



## Media statement

### Cyclone Idai: Why is the media not linking it to climate change?

#### Trump, Rich Industrialised Countries and Carbon Corporations Must Pay a Climate Debt For Damage Caused

22 March 2019

On the 14<sup>th</sup> of March, a cyclone with winds of up to 177km/h hit Southern Africa, devastating large parts of Zimbabwe, Malawi and Mozambique. Even in the early stages of the aftermath, it has been hailed as a humanitarian disaster. According to the UN's weather agency, it is possible that cyclone Idai has the potential to be the worst weather related disaster to ever hit the Southern Hemisphere. This is a climate disaster engendering climate injustice.

In Zimbabwe, close to 100 people have been confirmed dead, and over 200 are missing. Over 600 houses were destroyed, and around 20 000 were damaged. Zimbabwe is experiencing landslides and roads are completely destroyed leaving people stranded. In Malawi, approximately 56 people have been killed, and close to 600 missing. Due to flooding and other damage, around 11 000 households are displaced, with around 920 000 people being affected in total. Reports coming out of Mozambique are saying that over 500 000 people have been impacted. The death toll in Mozambique is around 200, but is continuing to rise as more than 350 000 people are at risk, with estimations saying that the death toll could triple.

With this level of devastation, it is important to ask why this climate shock has occurred. The reality is cyclone Idai is an example of extreme weather brought on by climate change. According to the UN IPCC 1.5C degree report, human activities have been responsible for approximately 1C degree increase in temperature globally since before the industrial revolution. If we continue to increase greenhouse gas emissions at the same levels, we are likely to reach a 1.5C degree increase within the next 20 years or sooner. Research has shown that extreme climate and weather conditions were observed around the 0.5C degree increase mark. The report states that "trends in intensity and frequency of some climate and weather extremes have been detected..." (IPCC 2018), and this increase in frequency and intensity will only continue to worsen as temperatures continue to rise. Moreover, scientific research has confirmed a link between cyclone Idai and heating oceans linked to climate change.

Climate change is extremely serious in the African context, with high levels of inequality, poverty, limited resources, environmental destruction led by transnational corporations and indebtedness to rich countries. Africa did not cause the climate crisis and most Africans have very low per capita emissions compared to Americans or South Africans, for instance. Yet Africa is going to experience some of the worst extremes of climate change and increasing temperatures. The IPCC 1.5 degree Report tells us that Sub-Saharan Africa, has already been experiencing more frequent and intense

climate extremes, and an overshoot of 1.5C degree increase will mean devastating consequences for the region. The temperature increases that the region will face are projected to be at least twice higher than the global average.

We stand with the people of Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Malawi that have been devastated by cyclone Idai.

Many measures could have been taken such as early warning systems, media mainstreaming climate news so extreme weather is monitored and anticipated, disaster management systems put in place, for instance, to prevent a loss of life. This has not happened because of climate denialism amongst political leaders, the media and states in the region.

On Monday 18 March 2019 we engaged key institutions in the media family such as the Sunday Times, Press Council and the South African National Editors Forum (SANEF) to #EndClimateDenialism in the media. We await a formal response from SANEF regarding our demands to ensure the media #EndClimateDenialism. We have initiated and welcome a debate on the role of the media in mainstreaming and reporting the worsening climate crisis so we can educate the public and advance climate justice alternatives, now, as part of the deep just transition to sustain life. Failure by the media to take climate science seriously imperils our society even more.

Climate change is being driven by petro states, such as Trump's USA leading the fracking boom, and carbon corporations. Rich industrial countries also owe the world a climate debt for 150 years of using coal, oil and gas for industrialisation. From the standpoint of climate justice, we demand petro states, carbon corporations and rich industrial countries contribute reparations to Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Malawi for the climate debt owed, so these countries can rebuild as part of the deep just transition.

Finally, South Africa is the 14<sup>th</sup> highest carbon emitter in the world. Our coal addiction is a big part of the problem. Energy imports from Mozambique were also disrupted due to the carnage of cyclone Idai and this contributed to Eskom's recent rolling black outs. We demand a deep just transition now beyond fossil fuels like coal, to socially owned renewable energy, a food, seed and water sovereignty system, a universal basic income grant and climate jobs, as a minimum, to ensure we mitigate climate shocks, meet the needs of workers and poor communities. Through our climate justice charter process we will advance these alternatives for South Africa. More information is available at [www.safsc.org.za](http://www.safsc.org.za) and [www.copac.org.za](http://www.copac.org.za)

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