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Environment

Environmental and climate debt: Who is responsible?

- Features -

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The concepts of climate debt and ecological debt are central to successfully achieving the ecological bifurcation. The ecological debt owed by States – and in particular the wealthiest States and major corporations – of the North to the populations of the Global South must be recognized. That recognition must take the form of cancellation of the debt of the countries of the Global South and paying of reparations by the States of the North. The latter must compel the wealthiest interests to contribute and assume responsibility for climate disruption and for taking the actions that are urgently needed to limit its consequences and its aggravation to the maximum extent possible. [1]

PS:

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[1] This chapter is based on the data of the Climate Inequality Report 2023, co-ordinated by Lucas Chancel, Philipp Bothe and Tancredè Voiturez, and more generally on the database from the World Inequality Report 2022. Chancel, L., Bothe, P., Voiturez, T. (2023) Climate Inequality Report 2023, World Inequality Lab Study 2023/1, <https://wid.world/wp-content/upload...> or Chancel, L., Piketty, T., Saez, E., Zucman, G. et al. World Inequality Report 2022, World Inequality Lab, <https://wir2022.wid.world/www-site/...>

[2] Chancel, L., Piketty, T., Saez, E., Zucman, G. op. cit. p. 117

[3] Chancel, L., Piketty, T., Saez, E., Zucman, G. op. cit. p. 119

[4] Chancel, L., Piketty, T., Saez, E., Zucman, G. op. cit. p. 19.

[5] Chancel, L., Bothe, P., Voiturez, T. (2023), op. cit. p. 135.

[6] A concept developed by Andreas Malm and taken up by Jason W. Moore and others. In an interview in January 2021, Malm stated: “Replacing the concept of Anthropocene with that of Capitalocene is a way of being more precise in showing that it is capital — as a process and a specific structuring of human interaction based on inequality and power — that has become a factor of destructive geological change, and not the human race as such. What has happened is not an outgrowth of our biological characteristics as Homo sapiens, but is rather a specific historical and social evolution.” Andreas Malm, “Pour mettre fin à la catastrophe, il faut s’en prendre aux classes dominantes” (To end the catastrophe, point the finger at the dominant classes”), interview by Reporterre, 14 January 2021, [=>

<https://reporterre.net/Andreas-Malm-Pour-mettre-fin-a-la-catastrophe-il-faut-s-en-prendre-aux-classes-dominantes>] (translation CADTM). In English: Andreas Malm, “The view from Dominica: Anthropocene or Capitalocene?”, UNESCO, 29 March 2018, <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/...> accessed 6 January 2025

[7] Debt Justice, “Climate vulnerable countries debt payments highest in three decades,” 3 June 2024, <https://debtjustice.org.uk/press-re...>, accessed 6 January 2025

[8] Rates are constantly changing. The Web site World Government Bonds provides an overview of rates for the great majority of countries on the planet: <https://www.worldgovernmentbonds.co...>

[9] “Lower income countries spend five times more on debt payments than dealing with climate change.” Jubilee Debt Campaign, October 2021.

<https://debtjustice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/10.21.pdf> , accessed 6 January 2025