



CLIMATE JUSTICE FOR TOURISM WORKERS! World Tourism Day September 27, 2016

While it is important that governments take urgent action to reduce carbon emissions as a major cause of climate change, many of the “climate action” plans of governments across the Asia/Pacific region still treat climate change as an environmental and industrial issue. By developing action plans aimed at “the economy”, governments are helping business to reduce risk rather than reduce carbon emissions, while planting trees.

For some governments in the region climate mitigation policies are being promoted to gain access to international aid and loans, where “talking the talk” on climate action is more important than taking action. This is why planting trees has become a photo opportunity rather than a serious effort to reduce carbon dioxide in the atmosphere and preventing landslides and flooding.

Most climate policies today fail to recognize that climate change - and how we respond to climate change – is also an ethical issue involving human rights and justice. Sustainability is as much about sustaining livelihoods as it is about managing resources. In countries like Bangladesh, Myanmar and the Maldives, working people have reduced access to potable drinking water, as water salinity rises along with the cost of purified water. This undermines the human right to water.

Climate change has a direct impact on the livelihoods of workers and their families, worsening the existing problems of poverty wages, job insecurity and inequality. This includes tourism workers. From trekking guides in Nepal to luxury hotel resort workers in the Maldives, climate change is dramatically transforming the environment in which people work and live. Yet governments are only talking to business and international agencies about what needs to be done.

Climate change affects tourism peak seasons, making employment more insecure and incomes more unstable. Tourist attractions – from coral reefs to religious heritage sites – are suffering damage from extreme weather that leaves hotels empty. Climate disasters like flooding leave tourism workers jobless. There is no tourism without tourists.

On World Tourism Day, workers are demanding that governments recognize the impact of climate change on tourism, and that the protecting the rights and livelihoods of tourism workers be part of the response. This needs the independent and democratic trade unions representing tourism workers to be involved in decision-making on climate action plans. Because the only way for climate action plans to work, is for working people to be part of the plan.