

**Special Session
Human Rights Activists Network Workshop**

**Stand UP Against Inequality
to Tackle Climate Crisis**

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In June 2020, 226 lower-level local governments across the country announced the 'Climate Crisis Emergency Declaration', and the National Assembly passed the 'Resolution to Facilitate an Emergency Response to Climate Crisis' in September of the same year. In October 2020, the Korean Government announced its '2050 Carbon Neutrality' strategy. In 2021, '2050 Carbon Neutrality Scenario' was announced, following the enactment of 'Carbon Neutrality Green Growth Act' and the launch of '2050 Carbon Neutrality Commission'. Major media channels, such as broadcasting and newspapers, have also been spotlighting climate crisis as a main issue for quite a long time. In addition, many of the large companies in the financial, automotive, steel, and petrochemical industries run commercials that emphasize 'green' slogans and their ambitions for an eco-friendly management. It seems that 'climate crisis' and 'carbon neutrality' have suddenly become a social value that is acknowledged and agreed upon by everyone. Current president Yoon Suk-yeol's administration does not deny the value of carbon neutrality. His administration is trying to 'expand nuclear power' by drawing attention to carbon neutrality and climate crisis.

The specific direction and pace of change in our society will be ultimately determined by how the politics work around the following matters: the cause of massive greenhouse gas emissions, the main culprit of climate crisis: proper solutions to a prompt energy transition and zero emission: who will bear the responsibility and burden in the transition of industries. In this climate politics, the most important issue is 'inequality and justice.' To be accurate, it is critical to figure out which 'inequality' requires our attention and how the 'climate justice' should be defined. 'Climate crisis and inequality' are usually understood as a combination of social inequality, which has deepened since the birth of neo-liberalism, and the natural disaster of climate crisis caused by fossil fuels. However, from a perspective that unequal relationship in our society or the so-called capitalism brought about climate crisis, the most important and just way to solve climate crisis is to tackle the inequality.

Even if we control the 'individual consumption' of the world's top 10 percent population (630 million people), who have driven the global carbon emissions for the past 25 years, it will be difficult to fully reduce carbon emissions across the globe. The reason is that much of the carbon emissions caused by those people exist in the form of assets such as equity and bond invested in the companies. Even if these

individuals reduce personal consumption and pay a large amount of carbon tax, their income will still originate from transnational capital that continues to generate massive carbon emissions and that cannot operate without continuous profit-making and growth. These days, there is a widespread perception among the public that climate crisis is no longer an issue of 'environment/ecology' but a problem of the capitalist growth system and an issue of production and consumption. The capitalist growth system is enabled through the relationship of power based on capitalism, in which those who own the means of production(machine/land/resource) have an exclusive and monopolistic right to possessing the outcome of the production. Our efforts for seeking an 'alternative' climate movement cannot go beyond what capitalism allows if we don't tackle the unequal relationship of power.

Distributing the responsibilities, damages, and costs of climate crisis without facing the problem of fundamental structure, systems, and power that caused the climate crisis will create another variable that is dependent on the relationship of power. Without a change in the unequal relationship of power, we might only be able to address the apocalyptic symptoms caused by climate crisis and inequality. Climate justice movement against the capitalist relationship of power should be conducted as a 'social movement' that deals with capitalism as a target of the public's struggle, negotiation, discussion, and intervention. In other words, climate justice movement should empower the society to change the agenda of struggle and negotiation.