

Activists protest Chilean president's climate record as UN holds summit



New York, September 25 (RHC)--Chilean environmental activists staged a protest to question the Atlantic Council's decision to give its Global Citizen Award to President Sebastian Piñera on Monday on the sidelines of the UN Climate Action Summit in New York.

"They are giving the world a totally erroneous image that here (in Chile) everything is fine and that we're, like, the kings of environmental protection," Movimiento Chao Pescaio creative director Ladislao Palma told reporters.

Palma said environmental activists were "indignant" over the awarding of the honor to the Chilean head of state. Protesters called on the government to close all 28 coal-burning power plants in this South American country by 2030 and not by 2040 as projected in the CO2 reduction plan released by the government on June 4.

Under the Piñera administration's plan, eight thermoelectric power plants would close in the next five years and Chile would eliminate coal from its fuel mix by 2040.

“We are participating in this act, inviting everyone in Chile and New York (to join us). We have comrades from Chao Pescao, Friday for Future and Greenpeace outside the UN, asking the secretary-general to please tell Sebastian Piñera to listen to his countrymen, to once and for all listen to us because we’re dying,” Palma said.

The protest in New York took place outside UN Headquarters during the United Nations Secretary-General’s Climate Action Summit, which was attended by Piñera, French President Emmanuel Macron, Colombian President Ivan Duque, Bolivian President Evo Morales and other world leaders.

Amanda Starbuck, a Greenpeace Andino representative, said in New York that Piñera’s participation in the Climate Action Summit marked “a new lost opportunity” to show the world the “environmental reality” in Chile.

“It happened last year, when he promised to change the situation in the death zones, but the reality is the same today and perhaps worse than before. Today, what the president didn’t tell the world is that people are still being poisoned at Quintero-Puchuncavi, that he has given another 20 years of life to coal and that an ambitious bet on renewable energy has not been made,” Starbuck said.

Quintero-Puchuncavi is an area plagued by high levels of industrial pollution.

“A plan that takes into account closing all the (coal-burning) plants by 2030 is perfectly possible and the immediate closing of the eight plants that the president announced will be closed by 2025,” Starbuck said in a statement.

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