

Call for ceasefire in Palestine at COP28 G77 Leaders' Summit

New Delhi, 27 Dec. (Radhika Chatterjee and Indrajit Bose): The G77 and China expressed its strong solidarity with the people of Gaza, in Palestine, at the Group's 'Leaders' Summit' held on the sidelines of COP28 in Dubai held on Dec. 2, that was organised by **Cuba, the Chair of the G77/China**. It was the first time in the history of the climate conferences under the UNFCCC that such a meeting was held.

Several countries in the group condemned the "genocide" being conducted against people of Gaza, including "thousands of children", by Israel, the "illegal occupier" and called for "peace" and "immediate ceasefire".

In the inaugural session, **Miguel Canaz, the President of Cuba**, expressed support and solidarity with people of Palestine, saying that "Cuba is against the genocide in Gaza because of occupation by Israel" and added further that it will always support legal means for putting the "barbarism to an end". Other leaders too expressed similar sentiments. (See highlights below).

The summit was attended by 40 developing countries, with around 19 represented by their heads of State. A majority of the leaders who spoke expressed the need for maintaining unity and solidarity amongst developing countries.

Stressing the importance of the principles of equity and common but differentiated responsibility and respective capability (CBDR-RC), they commended the establishment of the Loss and Damage Fund (LDF). Laying out their expectations of the global stocktake, (GST), they emphasized the need for developed countries to deliver on their obligations and take the lead in dealing with climate change, a crisis to which developing economies "contributed the least" but are "affected the most". Many leaders also stressed that for developing countries, addressing climate change needs to also tackle development and poverty eradication.

Some leaders also emphasised the need for reforming the international financial architecture and addressing the problem of debt burdens faced by developing economies.

The **UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres**, who also spoke at the Summit called for the provision of an effective debt-relief mechanism, that supports payment suspensions, longer lending terms, and lower rates.

Several leaders also pointed out the urgent need for coming together against "unilateral measures" like the imposition of "carbon taxes" by developed countries. Acknowledging the inevitable need for moving towards clean energy technologies, some leaders also

highlighted that the use of critical minerals and rare earths should happen in a manner that ensures that “the new economy is fairer, more equitable and offers equal opportunity for all”.

The **President of Cuba**, in welcoming leaders to the Summit, pointed out that the developed world has “carried out unbridled consumption of resources” which is “causing increasing tension”. There exists a “huge gap between the opulent Global North and ever poorer Global South”, he further added. Canaz said there is a “need for greater emissions reduction and limit global warming by not exceeding 1.5 °C”, but “regrettably, developed countries do not honour their obligations and don’t deal with their consumption. Means of implementation (MOI) for developing countries must be adequate and commensurate with the international agreements.” Reiterating the principle of CBDR-RC and the need for equity, Canaz said, “We have to ensure that nobody is genuinely left behind. The MOI must be adequate, including financing, which is falling short. The Global South cannot decouple climate action and development. They are inextricably linked,” added the Cuban President.

Antonio Guterres told the group, “your unity, advocacy and tenacity were essential in securing last year’s historic Loss and Damage agreement”. Guterres said the GST requires actions in three areas to “create the conditions for a surge of global climate ambition in 2025 and beyond”.

In the area of finance, he said, “Developed countries must clarify the delivery of the \$100 billion commitment. We need also to see a clear plan to double adaptation finance to \$40 billion a year by 2025 as a first step to devoting at least half of all climate finance to adaptation. Up to eighteen times more finance is needed for adaptation to meet the current needs of developing countries”. The situation was the same for the new LDF, he said further.

Highlighting the issue of reforming the international financial architecture, Guterres said it “must be reformed to reflect the realities of today and to respond to developing countries’ needs including in relation to the Bretton Woods system. The international financial system must provide an effective debt-relief mechanism, that supports

payment suspensions, longer lending terms, and lower rates”. “All international financial institutions must align their policies, plans and programmes with the Paris Agreement (PA)”, he further added.

For multilateral development banks, Guterres said their capital base should be increased. He said there has to occur a “reform of their business models so that they leverage far more private finance at reasonable cost to developing countries”. He also shared that “grants and concessional finance are essential for leveraging private finance at scale”.

The second thing that was needed was a drastic reduction in emissions. Reflecting on the seriousness of the situation, he said, “Current policies would take us towards a 3°C degree rise in global temperature. That spells disaster, particularly for developing countries”.

Regarding the urgent need for deploying clean energy technologies he stressed that “The extraction of critical minerals for the clean energy revolution — from wind farms to solar panels and battery manufacturing — must be done in a sustainable, fair and just way... We cannot repeat the mistakes of the past with a systematic exploitation of developing countries reduced to the production of basic raw materials”, said the UN SG further.

Guterres also announced the establishment of “the Panel on Critical Energy Transition Minerals,” which he said “will bring together governments, international organizations, industry and civil society to develop common and voluntary principles to guide extractive industries in the years ahead in the name of justice and sustainability”. “The G77/China [have] to keep pushing for the change our world needs”, he added further.

Dr. Sultan Al Ahmed Jaber, the COP28 President, of the United Arab Emirates, congratulated Cuba and the group for holding the Summit and appreciated its unity. Sharing his expectations from the GST, he said, “We want a just energy transition – one that is orderly and is responsible and leaves no one behind. We want this transition with equity in its heart. A transition that will deliver tangible results and solutions”. He further added that “action was needed at every step to

restore trust, whether it be in mitigation, adaptation, MOI, including finance”.

HIGHLIGHTS OF SELECTED INTERVENTIONS

Riad Malki, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the State of Palestine, reiterated the need for maintaining the principles of equity and CBDR-RC within UNFCCC, “while recognizing the need for an effective and progressive response to the threat of climate change based on the best available scientific knowledge and in the context of sustainable development and efforts to eradicate poverty”.

Drawing the group’s attention to the suffering of the people of Palestine, Malki said, “the absolutely devastating environmental situation our people face in the Gaza Strip due to the ongoing genocidal war waged by Israel, the illegal occupier, against the Palestinian people. As you know, the illegal occupier has been waging a criminal war against our people for nearly two months, which has claimed the lives and limbs of tens of thousands of innocent Palestinian civilians – most of them women and children. This atrocious campaign of death and destruction has also obliterated at least 60% of the buildings in Gaza, including universities, hospitals, and hundreds of schools, and decimated the infrastructure causing untold damage to the already fragile ecosystem there and further contaminating underground water supplies. Large swaths of land have been scorched and turned into desolate wastelands.

Equally condemnable and criminal is Israel’s widespread, systematic, and illegal use of various munitions against Palestinian civilians, including white phosphorous against densely populated areas in the Gaza Strip. This highly toxic and destructive chemical will have long-term environmental effects on Gaza as well as health implications for the population. In this connection, I urge you to support Palestine’s efforts to secure an immediate end to this illegal aggression as well as our continuing endeavors to seek accountability for the crimes committed against the Palestinian people, including this criminal and environmentally hazardous crime. Palestine will also seek your support in commissioning a detailed study of the environmental impact of this egregious war and international support in

repairing the extensive environmental damage caused by it”.

Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, the President of Brazil, addressing the UNSG in the context of the ongoing “genocide” in Gaza, said, the UN needs to dedicate “more effort to manage to reach an agreement. It should take an attitude that either we change the UN Security Council or we add more members so that responsibility prevails. We are very much bothered. We should stop the war and save lives instead of destroying lives”.

Laying out the role that G77 and China have to play in the current world, he said, “in the context of growing geopolitical fragmentation, G77 must be the guardian of multilateralism”. Referring to the discussions on transition, Lula said, “there are many models towards a decarbonized world. Fair transition cannot leave us as mere exporters of raw materials. It must allow us to transform and leverage industrialization”. He further highlighted that, “Unilateral measures show the hypocrisy of the rhetoric of free trade and the burdens being transferred to the Global South. We, the most affected by climate change, are being punished twice”. Expressing the need for working towards justice, Lula said the “Global North should shoulder the responsibility”. He drew attention to the fact that developing countries need “US\$ 4-6 trillion to implement their nationally determined contributions (NDCs)”.

Referring to the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Brazilian President said the problem of these financial institutions was the limited number of seats that developing countries have on their Board. “Developing countries do not manage to access money because of bureaucratic mechanisms”. “We need to have fair institutions and find solutions to tax evasion, a problem which currently favours the super-rich. It is not possible to postpone the discussion anymore. We have to reduce inequalities or we will stay behind if we don’t advocate for resources,” added Lula.

Cyril Ramaphosa, the President of South Africa, in a strongly worded statement expressed solidarity with the people of Palestine, and the “people who are now being subjected to acts of genocide.” “More than 4000 children have died and many more have war wounds inflicted on their

fragile bodies. People in Palestine, particularly in Gaza need to live in peace. We are demanding ceasefire now; to stop the slaughter of people in Gaza."

Speaking about the challenges of climate change, Ramaphosa said for developing countries, "transformative climate action is taking place alongside our efforts to eradicate poverty and inequality." Developing countries should "coordinate their positions for the "transformation of global financial architecture and reform of multilateral development banks, so that they can support sustainable development where it is needed the most." He stressed that developing countries should also "forge a united platform against unilateral coercive and trading distortion measures under the guise of climate action, including carbon taxes that have the effect of reversing climate finance flows to the Global North."

Referring to climate justice, the South African President said it is "premised on each Party having the sovereign right to choose its own developmental path of shared objectives. This speaks to the right of developing economies to developmental space. Since developing economy countries are least responsible for the climate crisis, but most affected, it is critical that enabling MOI support is provided by developed economies".

Speaking in the context of clean energy technologies, Ramaphosa said, "exporters of strategic minerals and rare earth required to drive green development need to work together to ensure that the new economy is fairer, more equitable and offers equal opportunity for all. Our natural resources need to advance the sustainable development of our people", stressed the President.

He pointed out that there was a "need to reframe climate action narrative to better address realities of developing countries with a view of giving appropriate recognition to their rights and to acknowledge their contributions to the global fight against this existential threat."

President of Colombia, Gustavo Petro, called for a debate on structuring a new international financial system to deal with the climate crisis. He

said, "a pact between poor countries, between middle-income countries and between rich countries and China is required, around how the world financial system is structured in order to finance the great Marshall Plan to solve the crisis." Elaborating on what this might entail, he said, "With China we would have to dialogue within the IMF, within multilateral development banks, about how to reduce the debt of States. Without that, we will not have the capacity to finance the transition. It is not by putting a begging hat on the richest funds of capital that we are going to finance it," he emphasized.

Stating that the energy transition would require a much larger amount than the US\$100 billion annually that was promised by developed countries, it will no longer be sufficient, said Petro, adding that what is required is trillions of dollars. "This enormous amount has to come from public funds, but for those public funds to exist, we have to get rid of debt and this means that there are many mechanisms or issuances of IMF special drawing rights for that purpose," he asserted. Another mechanism that he proposed for raising climate finance was of implementing a universal tax on "the global carbon trade, that is, on oil and coal."

Xiomara Castro, the **President of Honduras**, speaking through a representative, emphasized the need to protect tropical forests, indigenous peoples and their livelihoods. She called for measures like "environmental direct investments," and for regulations aimed at "use of seeds" and for preventing "over exploitation of ocean resources". She also called for the implementation of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea to "conserve marine biodiversity beyond national jurisdictions". Hitting the nail on its head, she pointed out "we need to sharply bring down consumption levels in developed economies... and address environmental impacts of their consumption. Those who bear global responsibility of the problem, must shoulder the responsibility of addressing the problem," she added further.

Mia Amor Mortley, the **Prime Minister of Barbados** stressed that the "climate crisis demands from us justice in allocation of resources; justice in recognizing that countries that did not cause the climate crisis are being forced to expand their debt space. We have to rather focus on the development of people" and laid emphasis on two

main directions in which work was needed. First, the need for the G77 and China to “unite” for “a global methane agreement”. She pointed out that “methane was the biggest contributor to heating” that the world was witnessing. There was therefore a need for a transformation in “not just the oil and gas industry, but also the farmer sector and agriculture”.

Second, on the need for reforming the international financial architecture. Citing the Bridgetown initiative, the Paris Pact and the Marrakesh agreement, Mortley said, “all speak to the need for reform of an unjust financial system. We need long term capital that is affordable”. “We have started to capitalize the LDF but it is unlikely to meet the needs of those who need it most unless we recognize a significant part of the global capital is controlled by those few who do not require to contribute to the Fund”.

She also highlighted the need for raising funds for adaptation. She said, “every dollar of investment saves \$7 of damage. We need to shift from the valuing of short-term capital and secure long-term capital at affordable rates”.

Recalling the challenges faced by the industrial world in the aftermath of World War I, Mortley said at that time the industrialized countries “provided the necessary funds by translating bonds that could finance for the war and post-war reconstruction. They paid off those bonds only in 2014. Even industrial countries needed that kind of capacity to stretch out capital it borrowed, imagine how much developing countries need”.

The biggest concern for developing countries was that they “will become un-investable”, “which would “bring another set of consequences” that developing countries were not prepared for, said Mortley. What was needed was to bring “creditors, bankers, and credit rating agencies at the table. If they are not at the table, what will happen to the insurance sector?” she asked. Stressing the magnitude of the crisis of climate change, she emphasized on the need for peace. “War”, she said, “should not be against human beings, whether in Africa, Eastern Europe or the Middle East. We need all hands on deck to win the war against climate change. We have to remove the distractions and get back to the business of saving the planet.”

Reiterating its solidarity with G77, **Ding Xuexiang**, the **Vice Premier of China**, said, “As the largest developing country in the world, we stand with the developing world side by side”. Sharing some highlights of the role China has played in supporting the developing world, he said, “We have assisted other developing countries in tackling climate change. We have made solid efforts to promote South-South cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative. We have set up the South-South Cooperation Fund”. Stressing the need for safeguarding multilateralism, he said, “We oppose unilateralism and bullying that uses green development as a pretext. We promote equity, justice and urge developed countries to honour their obligations”.

David Choquehuanca Céspedes, the **Vice President of Bolivia**, speaking for the **Like-minded developing countries (LMDC)**, in a scathing statement said, “there is a lack of leadership from developed countries and a lack of ambition in reducing emissions on their part. They also have fossil fuel expansion plans up to 2050. If developed countries want to fight the climate crisis, they cannot hope to achieve net zero by 2050. They must do so now for an equitable sharing of the global carbon budget”. He stressed that “it is the developed countries who are responsible for jeopardizing the planet”. But now they are “always seeking to erode the fundamental principles of CBDR and equity”.

Cedric Schuster, the **Minister of Natural Resources and Environment of Samoa**, speaking for the **Alliance for Small Island States (AOSIS)**, said the main priority for the island nations was a hope to “achieve stronger, bolder climate action”. Speaking about climate finance, he said, “there is a different nature of financial flows, to this end, we are advocating for sub goals on mitigation, adaptation, and loss and damage within an overarching goal for greater transparency and accountability”. He stressed that “higher ambition on mitigation coupled with support for adaptation will get the world to 1.5 °C degree goal”. The world “must see strengthened commitment from major emitters”.

Calling for a “phase out of fossil fuels” as opposed to a business as usual approach, he also highlighted the provisions and principles of the PA and

stressed the need of “setting renewable energy capacity by 2030, with clear signals to markets”. These he said, could not happen without “stronger commitment to fossil fuel phase out”. He emphasized the need “to move faster to climate resilient societies”. To achieve this, countries “must lean on international cooperation to pave the way for these development pathways”, he added.

Marco Vinicio Ramano, Vice Minister of Natural Resources and Climate Change of Guatemala, speaking for **Independent Alliance of Latin American and Caribbean Countries (AILAC)** echoed **AOSIS**. It also added that the GST should “limit climate flows in the form of debt”, pointing out that “the topic of financing is at the heart of implementation of climate action”.

Stanely Kasongo Kakubo, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Zambia, speaking on behalf of the **African Group,** highlighted the difficulties faced by the African countries. He said, “Most of us, especially in the African region, despite contributing least to climate change, are disproportionately affected by it. Floods, droughts, storms are affecting our crops and their productivity, directly leading to poverty and hunger, especially in the Sahel region.” Stressing on the need for recognizing “the special needs and circumstances of African countries,” some measures that should be focused on include: “Implementing policies and supporting techniques that leads to the adoption of climate resilient food systems; adopting water harvesting methods and promoting efficient way of utilizing scarce resources; using geographic mapping systems to map out droughts and floods; and green finance sector investments to support financing and enable resilience”.

Jalil Abbas Jilani, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Pakistan, said that it was through unity and solidarity that “our predecessors succeeded in establishing principles of equity and CBDR-RC in the UNFCCC. Now we have to bring similar solidarity and unity to achieve objectives in adaptation, mitigation, and loss and damage. He also said that the G77 and China must work

together to the reform international financial infrastructure, seek special drawing rights, and debt swaps.” He urged developed countries to “act on their commitments made in the PA, Glasgow, and Sharm El Sheikh”. Speaking about climate finance, he said, “concessional climate finance must be leveraged to mobilize US\$ 1 trillion in investments”. He also stressed the “transfer of technology from developed to developing countries.”

Celinda Sosa Lunda, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bolivia, highlighting the need for respecting the rights of indigenous peoples said, “in Bolivia we learn from our peoples to preserve and strive for a harmonious life with nature, we reclaim all this knowledge, and we encourage that the visions to overcome the current climate crisis are thought from these perspectives that respect ecosystems and that generate collective thinking”.

The **Prime Minister of Uganda, Robinah Nabbanja,** speaking through a representative, who will assume the chair of Presidency for G77 and China in 2024, said the climate crisis the world is facing currently can only be addressed through actions that are aimed at achieving the “objectives of the Convention and the principles of equity and CBDR-RC, in light of different national circumstances”. Commending the establishment of the LDF, she said the it “should support programs that address economic and non-economic loss and damage on any affected aspect of human and natural systems. There must be simplified and active access to funds to ensure that no developing country is left behind.” Regarding climate finance, she said, “The new collective quantified goal on climate finance should be informed by lessons on US\$ 100 billion goal annually, including the failure to mobilize the goal. We have to think about the quantum and timeframe of the goal, define the qualitative and quantitative elements, identify the various instruments, and will be a part of the dynamic contributor base”. Uganda, as the next the chair of Presidency for G77 and China in 2024, also gave a call for strong participation of all countries in the summit it will be hosting in Kampala on 21st January 2024.