

# No “Durban mandate” for The Great Escape

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As African civil society and international allies, we reject the call of many developed countries for a so-called “Durban mandate” to launch new negotiations for a future climate framework.

A new mandate for a new treaty in place of the Kyoto Protocol should be understood for what it really is – rich countries backtracking and reneging on “inconvenient” obligations, at the expense of the poor and the planet. While developed countries may appear progressive by asking for a mandate to negotiate a new legally binding treaty, the truth is that this is nothing but a veiled attempt to kill the Kyoto Protocol and escape from their further mitigation obligations under the already existing mandate in the Protocol itself, and the agreement in 2005 for negotiating further emission cuts. A political declaration to continue the KP is, in practice, another nail in its coffin. Anything less than a formal legal amendment and ratification process, will deliver an empty shell of the Kyoto Protocol.

Agreeing to a new mandate would mean action is effectively delayed for five to ten years. A new treaty will take several years to negotiate with several more years needed for ratification. Further, there is no assurance that countries that have repudiated the existing legal architecture, like the United States, will agree to or ratify a new agreement, nor that such agreement will not be a weak and ineffective “pledge and review” system.

Developed countries must urgently scale up the ambition of their emission reduction targets. As the latest reports by the International Energy Agency make clear, deep emission cuts are needed now to have a realistic chance of limiting temperature rise to 1.5°C. Current emission reduction pledges will lead us to a world that is 5°C warmer. For Africa, this means 7 or 8°C of warming and unimaginable human suffering. This is why a pledge-based approach with weak review rules, instead of the Kyoto Protocol’s approach of legally binding commitments and international rules that give meaning to these commitments, is completely insufficient to ensure the necessary emission cuts.

While many developed countries condition any further action, including fulfilling their legally binding obligations to a second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol, on greater action by emerging economies, developing country pledges already far outweigh pledges by developed countries. In fact, with accounting loopholes and the use of carbon markets, developed countries could make no net contribution to reducing emissions by 2020.

While many developed countries seek to end the Kyoto Protocol, they simultaneously attempt to retain and expand their favored elements of the Kyoto Protocol, like the CDM, in a new agreement and shift their responsibilities onto developing countries. Without legally binding emission reductions under the Kyoto Protocol, developed countries must not be allowed to have access to the carbon markets. Further, with the price of carbon crashing, paltry emissions reductions pledges from developed countries, there is no rationale for the continuation of the CDM or the creation of new market mechanisms.

Developed countries must scale up their ambition and stop blaming other countries who have contributed far less to the climate crisis, yet are taking on more aggressive action. Developing countries are living up to their promises made in Bali, while developed countries are attempting to re-write the rules of the game to avoid meeting their obligations.

Developed countries are also denying developing countries the necessary finances and technology to address the climate crisis. The provision of finance from developed to developing countries is an obligation in and of itself. It must not be used as a bargaining chip in the Durban negotiations, nor should it be dangled in front of poor countries as a bribe to get agreement for a very bad mitigation deal. The same applies to the operationalization of the Green Climate Fund. Success in Durban depends on the Green Climate Fund not being an empty, ineffective shell.

We will not accept a “Durban mandate” or any outcome that locks in the current low ambition and inaction for many years, and condemns billions of people in Africa and across the world to suffer the worst impacts of a warming world.

*Signed by:*

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Rural Women’s Alliance  
South Durban Community Environmental Alliance  
Southern African Faith Communities’ Environment Institute  
Third World Network  
Trust for Community Outreach and Education  
Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy  
Philippine Movement for Climate Justice  
Fairwatch - Italy  
Greenovation Hub  
Earth Day for Almost Extinct Animals  
KRuHA - Indonesia; people’s coalition for the right to water  
Focus on the Global South  
African Biodiversity Network  
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Gender, Environment and Climate Action Network (GECAN), Nigeria  
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