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2013/11/18

CAN Open Letter to Umbrella Group Countries Brollies won't save you from a Super Typhoon

The beginning of COP19 was overshadowed by the devastating effects of Super Typhoon Haiyan in Palau, Micronesia, the Philippines and neighbouring countries. Not only is the destruction suffered by these countries tragic, so is the fact that this is not the first COP to occur in parallel with such distressing extreme events. It is almost as if Mother Nature is sending us a message: the world cannot stand still in the face of climate chaos. Yet, many countries in this group do not seem to have gotten the message.

The actions taken this past week here and at home by Japan, Australia and Canada are simply unacceptable. One of the key tasks in Warsaw is to raise near-term ambition in order to close the gigaton gap. Japan's announcement yesterday to lower its ambition so massively that it will now actually "increase" emissions from 1990 is absolutely shameful. The world needs decisive and immediate actions to reduce emissions, not ambition. To add insult to injury, Japan seems to be trying to make the target look ambitious through some creative accounting, yet the cold, undeniable fact remains: it is an increased target compared to 1990 and a significant rollback from even Kyoto. The government has to come back with a truly ambitious target, without relying on nuclear energy. After all, too much reliance on nuclear energy led to this situation in the first place. You should not repeat the mistake.

Down-under the situation is sadly too similar. It seems there is not one aspect of these negotiations that Australia is not out to frustrate. First it was climate finance, which includes vital funding to vulnerable communities to help build resilience to climate change. Next it was attempting to roll back your emissions

targets and domestic legislation, at a time when we so badly need you to up our ambition. Australia then took an impossibly hard-line position on a mechanism to address the loss and damage suffered by developing countries impacted by climate change. We could include other countries in this room on that last point. We do not believe these positions represent the wishes of the Australian community and we expect better.

The cheerleading by Canadian 'leaders' on Australia's misguided legislative actions is simply disrespectful to all those countries present here seeking to negotiate action on climate change in good faith. This farce is further compounded by Canada's own projections that it is not currently even getting close to Copenhagen 'target' and miles away from its original Kyoto commitment or what is required by science. The gap is a result of a nonsensical push to expand the tar sands as fast as possible – which will result in a tripling of emissions from the tar sands between 2005 and 2020. Aggressive expansion of fossil fuel extraction is incompatible with the need to phase out GHG emissions within the next few decades.

As civil society, we have used every means at our disposal. We went so far as to create the Fossil of Disbelief, because the situation has simply become Kafkaesque. Humanity must reduce its emissions to avoid the worst impacts of climate change; if the 200 mph sustained winds of the Super Typhoon were not enough of a wakeup call, you are not only deaf, you are something else.

If the devastating impacts of climate change such as massive floods caused by storms, heat wave, sea level rise, and/or many other extreme events were not scary enough to wake you up, I don't know what can.

Sincerely,

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