

## COP21: Statement of Principles

The BlueGreen Alliance, representing many of our nation's biggest and most impactful labor unions, environmental, conservation, and science organizations, has been active at the UNFCCC since 2008 in Bali, and since COP15 in Copenhagen has publicly called upon world leaders to come together to forge an agreement which adheres to the principles of scientific urgency, fairness, and justice.

COP21 in Paris will be the most consequential of these meetings, and we hope will represent a turning point where the world focuses on serious action to achieve reductions in carbon pollution in line with scientific urgency and to drive investments in our people and communities that improves their livelihood.

Solving climate change *should* simultaneously build resilient infrastructure, improve community health and safety, safeguard wildlife, and strengthen and create economic opportunities and sustainability for all citizens. In Paris, we have an opportunity to achieve critical progress towards securing our environmental and economic future. We offer the following five principles that we believe will achieve this comprehensive vision:

### Strong Targets and Long-Term Ambition

The world's leading scientific organizations have been unambiguous that climate change is a dire and urgent threat. These numerous peer-reviewed reports they have produced, resulting from an unprecedented collaboration 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.

As we have stated repeatedly before and after past negotiating sessions, we strongly advocate for international climate action focused on science-based greenhouse gas reduction targets. We support the commitments made by the United States and other countries to significantly reduce emissions over the next 10-15 years, but we also acknowledge that these commitments are not sufficiently ambitious to head off the worst effects of climate change. We call on the United States and others to achieve an agreement in Paris that incorporates both a transformational long-term goal and a review of commitments every

five years, in order to ramp up the level of ambition as needed to meet the scientific reality.

### Just Transition

A transition to the clean energy economy requires the resources, policies, and priorities needed to retool our nation, create family-sustaining jobs, strengthen and grow no- and low-carbon sectors—including energy efficiency, renewable energy and commercial carbon capture and sequestration (CCS) applications—and ensure our communities are healthy and safe. If done right, addressing climate change can be one of the best ways to further develop the economy. With clean technologies becoming increasingly available and at lower costs, and the price of inaction on mitigation and adaptation rising, the equation is further tipping in favor of dramatically scaling up smart investments in our infrastructure and workforce right now. Making our infrastructure more resilient can create jobs, and is vital to our global environmental and economic future.

We need bold action to retool our economy, both here in the United States and around the world. We need an ambitious agenda that combines an aggressive emission reduction strategy with a sound infrastructure, jobs, and community resilience strategy. Stagnating wages and employment are major issues in the U. S. and globally. We must pursue our pollution reduction goals in ways that put people to work at family and community supporting wages. The wealth of this nation, and indeed the global economy, has been built on the contributions of millions of workers in carbon-intensive industries. These workers should not be cast aside. Workers should not be forced to choose between a better environment and family supporting wages.

As such we strongly urge that Just Transition and Decent Work language is included in the preamble and operational Articles of the future Paris Agreement, as stated in the bracketed section of Article 2, Option 1 of the draft agreement and decision from October 23, 2015:<sup>i</sup>

*“This agreement shall be implemented... while ensuring... a just transition of the workforce and creation of decent work and quality jobs in accordance with nationally defined development priorities...”<sup>i</sup>*

## Verification and Transparency

Successfully addressing climate change requires bold, collective global action. No single country or region can meet this challenge alone. Each country must put forward its best efforts to reduce greenhouse gases, and developed countries must support developing countries as they move forward on both mitigation efforts and adaptation activities. This collective action cannot work unless each country's actions are implemented properly and transparently, and includes the necessary means for measurement, verification, and review (MRV).

The BlueGreen Alliance has long argued that an effective global climate regime must be grounded in transparency.<sup>ii</sup> The agreement must include strong provisions for biennial reporting and review, so that we can regularly assess the progress of all countries towards their commitments and hold them accountable for achievement of their environmental objectives. This level of review and transparency is an absolute must if we are to tackle global climate change in a fair and comprehensive way. It is also vital to ensuring a level playing field for globally competitive manufacturing while ensuring we are meeting the greatest environmental challenge of our time.

## Finance

An agreement in Paris should support efforts to mobilize financial support for developing nations. We believe that in addition to its bilateral assistance programs, the U.S. should support the Green Climate Fund, which will help to achieve two core goals. The first is to help support a clean energy economic development model for developing and emerging economies. Considering the climate implications as well as the potential to support domestic industries and jobs, we cannot afford to have

clean energy and energy-efficient technologies deployed in developing countries only many years after they are deployed in developed countries.

The second goal is to provide international adaptation assistance. Vulnerable communities across the world are already being impacted by climate change, and even if we take much more aggressive action to limit the further build-up of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, these impacts will continue to increase over the next several decades. As we move forward with job-creating solutions to the climate crisis, we must simultaneously take action to help the world's most vulnerable communities adapt to the unavoidable impacts of extreme climate-related events, temperature increases, and sea level rise.

## Revenue

Linking the above four principles is the need to generate revenue for investments in technologies to reduce greenhouse gas pollution, a proper transition for workers and communities, support for manufacturing industries, and vital financing for developing nations. In addition to directly putting a cap and price on carbon pollution, there are various innovative financing options that can be used to raise revenue, such as public and private bonds, debt forgiveness, the elimination of subsidies for fossil fuels, and adoption of a global Financial Transaction Tax (FTT).

## Footnotes

<sup>i</sup> UNFCCC, *Draft agreement and draft decision on workstreams 1 and 2 of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action*. Version of 23 October 2015 @ 15:30hrs. [http://unfccc.int/files/meetings/bonn\\_oct\\_2015/application/pdf/ws\\_1\\_and\\_2.pdf](http://unfccc.int/files/meetings/bonn_oct_2015/application/pdf/ws_1_and_2.pdf)

<sup>ii</sup> BlueGreen Alliance, June 2010. <http://www.bluegreenalliance.org/news/publications/document/BGA-Bonn-letter-FINAL.pdf>



**The BlueGreen Alliance is a national partnership of America's largest labor unions and environmental organizations. We work together to turn today's biggest environmental challenges into our biggest economic and job-creating opportunities. Together with 15 million members and supporters, we are a powerful, unified voice calling for good, family-sustaining jobs, a clean environment, and a thriving and fair American economy.**