy through crucial policies and investments in renewable energy, residential and building efficiency, industrial efficiency, clean energy manufacturing, and transmission and transportation infrastructure upgrades. These improvements would allow us to use resources more efficiently and create and retain jobs using high-road strategies and livable wages. Policies such as these make good sense to both domestic and international audiences, creating jobs for the American worker and lowering emissions as a country. We are also committed to the adoption of regulations of greenhouse gas emissions. We believe that such regulations will make the U.S. more globally competitive and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, while also serving our international climate objectives.

In addition, we remain committed to advancing key issues agreed to in Cancun, Mexico last year and addressed in our COP16 policy brief.<sup>1</sup> Progress must continue on increasing transparency on the financing of climate change mitigation efforts and on measuring, reporting and verification (MRV) for developing and developed countries. Real progress on implementing the “green climate fund” established in Cancun should be achieved in Durban. The outcome in Durban must continue to include language on ensuring just transition to clean energy economies. The negotiations must also continue progress on countries’ adaptation efforts and expanded policies for technology transfer to help developing countries leapfrog dirty patterns of growth, while ensuring that strong intellectual property rights are kept in place. In addition, initiatives to reduce emissions from deforestation and degradation (REDD+) have been advanced during previous COPs. We must build on these measures, ensuring that forest emission reductions are additional and permanent. It is integral to the international climate change process to continue to build on the steps taken in Cancun. We must act resolutely on these issues.

In Copenhagen, developed countries including the U.S. made an aspirational commitment of generating \$100 billion yearly in climate finance by 2020 to support concrete mitigation and adaptation actions by developing countries. While this commitment is necessary, we recognize the challenges climate

finance presents as many countries across the globe face difficult economic times. It is important that in Durban agreement is reached on ways of generating climate financing for the short term, medium term, and longer term in order to ensure some certainty in this process. This, of course, must go hand in hand with forward movement on other aspects of the negotiations, including transparency, deforestation, and the other priority issues. There are various innovative financing options currently being discussed, such as levying fees on emissions, public and private bonds, debt forgiveness, the elimination of subsidies for fossil fuels, and adoption of a global Financial Transaction Tax (FTT). All of these should be considered as possible finance mechanisms.

Finally, with the first commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol expiring at the end of 2012, Durban must provide a roadmap for continued efforts to secure a comprehensive, legally-binding, rules-based climate regime that can provide a solid framework for international efforts to achieve the ultimate objective of the Framework Convention.

The BlueGreen Alliance looks forward to working with U.S. negotiators, the UNFCCC, our labor and environmental partners, and our brothers and sisters in the international community to outline effective and critical policies to address the U.S.’s responsibility to both the environment and workers at home and abroad. We have the opportunity to realign the priorities of global economic development and put our own U.S. economy on a cleaner, sustainable path.

<sup>1</sup> “A Global Agreement to Address Climate Change and Create Jobs”  
<http://www.bluegreenalliance.org/admin/publications/files/BGA-COP-16-Booklet-vFINAL.pdf>

#### BLUEGREEN ALLIANCE PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS



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The BlueGreen Alliance is a national, strategic partnership between labor unions and environmental organizations dedicated to expanding the number and quality of jobs in the green economy.

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