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NGOs at UN climate talks in Warsaw walk out

Warsaw, Poland (PANA) – With a day to go before the two-week UN climate negotiations ends in Warsaw, Poland, observers from NGOs and social movements on Thursday walked out of the negotiations, accusing rich industrialised countries of jeopardising international climate action.

"We believe in this process. We will never give up on it, because people around the world desperately need a global climate change. But a new treaty must also be meaningful. Warsaw has simply not been good enough. As civil society we will be back next year with still more voices behind us, with more determination and with more ambition to succeed. We urge governments to do the same," Kumi Naidoo, Executive Director of Greenpeace International, said.

Susann Scherbarth, climate justice and energy campaigner for Friends of the Earth Europe, said: "we are walking out in frustration and disappointment - rich industrialised countries here in Poland have done nothing to cut emissions or provide finance to tackle climate change. We also walk out in solidarity with those communities and countries who stand to lose from climate change, and for whom these talks have done so little. Enough is enough."

Some of the movements and organisations involved in the walk out included the Pan African Climate Justice Alliance, Construyendo Puentes (Latin America), IBON International, LDC-Watch, Friends of the Earth Europe, the International Union Confederation, Greenpeace, Oxfam, ActionAid, and the WWF.

WWF said in a statement it issued after the walk-out that "We have said we stand in solidarity with the millions impacted by Typhoon Haiyan, and with all climate impacted people. Our solidarity compels us to tell the truth about COP 19 - the Climate Conference.

"The Warsaw Climate Conference, which should have been an important step in the just transition to a sustainable future, has failed to track to deliver virtually nothing. In fact, the actions of many rich countries here in Warsaw are directly undermining the process itself, which is an important multilateral process that must succeed if we are to fix the global climate crisis,"

"When Japan announced that it was following Canada and backtracking on emission cut commitments previously made, and Australia gave multiple signals that it was utterly unwilling to take the UN climate process seriously, the integrity of the process was further jeopardized," it added.

Issues being cited by the NGOs for protesting also include the stalling of negotiations on loss and damage because rich countries refuse to engage on the substance of an international mechanism.

The NGOs also argued that Warsaw had not seen any increase in emission reductions or increased support for adaptation before 2020, they said, adding that "it has actually taken the process backward and that a clear pathway to a comprehensive and fair agreement in Paris 2015 is missing."

"We as civil society are ready to engage with ministers and delegations who actually come to negotiate in good faith at the Warsaw Conference, rich country governments have come with nothing to offer. Many developing country governments are struggling and failing to stand up for the needs and rights of their people. It is clear that if countries continue acting in bad faith, the next two days of negotiations will not deliver the climate action the world so desperately needs," WWF stated.

The organisations said they will now focus on mobilizing people to push their governments to take leadership for serious climate action and assured that they will go to Lima, Peru, in 2014 for the next round of the UN negotiations to hold governments accountable to the vision of a sustainable and just future.

The Warsaw conference is one of the final steps leading to a new international climate global agreement to be signed in 2015.

Although no major decisions are expected to be announced in Warsaw, it is, however, critical that the conference make progress on climate finance which developed countries have promised to support poorer countries to cut their emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change.

Developed countries had promised an annual budget of US\$ 100 billion by 2020 but governments have not yet specified how they will deliver on this pledge between 2013 and 2020.

On Wednesday, Namibia, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Kenya emphasized developed countries' obligation to provide climate finance and the need to operationalize and capitalize the Green Climate Fund as soon as possible.

Another key issue here is on a proposed "loss and damage" mechanism that developing countries have stressed is needed to help countries cope with climate impacts.

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