



April 7, 2010

The Right Honourable Stephen Harper, Prime Minister of Canada
Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa
K1A 0A2

Open letter to Prime Minister Harper from the Council of Canadians

Dear Prime Minister Harper,

On behalf of the Council of Canadians, I am writing to request the Canadian government publicly address their plans regarding the invitation from the Plurinational State Government of Bolivia to the upcoming People's World Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth taking place in Cochabamba, Bolivia April 20-22, 2010. The Canadian government should commit to sending a high-level delegation to this historic conference.

Shortly after the Fifteenth Session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) last December in Copenhagen, the Bolivian government extended an invitation to governments worldwide to attend this Conference.

The Conference, a mere thirteen days away, responds to the failure of the Copenhagen negotiations to deliver a fair and legally binding international climate agreement. The Copenhagen Accord contains voluntary, weak emission reduction targets, inadequate and insecure pledges for climate financing in the global South, and threatens to undermine key principles of the UNFCCC.

The aim of the Conference is to advance an agenda led by civil society organizations in dialogue with governments dedicated to preventing climate change. It aims to analyze the structural causes of climate change, and develop specific proposals and actions for addressing it. The Conference will include the participation of social movements, organizations, scientists, academics, UN institutions and governments wanting to work with their citizens.

Reports indicate that government representatives from more than 50 countries will be attending. This includes the majority of 'Least Developed Countries' whose populations will be most vulnerable to climate change, as well as France, Russia and Spain. We have documentation that the Canadian Ministry of Foreign Affairs received an invitation from the Foreign Ministry of Bolivia.

We are not aware of the Canadian government's response to this important invitation, nor of its plans for engaging in Conference proceedings.

As one of Canada's largest public advocacy organizations with members across the country, the Council of Canadians has an active climate justice campaign and we will be participating in this momentous Conference. Maude Barlow, National Chairperson of the Council of Canadians, has been formally invited by the Bolivian Government to participate as a main plenary panelist.

As Canadians that will be present at the Conference, we are seeking clarity about how to respond to questions regarding our Government's participation.

This Conference is an opportunity for the Canadian government to become a constructive player in international climate action. This includes planning for deep emission reduction targets. Committing to a short-term target of at least 40 per cent below 1990 levels is consistent with what many climate scientists, civil society organizations and governments throughout the world say is necessary to confront the climate crisis. It also includes contributing our country's fair share to climate financing for the global South (additional to existing funds, managed democratically and not dependent on carbon markets), which has been projected at 3-4 per cent of the global total.

As time is short, please clarify the government's intention and response regarding the invitation to attend the Conference, which should include sending a high-level delegation. I look forward to your prompt reply.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Andrea Harden-Donahue".

Andrea Harden-Donahue
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