

## Be the Seed

### An Introduction to and Commentary on the government of Bolivia's Call for a 'Peoples' World Conference On Climate Change And The Rights Of Mother Earth'

Jai Sen, cacim.net, India, March 2010 <sup>1</sup>

#### *Introduction*

Because of climate change, the world we know – the planet we as human beings call home – is today in crisis, and is perhaps in a kind and scale of crisis that has never been known before in history : Of a possible incremental and then non-linear, cataclysmic collapse of the ecosystem, one that threatens life as we know it.<sup>2</sup> In its course, this collapse threatens to open social conflict, violence, war, and widespread individual and social trauma - and even deeper injustice on the planet at an unprecedented scale, along with immense accompanying suffering for huge numbers of people across the world.

We are not 100% sure that this is definitely what is going to unfold (and in some ways, it is in the very nature of the unpredictable combinations of changes that are already taking place, and that are expected to increasingly take place, that we will never be able to be 100% sure of what is going to happen), and we need to make one of our tasks to try and outline all possible scenarios. But most analyses so far, including by the IPCC, suggest that a collapse is quite possible – unless enormous and radical changes are very rapidly made to the world's economy that can drastically limit carbon emissions; which at present anyway, seem unlikely.

This possible scenario of course opens deep questions for everyone, in any walk of life and in all parts of the world, but most definitely for all those concerned with social justice.

The intergovernmental conference that took place in Copenhagen in December 2009 around climate change made clear that most of the governments of the world (and especially those of large countries, both from the North and the South, including India), are unwilling – as yet, anyway - to address the incipient war, violence, injustice, and almost unimaginably deep human suffering that today seems so possible (and in some ways has already been unleashed) in the form of cataclysmic climate change; and that they are structurally incapable of doing so. This is because of their single-minded greed for power-over and their focus on 'national interests', the control that corporations and other private interests have

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<sup>1</sup> I prepared the first draft of this Note in January 2010, at the request of a group of people from movements and solidarity groups who have started to meet in New Delhi towards establishing a longer-term process of reflection on and critical engagement with key issues in movement; and to whom I put forward the idea of solidarity with the Bolivian initiative introduced in this Note. My thanks to the following : For their comments on the first draft of this introduction, Julia Sánchez, Kolya Abramsky, Lee Cormie, and Peter Waterman; Ashok Chowdhury for his close and critical engagement and solidarity in, and contributions to, the development of these ideas and proposals in the third draft; the meeting of the Delhi group on March 2 2010 to more specifically discuss how to relate to the Cochabamba Conference, for their comments and their invitation to revise and prepare a fourth draft; and Mayra Gomez and Julia Sánchez for some very helpful comments on and corrections to my fourth draft. Finally, I would like to express my debt to John Holloway for the idea of a crack – and, I think, also of being a seed.

<sup>2</sup> In case you have not already seen the powerful film by Yann Arthus-Bertrand titled 'Home', brilliantly showing the present state of our planet, you must do so. You can see and/or download it @ [www.home-2009.com/](http://www.home-2009.com/).

over them and over politics, and the consequent short-sightedness and inability of governments to think longer-term and of the interests of the planet as a whole.

In this context, on December 21 2009 – within a few days of the conclusion of the Copenhagen Conference - the President of Bolivia announced that “a world conference of social movements” would take place in Bolivia on April 22 2010, “which is the International Day of Mother Earth”.<sup>3</sup> And on January 5 2010, two weeks later, the government of Bolivia issued its full Call for a “**Peoples’ World Conference On Climate Change And The Rights Of Mother Earth**” (text below; also available @ [www.cmpcc.org](http://www.cmpcc.org)), to be held in Cochabamba, Bolivia, during April 19-22 2010.

It is also very significant that the Conference is being held in the city of Cochabamba, which in the year 2000 was the site of the historic and successful popular ‘Water War’ against the privatisation of water supply.<sup>4</sup>

Especially in view of the failure and farce of the Copenhagen process, there is good reason to believe and to argue that **the initiative taken by Bolivia is extremely important** and that **it demands our closest attention**. This Note takes this position. To do so however, it argues that we need to critically view and relate to the content, timing, strategic perspective, and authorship of the Call in terms of certain key considerations, which I try and lay out below in terms of ten points.

#### *Ten points of engagement*

**One**, although the Call has been issued by a government, this is a government with a difference. We need to recognise and read that the Bolivian state, as it stands today (but more on this below), is a **social movement state**. This is not only the term used by social and political analysts (eg Guillermo Delgado-P, forthcoming (2010) – ‘Re-founding Bolivia : A Social Movements State ?’, in Jai Sen and Peter Waterman, eds, forthcoming (2010a) - *Worlds of Movement, Worlds in Movement*. New Delhi : OpenWord) but *by itself* and by its president Evo Morales Ayma, its vice president Álvaro García Linera, and its ambassador to the UN Angélica Navarro, among others. They see themselves that way, as having grown out of social movement and as still rooted there – and in many ways they seem to see government as being an instrument for the aspirations of social movement in the addressal of social, economic, and political issues; and also the ecological.

We need also to read the fine print and note that the person whose name the Call has been issued, Evo Morales Ayma, is identified as the President of a “Plurinational State”. This description, which comes from Bolivia’s new Constitution that was prepared and passed after Morales’ election,<sup>5</sup> is perhaps a unique identification, and a radical departure from normal governmental nomenclature.

If so, then taken together this constitutes a radically different ‘state’ than any other, perhaps, that today exists in the world, and where there are very few such that have existed in history; and where those that have existed have usually been short-lived, as a consequence of being under intense external and internal pressures.

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<sup>3</sup> Links, December 2009 - ‘Bolivia calls World Conference of Social Movements’, on [Links](http://links.org), International Journal of Socialist Renewal, December 21 2009, @ <http://links.org.au/node/1419#comment-52978>. Accessed 04.03.2010.

<sup>4</sup> Oscar Olivera, in collaboration with Tom Lewis, 2005 – *Cochabamba ! : Water War in Bolivia*. Cambridge, MA : South End Press; and : Jim Schultz, September 2000 – ‘Bolivia’s Water War Victory’, in Earth Island Journal, September 22 2000. [http://www.thirdworldtraveler.com/South\\_America/Bolivia\\_WaterWarVictory.html](http://www.thirdworldtraveler.com/South_America/Bolivia_WaterWarVictory.html). Retrieved February 14, 2007.

<sup>5</sup> Enacted in February 2009. See <http://www.bolivianconstitution.com/>

And finally on this first point, we need to read the political-ideological character of this Call, where four out of the five proposals it makes are in essence above and beyond the nation-state :

- **A Universal Declaration of Mother Earth's Rights**
- The organisation of the **Peoples' World Referendum on Climate Change**
- Developing an action plan to advance the establishment of a **Climate Justice Tribunal**
- **Defining strategies for action and mobilization to defend life** from Climate Change and to defend Mother Earth's Rights.

Any government can call for a "People's Conference" (and many do); but few have any legitimacy to do so, and to do something like this. This one does.

Having said this however, we nevertheless need also to always remain critically conscious of the fact that the Bolivian state – just like any other, and for that matter, also any social movement - is not monolithic and that it is likely that there are several different tendencies within it, pulling and pushing in different directions. One among many other consequences of this is that there may be inconsistencies and internal contradictions even in the positive initiatives that it takes, such as this Conference.

**Two**, we need to recognise that Bolivia also has another very special legitimacy for making this Call, having played a key role at the Copenhagen Conference, along with the Maldives and one or two others, in articulating not just the perspective of 'the South' but of ordinary peoples everywhere in the world.<sup>6</sup>

**Three**, we need to read and recognise that Evo Morales Ayma, the President of Bolivia, is himself Aymara – an indigenous person, coming from the largest indigenous group in Bolivia – and that the Bolivian state is therefore today led by indigenous peoples; and that the social upheaval that led to his being elected in 2006, and then re-elected in 2009, was and is led by indigenous peoples and their movements. A lot more could be said on this, but this is not the place for that; so let it just be said that in terms of world history and of how indigenous peoples have been historically treated by colonising and by settler societies – in Latin America and in all parts of the world -, the situation that today exists in Bolivia is nothing short of remarkable and history-breaking. In some ways, it represents a new phase in history, and because Evo Morales came to this position as the leader of a mass movement, is perhaps even more significant than the election of a person of colour as the President of the USA.

**Four**, more generally we need to read, recognise, and act in critical solidarity with the emancipatory, insurgent, and anti-imperialist content of the present government of Bolivia's general domestic programme (such as land reforms, fiscal reforms, and the take-over of certain key industries from multinationals and their nationalisation / being brought under social control; and most comprehensively in the vision of the new Constitution it has drafted and got approved<sup>7</sup>) – and especially at this juncture in world history.

**Five**, we need also to read this upheaval – and in particular, this Call – as a part of and in relation to the wider stirrings taking place among indigenous peoples in the Americas today, and especially in South and Central America; and with the major social and political changes taking place in that part of the world (only one of which has been the recent election of presidents in nothing less than eight countries who can broadly said to be 'leftist'). Among

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<sup>6</sup> Amy Goodman, December 2009 – 'Bolivian President Evo Morales on Climate, Copenhagen and Capitalism', on <http://endofcapitalism.com/2009/12/17/bolivian-president-evo-morales-on-climate-copenhagen-and-capitalism/> and [http://www.democracynow.org/2009/12/17/bolivian\\_president\\_evo\\_morales\\_on\\_climate](http://www.democracynow.org/2009/12/17/bolivian_president_evo_morales_on_climate).

<sup>7</sup> As mentioned above; see <http://www.bolivianconstitution.com/>.

other things, the call for this World Conference is very similar to the spirit of the Call issued in May 2009 by CAOI - Coordinadora Andina de Organizaciones Indígenas (Andean Coordinating Body for Indigenous Organisations) and others for a 'Minga (Convergence, Mobilisation) for Mother Earth and a Forum on the Civilisational Crisis and Alternative Paradigms',<sup>8</sup> and to the content of the Declaration of the Indigenous Peoples that was issued by CAOI and others from the World Social Forum that took place in Belém, Amazonia, Brazil, in January 2009.<sup>9</sup>

Although we do not as yet know whether CAOI and the other organisations it works with have endorsed Bolivia's Call,<sup>10</sup> there is no question that even the co-existence, and possibly the confluence, of these two currents promises to be world changing – redefining emancipation and renewing left and emancipatory politics. We need also to be alive to the fact that this is perhaps the first time in history that a proposal by indigenous peoples has reached the world stage in quite this way, and therefore – reading also the cultural politics and historic moment of the situation – we need to act in a spirit of transcommunal solidarity.<sup>11</sup> To act in solidarity with such an initiative will mean to act in solidarity with a major emerging movement of reassertion – and through this we can perhaps renew and revitalise our own politics.

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<sup>8</sup> See : Coordinadora Andina de Organizaciones Indígenas (CAOI), Coordinadora de las Organizaciones Indígenas de la Cuenca Amazónica (COICA), Consejo Indígena de Centro América (CICA), Movimiento de los Trabajadores Rurales Sin Tierra (MST), and others, nd - '*Minga Global por le Madre Tierra / Global Mobilisation for Mother Earth*', in Spanish and English, accessed 04.03.2010 @ <http://minkandina.org/mingaglobal/>.

<sup>9</sup> Available 29.05.09 @ <http://www.cadtm.org/spip.php?article4133>.

<sup>10</sup> Diary notes by JS, 04-27.03.2010 : On a conference call on February 8 2010, organised by the organisers of the Cochabamba Conference, I asked Pablo Solón (Bolivia's Climate Change Ambassador and the person coordinating the Conference) how the Conference was relating to the initiatives already taken with respect to Mother Earth by CAOI and others. He said that they are "closely in touch with all indigenous peoples' organisations in the region". (He added though, that at that point in time they still had only very weak contacts with popular organisations and movements in Africa and Asia, and asked for help in developing these.) This close connection was then only underlined in a letter that I received on March 23 2010 from Nick Buxton, who is acting as Media Liaison for the Cochabamba Conference, which said that they are "expecting thousands from social movements from across Latin America".

During this same period, and at the request of the March 2 meeting in Delhi, I wrote directly to CAOI and others to ask about this but have not yet heard back

I have however received two pieces of related information in this regard, in this meanwhile. One, that CAOI was holding an organisational congress, including leadership elections, in the first half of March 2010 – and it was therefore expected that it would discuss its relation to the Cochabamba Conference at this congress. And two, Mayra Gomez pointed out that CAOI had already registered a self-organised event at the Conference titled '*El Buen Vivir de los Pueblos Indígenas Andinos como alternativa al Cambio Climático*' ('The Andean Indigenous Peoples' concept of Living Well as an alternative to face Climate Change issues'), available in English @ <http://pwccc.wordpress.com/2010/03/03/762/#more-762>.

Even if CAOI has registered this event however, it is very noticeable that even though the key question of 'Mother Earth' (or *Pachamama*) is common to CAOI's call and the Conference, CAOI does not have a link on its website to the Conference; and also that the reference to the Cochabamba Conference in its report on its website on its organisational congress (accessed 27.03.10 @ <http://www.minkandina.org/index.php?news=288>) is minimal; simply that it will participate.

While there is no reason to assume that CAOI's relation to the Cochabamba Conference is necessarily typical, this coolness from such a major indigenous formation in the region demands reflection.

<sup>11</sup> For a discussion of this concept, see : John Brown Childs, 2003 – [Transcommunitality : From the Politics of Conversion to the Ethics of Respect](#). Philadelphia : Temple University Press; and for an attempt to enact this, Jai Sen, May 2009b – '*Towards Walking the Earth Together : An Open Letter to the Puno Cumbre / Caminar Hacia la Tierra Juntos : Una Carta Abierta a la Cumbre de Puno*'. Dt May 22 2009. Available 27.10.09 @ <http://www.openspaceforum.net/twiki/tiki-index.php?page=MingaInDefence&highlight=towards%20walking>.

**Six**, given all this, we therefore need to recognise the emancipatory, insurgent, and anti-imperialist character also of this international, transnational, and transcommunal Bolivian initiative, at a regional and world level, at several levels of meaning and in terms of several empires;<sup>12</sup> we need equally to recognise that as such, it will be under great pressure from all those who oppose addressing climate change as well as the broader political-economic changes that are required for this – pressure to co-opt the Conference, pressure to disrupt it; and that we therefore need to do everything we can to critically engage with and support it.

**Seven**, the Call – in particular - has very special interest and significance for social movement in India. First, it is broadly very consistent with the spirit of the Statement issued by the India Climate Justice Network in November 2009, as a letter to the Prime Minister.<sup>13</sup>

Second, because of the extremely prominent position that the government of India has succeeded in leveraging for itself in the climate change process by linking up with other big economies of what till recently was called ‘the South’ (Brazil, China, and South Africa, forming the so-called ‘BASIC’ group) and by the BASIC countries striking a deal with the US. There is of course no question that we need to see the global negotiations around climate change, and therefore also this Conference, not only in terms of the UNFCCC process but also in terms of the global economy and of geo-politics; and therefore, whether or not Bolivia agrees with the actions of the BASIC group in Copenhagen, it will need to attempt to get this group, and the member countries, to play a leading role in the Cochabamba Conference – but where, if this happens, the Bolivians may well be asked by such countries to step back from its very radical proposals.<sup>14</sup>

And third, because there is such a continuity between this profound idea of a Mother Earth – here, articulated by the indigenous peoples of the Andean region of the Americas both as *Madre Tierra* and in indigenous languages as *Pachamama* – and the concept of *dharati ma* that is so widely respected and practised both by Adivasis (indigenous peoples) and farmers in India and that is therefore so deeply rooted in our own cultures of this region of the world. We, as humanity, are therefore already linked together across the planet – and indeed, bound together - by this fundamental concept; and so it becomes our responsibility as human beings in all parts of the world to respect, protect, and promote this concept.

Our relating to this Call from India is therefore potentially a way of relating to and joining forces both with all those in the world who believe in such ways of relating to this home of

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<sup>12</sup> For a discussion of the concept of plural empires, see : Jai Sen, March 2007d – ‘Understanding the world : Interrogating empire and power’. Introduction to Jai Sen, ed, forthcoming (2010a) - [Interrogating Empires](#), Book 2 in the *Are Other Worlds Possible ?* series. New Delhi : OpenWord and Daanish.

<sup>13</sup> New Trade Union Initiative (NTUI), National Forum of Forest People and Forest Workers (NFFPFW), Focus on the Global South, Intercultural Resources, Delhi Platform, Delhi Forum, Bharat Jan Vigyan Jatha (BJVJ), and others, November 2009 – ‘Memorandum To The Government Of India On The UNFCCC’s 15th Conference Of The Parties At Copenhagen’, dated November 24 2009. Posted by Vijayan M.J of Delhi Forum on November 25 2009 5:32:41 pm GMT+05:30, on the climate justice group [indiaclimatjustice@gmail.com](mailto:indiaclimatjustice@gmail.com), titled ‘Please Endorse: Memorandum to the PM on Climate Change’. Accessed 05.03.2010 @ <http://www.durbanclimatejustice.org/?p=445> and as a document @ <http://www.saded.in/Copenhagen/Climate%20Justice%20COP%2015%20Memo%20to%20PM%20final%2071209.doc>

<sup>14</sup> At a very concrete level, Bolivia’s proposals include a maximum 1 degree rise in temperature and a 300 ppm carbon level, which are far lower than what the larger and more industrially ambitious economies are aiming at, as well as reparations of carbon debt by the North; and at a geo-strategic level, it includes the radical-democratic proposals for a Climate Tribunal and the World Referendum, as mentioned above.

ours called planet earth and also with all those who oppose these possible developments, of compromise. It offers a way of broadcasting our thoughts and ideas worldwide, of engaging in deep exchange with similarly concerned people from across the world, and of jointly exploring and building political alternatives. And indeed, because of our cultures and because of contemporary geopolitical developments, social movements and other concerned people in India also have a very special responsibility to do so.

And by extension, it could be argued that the same perhaps applies to social movements and organisations in Brazil and South Africa, and even to social actors in China; and in principle to similar actors throughout the world.

**Eight**, and in direct relation to this, we need also to recognise that this Call by Evo Morales Ayma as President of the “Plurinational State of Bolivia” is significantly different from the Call made last year by Hugo Chavez, as President of Venezuela, for the formation of a ‘Fifth International’.<sup>15</sup> This is the case, first, in terms of its spirit of openness and where it is not immediately calling for a new institutional international but of a *process* international (or movement international) – building or contributing to world movement around climate change and a world wide web of resistance and emancipatory alternatives based on a very real crisis; and second, in terms of its seeing this process as *directly growing out of the pains of Mother Earth* and organically related to them – and not separate. The very conception of the two Calls, and of the politics in the two Calls, is radically different. Even if Morales and Chavez are otherwise seen at a regional (Latin American) and world level as allies and as both being of the ‘left’, and even if both are from non-settler sections of their respective societies, it is crucial to recognise that the two projects are different and that we need to carefully, critically, and separately relate to each.

**Nine**, although this is in some ways a ‘domestic’ issue, we need to realise that Evo Morales and his government are, like all insurrectionary and radical formations, under tremendous pressure within their country and that especially given all of the above, we therefore need, more generally, to act in solidarity with them. That they have held out for over four years, and have succeeded in negotiating extremely turbulent waters (with intense opposition internally from the settler society in eastern Bolivia and externally – and internally - from the US and transnational corporations), is remarkable. To relate to and to collaborate with this Call therefore also means a direct and powerful action of solidarity with a crucial actor in contemporary world social and political history; one that is indeed creating fundamental history. And as above, doing so can also be a way of renewing and revitalising our own politics.

**Finally, ten**, we need to recognise that the so-called ‘inter-governmental’ process called COP – with the last meeting held in Copenhagen in December 2009, and the next big one in Mexico in December 2010 – is likely to lead nowhere; and that governments, fuelled as they are by corporations, and jostling and jockeying as they always are for power-over (the power to exert control over others), are extremely unlikely to be able to take a clear, longer-term position in favour of planet earth. To reform them will require, at the minimum, an enormous amount of public education and pressure; and if they could ignore the huge pressure at and leading up to Copenhagen, as they did so blatantly – and including through repression and arrests -, they can and will do so again. Whatever they do is always first going to be what they are about, which is power-over, nationally and globally.

**Bolivia’s Call is a call for a radical alternative**, made in the interests of the planet called Earth that is our Home, and for power-to among the peoples of the world : The power to transform ourselves and the world, and to build a life and world of well-being, justice, mutual

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<sup>15</sup> See, for instance, Federico Fuentes, November 2009 – ‘Chavez’s Historic Call for a Fifth Socialist International’, on [VenezuelaAnalysis.com](http://www.venezuelanalysis.com), November 30 2009. Accessed 04.02.2010 @ <http://www.venezuelanalysis.com/analysis/4965>.

respect, and peace. It is also, in the words of John Holloway, a crack<sup>16</sup> : A crack in the wall that is government; a crack in the path to the future that is currently being laid out for us, of governments and corporations converting every crisis into one more profit-seeking opportunity; a crack within which there are now seeds – seeds that can break open those walls, these paths. The Bolivian proposals are those seeds. All of us are, or can be, those seeds. If we believe in social transformation and in protecting and nurturing the Earth, we need to critically but openly relate to and work along with this initiative; and we need also to work to ensure that this radicality remains its essential character, since this will always be under threat.

**The timing is also vital, and the time to act is NOW.** By issuing the Call for the Cochabamba Conference immediately after Copenhagen, and organising it a full eight months before the next COP Conference in Mexico, the Bolivians have created a vital opportunity for potentially creating a powerful countervailing global current to the presently monopolistic COP process, at all levels : At the level of social and political movement, at the governmental level, and most importantly, in the public sphere and in the imaginations of peoples everywhere.

*And yet, the need for a critical engagement...*

Keeping all this in mind, and keeping in mind also that there are several other climate-related initiatives in and from India, we need – I believe – to engage fully with each proposal of the Bolivian initiative and formulate a bouquet of activities that can contribute powerfully, individually and collectively, to the Cochabamba Conference and process.

At the same time, and keeping in mind the likely outcome of the official COP process, we should not conceive of relating to the Bolivian government's Call solely in terms of the Cochabamba Conference, or even of the intervention that it plans to make in the official intergovernmental process (which, to repeat, is only one out of the several proposals it has put forward in the Call). Rather, and perhaps even primarily, we need to relate to the initiative in terms of the four other proposals, as mentioned above, which together add up to having a much broader compass and to being a *process* that the Bolivians have opened up.

*On the other hand*, and at the same time, and even while acting in solidarity, we need also to be and to remain acutely aware of the limitations and possible contradictions of the Bolivian process. In particular, we need to be conscious of the dynamics of convergences such as is likely to take place in Cochabamba, and of the likely (and almost certain) focus on the intergovernmental (UNFCCC) process - whether the government of Bolivia intends this to happen or not.

First, Bolivia as the host has openly invited all sections of the non-state world, but somewhat unfortunately, even though Evo Morales' original call was to "social movements" from across the world, since then here seems to have been a slight but significant shift of focus. In more recent announcements, the government of Bolivia has placed greater emphasis on 'NGOS' (and on 'specialists'). Even if it has done this because it is using what is internationally accepted UN terminology (where social movements are included within the UN's definition of NGOs), the latter however is a category that is very different from social movements and popular organisations, and has very different interests, and unless the Bolivians play this very carefully, this strong engagement is likely to significantly influence the process they have opened up, possibly in ways that compromise and even contradict what they have proposed.

On the one hand, because of resource constraints and a lack of attention to this issue, this means that even though the government of Bolivia says that it expects large numbers of social movements from Latin America to participate, there are likely to be few social

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<sup>16</sup> John Holloway, nd, c.June 2007 – 'Break, Breakdown, Breakthrough'. Note presented at Panel Discussion at Alternative Summit at Rostock, Germany, June 5 2007.

movements from other parts of the South (Africa, Asia). On the other hand, this also means that the Cochabamba Conference is likely to also be flooded by articulate, well-resourced, and well-connected NGOs, primarily from the North but also from the North within the South, most of whom believe in the intergovernmental COP process and/or cannot see beyond it, and will therefore be primarily driving for building a kind of reformist countervailing pressure within it. This however is very different from – and is even opposed to – the radical-democratic proposals that have been so well articulated so far by the government of Bolivia.

In other words, while we need to appreciate the openness of the Bolivians, the likely role of such NGOs at the Cochabamba Conference – accompanied by the lack of presence of movements from other parts of the South - may well tend to dilute the Bolivian proposals, not to reinforce them. And even while appreciating the reality of resource constraints (for bringing movement representatives from other parts of the South), the seeming lack of attention to this aspect suggests that we are losing a vital opportunity for building South-South links. Much more attention needs to be given to this – by the Bolivians and by all of us from across the world -, if the Bolivian seeds are to be accepted, and planted, worldwide.

And second, the government of Bolivia has also been open enough to invite all nation-states to come to the Cochabamba Conference, whatever their role was in Copenhagen.<sup>17</sup> Ostensibly, the objective of their doing this is to allow such delegations to observe and to interact with social movements and NGOs - but where the reality is that they, should they come, will of course also be acting to heavily influence the outcomes of the meeting. In short, it is quite possible that because of this, the resulting focus on COP will again tend to derail and/or overwhelm the Bolivian initiatives.

Finally, we need also to be alive to the criticism that is emerging within Bolivia – such as that while the government has issued this Call for an international people's conference, with radical proposals, its actions within the country with respect to directly related issues such as protection of the environment are not consistent.<sup>18, 19</sup> We need to be aware of this possibility and to study such criticisms and developments closely, even as we act in solidarity.

But, and in conclusion, I believe that at this juncture in world history, we need to raise our eyes and think and act at another level : In short, if we can perceive what I have termed “the emancipatory, insurgent, and anti-imperialist content” of the government of Bolivia's Call, **then surely this means that we need to take the most determined and imaginative steps possible to defend and promote this content** – and not to surrender it, and not to allow the Cochabamba Conference and initiative to be compromised or overwhelmed. We need also, as put forward already, to respect the historic fact that this is perhaps the first time that a proposal by indigenous peoples has reached the world in this way – and therefore to relate to it with transcommunal respect and solidarity.

*From wherever you are in the world : Be the seed !*

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<sup>17</sup> See the Conference website, [www.cmpcc.org](http://www.cmpcc.org), where this is openly announced.

<sup>18</sup> See, for example : Eduardo Gudynas, nd, c. February 2010 – ‘Una Necesaria Reflexion Acerca Del Encuentro Sobre Cambio Climatico En Bolivia’ (‘A Necessary Reflection on the Conference on Climate Change in Bolivia’, in Spanish), @ <http://accionreaccion.com/?p=216>; accessed 26.02.2010.

<sup>19</sup> We in India have heard similar comments in the course of preparatory and planning meetings, from serious social actors such as trade unions.

## PEOPLES' WORLD CONFERENCE ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND MOTHER EARTH'S RIGHTS

[www.cmpcc.org](http://www.cmpcc.org)

Considering that climate change represents a real threat to the existence of humanity, of living beings and our Mother Earth as we know it today;

Noting the serious danger that exists to islands, coastal areas, glaciers in the Himalayas, the Andes and mountains of the world, poles of the Earth, warm regions like Africa, water sources, populations affected by increasing natural disasters, plants and animals, and ecosystems in general;

Making clear that those most affected by climate change will be the poorest in the world who will see their homes and their sources of survival destroyed, and who will be forced to migrate and seek refuge;

Confirming that 75% of historical emissions of greenhouse gases originated in the countries of the North that followed a path of irrational industrialization;

Noting that climate change is a product of the capitalist system;

Regretting the failure of the Copenhagen Conference caused by countries called "developed", that fail to recognize the climate debt they have with developing countries, future generations and Mother Earth;

Affirming that in order to ensure the full fulfilment of human rights in the twenty-first century, it is necessary to recognize and respect Mother Earth's rights;

Reaffirming the need to fight for climate justice;

Recognizing the need to take urgent actions to avoid further damage and suffering to humanity, Mother Earth and to restore harmony with nature;

Confident that the peoples of the world, guided by the principles of solidarity, justice and respect for life, will be able to save humanity and Mother Earth, and

Celebrating the International Day of Mother Earth,

**The Government of the Plurinational State of Bolivia calls on** the peoples of the world, social movements, and Mother Earth's defenders, and invites scientists, academics, lawyers and governments that want to work with their citizens to the **Peoples' World Conference on Climate Change**

**and Mother Earth's Rights** to be held from 20th to 22nd April 2010 in Cochabamba, Bolivia.<sup>20</sup>

The Peoples' World Conference on Climate Change and Mother Earth's Rights has as objectives:

- 1) **To analyze the structural and systemic causes** that drive climate change and to propose radical measures to ensure the well-being of all humanity in harmony with nature
- 2) To discuss and agree on **the project of a Universal Declaration of Mother Earth Rights**
- 3) To agree on proposals for **new commitments to the Kyoto Protocol** and projects for a COP Decision under the United Nations Framework for Climate Change that will guide future actions in those countries that are engaged with life during climate change negotiations and in all United Nations scenarios, related to:
  - Climate debt
  - Climate change migrants-refugees
  - Emission reductions
  - Adaptation
  - Technology transfer
  - Finance
  - Forest and Climate Change
  - Shared Vision
  - Indigenous Peoples, and
  - Others.
- 4) To work on **the organization of the Peoples' World Referendum on Climate Change**
- 5) To analyze and develop an action plan to **advance the establishment of a Climate Justice Tribunal**
- 6) To define strategies for action and mobilization **to defend life from Climate Change and to defend Mother Earth's Rights.**

Bolivia, January 5th, 2010

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<sup>20</sup> Emphasis given.