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December 8 Day of Action - Brussels

4000 join climate protest in Belgium

- News from around the world -

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Despite cold rainy weather and a strike that seriously affected the railways, 4000 people demonstrated in Brussels on December 8 "for climate and solidarity." The demonstration was called by both the Climate Coalition and the group "Climate and Social Justice," on proposal of the latter. Organised within the framework of the Global Climate Campaign, it was the first real street demonstration on this issue in Belgium. It is seen as a success, especially holding into account the difficulties of travel to Brussels from other cities.

The demonstration was very open, with a lot of groups, organisations and action committees participating. Obviously, a lot of people wanted to express their commitment and mobilisation during of the UN climate conference in Bali. The Belgian political context also played a role, because the climate issue has been totally absent from the negotiations for a new government, despite the emphasis on this theme during the election campaign.

The demonstration started from the South Station and marched through the center of the capital to the Central Station, where a rally was held. Representatives of the unions, the environmental and development NGOs and Climate and Social Justice addressed the demonstrators in French and in Dutch, unanimously calling for further action.

The common platform adopted by the Climate Coalition and Climate and Social Justice urged policy makers to fight climate change through "structural measures respecting justice, social equity, democracy and solidarity."

"We unite our efforts in order to combat global warming through a tough post-Kyoto protocol," says the platform. "The temperature increase should not go beyond 2Â°C. ... global greenhouse gases emissions must be reduced by 50% to 2050."

The common platform did not oppose the development of nuclear energy, but Greenpeace, other environmental NGOs and Climate and Social Justice did. The Belgian parliament has decided to end use of nuclear energy by 2015, but that decision has faced strong opposition since the last election, in June. The participating unions refused to permit the Climate Coalition to include opposition to nuclear energy in its platform.

The Liberal, Christian Democratic and Social Democratic parties did not support the demonstration and did not participate, but the Greens and the various parties of radical left mobilised their members in the streets.

Climate and Social Justice distributed a leaflet calling for new actions in the coming months, citing the Heathrow climate camp as an example. In his speech at the final rally, the representative of Climate and Social Justice also referred to the mobilisation in Australia. "Let's all together unite our efforts in order to build a broad and massive global movement to defend our climate through a redistribution of wealth," he said.