



Sahabat Alam Malaysia
Friends of the Earth Malaysia
For Environmental Justice

1, Jalan Joki, 11400 Penang, Malaysia
Tel No: +604 827 6930
Fax No: +604 827 6932
Email: foemalaysia@gmail.com
<https://www.foe-malaysia.org>

Letter to the Editor

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UNITED STATES MUST ACT RESPONSIBLY TO END CLIMATE INJUSTICE

Sahabat Alam Malaysia (SAM) wishes to respond to the recent statement by the United States Ambassador to Malaysia, Mr Brian Mcfeeters entitled 'Partners in climate action', that was featured in a major English daily (6 Jan, 2023, Letter to Editor, The STAR).

While we agree with the US Ambassador that bold action to tackle climate change is more urgent than ever by everyone, the partnership for action among developed and developing countries is based on the fundamental principles of equity and "common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities" (CBDR-RC), recognised under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Paris Agreement.

These international agreements set out the commitments of developed countries to take the lead in emission reductions and to provide financial resources, technology transfer and capacity building to developing countries to enable them to implement their climate actions, including on emissions reductions, adaptation and to address loss and damage.

To enable developing countries to implement their climate actions in their nationally determined contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement, developed countries like the US must fulfil their commitments on the provision of financial resources, including to the existing dedicated climate fund under the UNFCCC, i.e. the Green Climate Fund (GCF).

Under the Obama administration, the US pledged to provide US\$3bn to the GCF in the initial resource mobilisation period from 2015-2018. However, only US\$1bn was transmitted, as the Trump administration reneged on this, leading to a significant shortfall of US\$2bn. This has affected the ability of the GCF to meet the many proposals in the Fund's pipeline from developing countries.

With the Biden administration in place since 2021, we have yet to see the US fulfil the Obama pledge to the GCF. To compound matters further, in the GCF's first official replenishment period (2020 to 2023), the US has yet to make any contribution at all.

Mr Mcfeeters extols the virtues of the Inflation Reduction Act of the US, which he says is providing US\$370bil "to solve the climate crisis" but these are for investments in the US only, and is not money for climate action in developing countries.

The GCF is launching its next replenishment call, and if the US views itself as a true partner in climate action, then it has to meet its unfilled pledge of US\$2bn shortfall to the GCF on top of providing additional significant resources to the Fund for the use by developing countries.

Moreover, at the UNFCCC's COP 26 in 2021, the US was the biggest blocker to the establishment of a finance facility to address loss and damage, like that faced by Pakistan, which saw devastating floods, affecting 33 million people and with damages and economic losses of over US\$30bn.

It took massive efforts from civil society and developing country governments to move the US at COP 27 in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, to get it to agree to a Loss and Damage Fund, which hopefully this year at COP 28 in Dubai, UAE, will be set up and will be resourced significantly. This again needs the support of the US and whether it will make it happen remains a big question mark.

In addition, while the US wants developing countries including Malaysia to move away from coal, it too must stop its addiction and expansion of fossil fuels on its own shores urgently.

According to US based Oil Change International, the US approved the largest expansion of oil and gas extraction of any country in 2022, and that it also has by far the largest projected emissions from proposed projects that could be finalized between 2023-2025, with anticipated lifetime emissions from those projects of approximately 15 billion metric tons of CO₂ – the equivalent of almost three times total net 2020 US greenhouse gas emissions.

Such revelations do not show the US as a responsible partner in combatting climate change, but of one that has and is contributing to the current climate catastrophe that unjustly condemns many millions in developing countries to death and devastation due to climate impacts. And this is climate injustice, and must stop.

The US is the world's greatest historical polluter of greenhouse gases and it cannot continue with impunity. It is not enough to talk about being a partner in climate action. It must act responsibly.

**Meenakshi Raman,
President
Sahabat Alam Malaysia**