



WE CAN

Women's Earth & Climate Action Network, International

CLIMATE JUSTICE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NATIONALLY DETERMINED CONTRIBUTIONS:

**GUIDANCE FOR A HEALTHY
AND EQUITABLE FUTURE
FOR PEOPLE AND PLANET**

SEPTEMBER 2024

Introduction

Scientists and governments agree that to avert the most severe consequences of climate change, global temperatures must be kept below 1.5°C from pre-industrial levels.¹ Through the Paris Climate Agreement, countries are required to submit Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), which embody each country's efforts to reduce and mitigate national greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to the worsening impacts of the climate crisis.² These NDCs showcase commitments by governments to ensure that global warming stays below the 1.5°C threshold. NDCs are submitted every five years to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Secretariat, with the next round of NDCs due in early 2025.³ The upcoming NDCs represent a critical juncture, as the targets and objectives set will influence climate action and policy until 2035, marking the last opportunity to implement transformative actions needed to avoid exceeding the 1.5°C limit and climate catastrophe.

Already, global communities are experiencing warnings of what a 1.5°C world could look like if significant action is not taken. Data from the Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S) illustrates that global temperatures crossed 1.5°C throughout a 12-month period from July 2023 to June 2024.⁴

In this context, the reality of extreme weather events, including heatwaves, droughts, floods, and hurricanes, are intensifying and becoming more frequent.⁵ Nearly 5 billion people across the world experienced climate-change-driven extreme heat over just nine days in June 2024.⁶ Heatwaves in 2024 have shattered previous records for temperature extremes, underscoring the escalating impacts of global warming and climate change.⁷ Additionally, flooding has emerged as a critical concern; in May 2024, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, experienced severe flooding, displacing over 540,000 people and taking the lives of over 155 people.⁸ These climate disasters underscore the global impact and devastation that communities are experiencing, and the unfortunate long-term negative effects on ecosystems, human health, and community infrastructure.

Despite the worsening climate crisis, there is still an opportunity for governments to take urgent action and address the harms of the climate crisis by strengthening, enhancing, and rapidly implementing their NDCs and climate commitments.

Civil society has been calling for a climate justice approach to the NDCs to ensure fairness and equity in climate action, which is essential for addressing the disproportionate impacts of climate change on communities most vulnerable to climate destruction. To achieve equitable outcomes,

¹ United Nations. (n.d.). *1.5°C: what it means and why it matters*. [\[LINK\]](#)

² United Nations (n.d.). *Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)*. [\[LINK\]](#)

³ United Nations (n.d.). *Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)*. [\[LINK\]](#)

⁴ Copernicus Climate Change Service. (July 4, 2024). *Copernicus: June 2024 marks 12th month of global temperature reaching 1.5°C above preindustrial*. [\[LINK\]](#)

⁵ NASA. (n.d.). *Extreme Weather and Climate Change*. [\[LINK\]](#)

⁶ Climate Central. (June 28, 2024). *Analysis: Global extreme heat in June 2024 strongly linked to climate change*. [\[LINK\]](#)

⁷ NASA Earth Observatory. (July 10, 2024). *Extreme Heat Hammers U.S. Coasts*. [\[LINK\]](#)

⁸ Rogero, T. (May 19, 2024). *Brazil counts cost of worst-ever floods with little hope of waters receding soon*. *The Guardian*. [\[LINK\]](#)

NDCs should include ambitious emission reduction targets, robust adaptation strategies, and holistic loss and damage plans. This involves promoting the participation of affected communities in the decision-making processes, integrating gender-responsive policies, upholding Indigenous People's rights, and leveraging local knowledge and expertise. Governments must recognize and provide the finance required to meet global climate targets and tackle social inequalities, while supporting community-led solutions.

To further support these goals, integrating a Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) is crucial. HRBA serves as a framework that aligns development processes with international human rights standards, aiming to promote and protect human rights while simultaneously addressing the root causes of inequality.⁹ HRBA also emphasizes building the capacities of both *duty-bearers* to meet their obligations of accountability and responsibility, and *rights-holders* to claim their rights, fostering an equitable and effective path toward sustainable development.¹⁰ By adopting a holistic and inclusive approach, governments can enhance the effectiveness of their climate actions and contribute to a thriving and just future.

In this document, the Women's Earth and Climate Action Network (WECAN) offers recommendations and guidance to policymakers, government officials, and advocates directly engaging in efforts to strengthen government NDCs. These recommendations and guidance to enhance the NDCs are based on a climate justice analysis and highlight the importance of including women's leadership, Indigenous rights, a Just Transition, biodiversity protection, fossil fuel phase-out, and gender-responsiveness policies in the NDCs. These recommendations are key to ensuring that NDCs and their implementation will lead us toward a healthy and equitable future for people and the planet. We call for a transformative commitment to implementing climate action and a bold approach to navigating this pivotal moment of change.

The Urgent Need For Enhanced Climate Commitments

Currently, NDCs are not addressing the scale of the climate crisis, which is an existential threat to the web of life. An analysis by Climate Action Tracker reveals that current NDCs are insufficient to meet the goals of the Paris Climate Agreement.¹¹ As of 2023, the NDCs for 2030, even if fully implemented, put the world on track for a temperature rise of 2.5°C - 2.9°C by the end of the century, far exceeding the 1.5°C target.¹² This temperature gap highlights the urgent need for transformative action in the upcoming NDCs. To reverse our current trajectory and align with the 1.5°C target, NDCs must feature ambitious mitigation, adaptation, and loss and damage contributions.

⁹ UN Sustainable Development Group. (n.d.). *Human Rights-Based Approach*. [\[LINK\]](#)

¹⁰ UN Sustainable Development Group. (n.d.). *Human Rights-Based Approach*. [\[LINK\]](#)

¹¹ Climate Action Tracker. (n.d.). *Comparability of effort*. [\[LINK\]](#)

¹² UN Environment Programme. (November 20, 2023). *Emissions Gap Report 2023: Broken Record – Temperatures hit new highs, yet world fails to cut emissions (again)*. [\[LINK\]](#)

Loss and Damage refers to the adverse impacts of climate change that exceed a country's ability to adapt. Unlike adaptation, which focuses on preparing for and/or managing climate risks, loss and damage addresses the irreversible consequences that occur despite efforts to mitigate and adapt.¹³ Importantly, the financial burden experienced by the most climate-vulnerable countries would be fairly distributed among high-income countries, ensuring that support is adequate to address the needs of those most severely impacted and who have contributed the least to the climate crisis.¹⁴

Furthermore, many NDCs lack ambitious emission reduction targets and detailed implementation plans.¹⁵ A systems analysis approach is imperative for developing effective and comprehensive climate strategies.¹⁶ This approach recognizes that climate change is not just an environmental issue but a complex challenge that intersects with social, economic, and political systems. By understanding these interconnections, a systems analysis approach encourages policymakers to design NDCs that address the root causes of climate change, promote resilience, and ensure a Just Transition for all. Integrating a Human Rights-Based Approach will enhance this by ensuring that climate strategies respect and protect fundamental human rights. By embedding human rights considerations into the systems analysis, policymakers can create effective NDCs that address the systemic causes of the climate crisis and the needs of the communities most impacted.

Addressing Disparities in NDC Contributions

While NDCs are essential for demonstrating a country's commitment to achieving global climate goals, it is crucial to recognize the disparities between low- and high-income nations in developing these contributions. According to *Our World In Data*, over "80% of the world's emissions are produced by the top-half of the world population (high- and upper-middle income countries)."¹⁷ The United Nations (UN) Environmental Programme echoes this disparity, noting that "low-income countries consume six times less materials and generate 10 times less climate impacts than those living in high-income countries."¹⁸

High-income countries, which historically have been the largest contributors to greenhouse gas emissions,¹⁹ should be held accountable for their significant, and often historic, role in accelerating climate change.²⁰ The actions of wealthy countries have led to substantial emissions and environmental degradation worldwide and contributed to the adverse impacts faced by nations most vulnerable to climate and environmental impacts. These affluent nations must not

13 United Nations Environment Programme. (November 29, 2022). *What you need to know about the COP27 Loss and Damage Fund*. [\[LINK\]](#); Bhandari, P., Warszawski, N., Cogan, D., et. al. (February 26, 2024). *What is 'Loss and Damage' from Climate Change? 8 Key Questions, Answered*. *World Resources Institute*. [\[LINK\]](#)

14 Sharma-Khushal, S., Schalatek, L., Singh, H., et. al. (May, 2022). *The Loss and Damage Finance Facility - Why and How*. *Climate Network*. [\[LINK\]](#)

15 United Nations Climate Change. (October 26, 2022). *Climate Plans Remain Insufficient: More Ambitious Action Needed Now*. [\[LINK\]](#); Cooke, K., Gogoi, E., Petrarulo, L. (October, 2018).

Overcoming the NDC implementation gap: lessons from experience. *Oxford Policy Management*. [\[LINK\]](#)

16 Rovenskaya, E. (November 16, 2021). *What is a systems analysis? International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis*. [\[LINK\]](#)

17 Ritchie, H. (August 31, 2023). *Global inequalities in CO2 emissions*. *Our World in Data*. [\[LINK\]](#)

18 UN Environmental Programme. (March 1, 2024). *Rich countries use six times more resources, generate 10 times the climate impacts than low-income ones*. [\[LINK\]](#)

19 Oxfam. (December 3, 2023). *Who is responsible for climate change?* [\[LINK\]](#)

20 Evans, S. (October 5, 2021). *Analysis: Which countries are historically responsible for climate change? CarbonBrief*. [\[LINK\]](#)

only take stringent measures to curb their emissions but also provide financial and technical support to lower-income countries that are disproportionately affected by climate change despite their minimal contributions to furthering the climate crisis.²¹

Incorporating Equitable and Inclusive Climate Policies to Address Disproportionate Impacts

In developing NDCs, governments must not only engage with global governments but also implement internal mechanisms for active participation from domestic civil society, particularly marginalized groups. A 2024 Oxfam report, which studied recent practices of 11 different countries' NDCs, found that "in one of the most inclusive countries studied, at a national consultation workshop on the NDC, government ministries accounted for almost half of all participants, while civil society and private sector combined made up only 10%."²² By incorporating diverse perspectives and addressing the needs of those most impacted, governments can work to develop more effective and equitable climate policies and solutions.

Across the world, low-income populations, Indigenous Peoples, underrepresented ethnic groups, women and gender-diverse people, and other socially marginalized groups are disproportionately affected by the climate crisis.²³ These communities often have the least responsibility for the emissions causing climate change but bear the brunt of its impacts due to their geographic locations, economic status, limited access to resources, and the enduring consequences of colonization and racism that have exacerbated their vulnerability to climate change.²⁴ Climate change exacerbates existing social inequalities, making it more challenging for these communities to recover from extreme weather events and adapt to changing conditions.²⁵

Women in vulnerable communities face unique and heightened risks. Social and economic inequalities mean that women often have less access to resources and decision-making power, making it harder for them to adapt to and mitigate climate impacts. Women are frequently responsible for managing natural resources, such as water and food, making them more vulnerable to environmental changes.²⁶ Additionally, gender-based violence can increase during climate-related disasters; climate change is seen to be a major "influence on increased vulnerability to all forms of SGBV [sexual and gender-based violence], including sexual violence, human trafficking, and child marriage."²⁷ Due to climate disasters, women and children are most likely to be displaced, forcing them to lose community and family support systems and making them more susceptible to abuse and exploitation.²⁸

21 United Nations. (May 27, 2021). *World's Poorest Nations Need International Support, Experts Tell Preparatory Committee, as E-Commerce, Global Market Access Take Centre Stage*. [\[LINK\]](#);

Rance, C. (December 4, 2019). Rich countries must pay their climate debt. *Friends of the Earth Scotland*. [\[LINK\]](#)

22 Hill, C., Pruett, D., et. al. (March, 2024). *Climate Plans for the People*. OXFAM. [\[LINK\]](#)

23 Baird, R. (2024). *The Impact of Climate Change on Minorities and Indigenous Peoples*. *Minority Rights Group International*. [\[LINK\]](#); Islam, S.N., Winkel, J. (October, 2017). *Climate Change and Social Inequality*. *United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs*. [\[LINK\]](#)

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid.

26 IUCN. (2021). *Gender and Natural Resource Governance: Addressing inequalities and empowering women for sustainable ecosystem management*. [\[LINK\]](#)

27 Kim. (December 7, 2023). *How Climate Change and Instability Exacerbate Sexual- and Gender-Based Violence and Violence Against Women and Girls*. *National Organization for Women*. [\[LINK\]](#)

28 Bendavid, E., Boerma, T., Akseer, N., et. al. (January 24, 2021). *The effects of armed conflict on the health of women and children*. *Lancet*. [\[LINK\]](#)

Recommendations and Guidance

Catalyzing Women’s Leadership for Climate Action

Women’s Leadership in Climate Solutions

Women’s leadership is crucial for effective climate action, as they are often at the forefront of innovative climate solutions, ranging from grassroots organizing to high-level policymaking.²⁹ Their unique perspectives and skills in areas such as community resilience,³⁰ resource management,³¹ and sustainable development³² significantly enhance the development of equitable and robust climate policies.

As mentioned above, the climate crisis amplifies existing social and economic disparities. Due to women being uniquely and disproportionately affected by the climate crisis—often due to their heavy reliance on natural resources and the heightened impact of climate changes on their communities—they are more likely to advocate for stronger climate action.³³

Supporting women in all their diversity³⁴ and ensuring their involvement in climate decision-making are essential steps toward more effective and equitable climate solutions. Research from *Sustainable Development* underscores the vital role of women in combating the climate crisis, showing that “CO2 emissions decrease by about 11.51 percent points in response to a one-unit increase in the index of WPE [Women’s Political Empowerment].”³⁵ Furthermore, research has shown that countries with higher female parliamentary representation are more likely to ratify international environmental treaties.³⁶

Gender Gaps That Exist Already in NDCs

Despite the well-documented benefits of women’s leadership and environmental stewardship, most countries still fail to fully recognize the crucial role women play in advancing climate goals. While 60 countries (out of 106 reviewed) state commitments to women’s empowerment, only 33 NDCs recognize equal participation of women in climate decision-making processes.³⁷ Furthermore, a mere 25 countries recognize women “as agents of change in accelerating

29 International Labour Organization. (2022). *Just transition: An essential pathway to achieving gender equality and social justice*. [LINK](#)

30 Erman, A., Fruttero, A., Hallegatte, S. (April 4, 2023). It takes a village! Accounting for women in building and strengthening climate resilience. *World Bank Group*. [LINK](#)

31 Women Food & Ag Network (WFAN). (n.d.). *Women Caring for the Land engages women landowners to advance stewardship and cultivate a community of conservation champions*. [LINK](#)

32 Mahila Housing Trust. (February 13, 2023). *Role of Women in Advancing Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)*. [LINK](#); Matters, I. (July 19, 2023). Women in power are the key to sustainable development. *Observer Research Foundation*. [LINK](#)

33 Ballew, M., Marlon, J., Leiserowitz, A., et. al. (November 20, 2018). Gender Differences in Public Understanding of Climate Change. *Yale Program on Climate Change Communication*. [LINK](#); United Nations Climate Action. (n.d.). *Why women are key to climate action*. [LINK](#)

34 “Women in their diversity” acknowledges the broad range of experiences, identities, and backgrounds among women, and recognizes the diversity of how people identify within the spectrum of gender and sexuality.

35 Lv, Z., Deng, C. (January 3, 2019). Does women’s political empowerment matter for improving the environment? A heterogeneous dynamic panel analysis. *Sustainable Development*. [LINK](#)

36 Norgaard, K., York, R. (2005). *Gender Equality and State Environmentalism*. [LINK](#)

37 UNDP. (n.d.). *Advancing Gender Equality in NDCs: Progress and Higher Ambitions*. [LINK](#)

progress on climate commitments.”³⁸ While this data reflects progress from previous NDCs, there remains a significant gap that impedes the advancement necessary to meet global targets. Addressing this gap is essential for integrating gender perspectives more comprehensively into national climate strategies.

Recommendations:

1. **Incorporate a Gender Analysis:** Conduct disaggregated gender analyses to understand the differential impacts of climate change on women, men, and gender-diverse peoples and integrate these insights and data into NDCs.
2. **Promote Gender Inclusive Participation:** Facilitate and ensure the active participation of women, gender-diverse peoples, and the LGBTQIA+ community in decision-making processes at all levels regarding climate programs and policies.
3. **Support Women-Led Initiatives:** Provide funding and resources for women in all their diversity leading climate projects and initiatives.
4. **Address Gender-Based Vulnerabilities:** Develop targeted strategies to address the specific vulnerabilities women and gender-diverse peoples face due to climate change impacts.
5. **Monitor and Evaluate Gender-Responsiveness:** Establish and implement mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the implementation of gender-responsive measures in NDCs.
6. **Recognize and Value Care Work:** Support and invest in essential care work often undertaken by women and gender-diverse individuals, ensuring that this work is integrated and valued in climate policies and funding allocations.

³⁸ UNDP. (n.d.). *Advancing Gender Equality in NDCs: Progress and Higher Ambitions*. [LINK](#)

The care economy encompasses paid and unpaid labor that supports the well-being and functioning of society, with a significant portion performed by women. This sector includes roles such as nurses, child caregivers, housekeepers, healthcare workers, cooks, and eldercare workers. This care work is a crucial component in addressing the climate crisis, representing a low-carbon sector integral to sustainable development. The care economy plays a fundamental role in daily life and economic stability. If unpaid care and domestic work were assigned an economic value, it would represent between 10% to 39% of GDP, depending on the country.³⁹ An estimated 16.4 billion hours are spent on unpaid care work each day—equivalent to 2 billion people working eight hours a day without pay.⁴⁰ Women are responsible for over three-quarters of this unpaid care work, dedicating 3.2 times more time than men.⁴¹ Demand for care work is expected to increase due to aging populations, changing family structures, increased female employment, displacement, and health issues linked to climate impacts.⁴² Investing in care as a public good, rather than high-emitting industries, is essential for promoting social equity and facilitating a just transition.⁴³

Upholding Indigenous Rights and Sovereignty

Importance of Indigenous Rights in Climate Solutions

Indigenous Peoples play a crucial role in climate solutions due to their profound connection to the land, traditional ecological knowledge, and expertise in sustainable resource management.⁴⁴ Their territories, often overlapping with some of the planet's most biodiverse areas, play a crucial role in biodiversity conservation and climate resilience.⁴⁵ By stewarding 80% of the world's remaining biodiversity and 36% of intact forests,⁴⁶ Indigenous and Tribal communities are on the frontline of protecting and defending the natural world.⁴⁷ In addition to this critical stewardship, Indigenous communities have an immense impact on mitigating climate change and greenhouse gas emissions, as highlighted by the Indigenous Environmental Network's (IEN) 2021 report, which shows that Indigenous-led resistance efforts in the United States and Canada “stopped or delayed greenhouse gas pollution equivalent to at least one-quarter of annual U.S. and Canadian emissions.”⁴⁸

Despite their ongoing contributions to environmental protection and climate solutions, Indigenous communities continue to face threats from land grabs, resource extraction,

39 UNRISD. (n.d.). *Why Care Matters for Social Development*. [\[LINK\]](#)

40 Addati, L., Cattaneo, U., Equivel, V., et. al. (June 28, 2018). Care Work and Care Jobs for the Future of Decent Work. *International Labor Organization*. [\[LINK\]](#)

41 Addati, L., Cattaneo, U., Equivel, V., et. al. (June 28, 2018). Care Work and Care Jobs for the Future of Decent Work. *International Labor Organization*. [\[LINK\]](#)

42 2X Global. (n.d.). *Care Economy*. [\[LINK\]](#)

43 WECAN. (n.d.). *Prioritizing Care Work Can Unlock a Just Transition for All*. [\[LINK\]](#)

44 Pyone, K. (September 24, 2019). Indigenous knowledge in natural resource management: integrating local perspectives into conservation strategies. *Yale School of the Environment*. [\[LINK\]](#)

45 Fa, J., Watson, J., Leiper, I., et. al. (January 6, 2020). Importance of Indigenous Peoples' lands for the conservation of Intact Forest Landscapes. *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment*. [\[LINK\]](#); Webb, J. (February, 2019). Indigenous-Led Conservation in the Amazon: A Win-Win-Win Solution. *Amazon Frontlines*. [\[LINK\]](#)

46 Fleck, A. (July 19, 2022). Indigenous Communities Protect 80% Of All Biodiversity. *Statista*. [\[LINK\]](#); Fa, J., Watson, J., Leiper, I., et. al. (January 6, 2020). Importance of Indigenous Peoples' lands for the conservation of Intact Forest Landscapes. *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment*. [\[LINK\]](#)

47 Goldtooth, D., Saldamando, A., Gracey, K., et. al. (August, 2021). Indigenous Resistance Against Carbon. *Indigenous Environmental Network and Oil Change International*. [\[LINK\]](#)

48 Goldtooth, D., Saldamando, A. (August, 2021). Indigenous Resistance Against Carbon. *Indigenous Environmental Network*. [\[LINK\]](#)

exploitation, lack of access to climate finance, and inadequate recognition of their rights and sovereignty.⁴⁹ The disregard for Indigenous rights is evident in the current NDCs of many countries, which frequently overlook the essential role of Indigenous participation and engagement. A 2022 analysis from the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA), reveals that over 62% of countries fail to reference Indigenous People in their most recent NDC submissions.⁵⁰ Moreover, although 31 countries (out of 106) referenced colonialism in their NDCs, only eight recognized Indigenous Peoples' rights, six included concrete mechanisms for incorporating Indigenous Peoples' knowledge, and just three countries mentioned Indigenous Peoples' governance systems.⁵¹

Recognizing and supporting Indigenous Peoples' autonomy and rights, including the right to Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) as outlined by the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples,⁵² is vital for upholding justice and enhancing the effectiveness of global conservation and climate efforts.

Given the significant gaps in acknowledging Indigenous contributions to protecting the natural world, it is evident that countries must enhance their recognition of the crucial values and rights held by Indigenous populations.

Recommendations:

- 1. Recognize and Uphold Indigenous Rights and Sovereignty:** Ensure that NDCs explicitly recognize, respect, and uphold the sovereignty and rights of Indigenous peoples, including land tenure, self-determination, and the rights outlined in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
- 2. Integrate Traditional Indigenous Knowledge:** Incorporate and support Indigenous knowledge and practices in national climate strategies and plans.
- 3. Implement Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC):** Guarantee that all proposed climate activities, including mining for transition minerals for renewable energy infrastructure, forest protection initiatives, and projects impacting Indigenous lands and communities, are carried out with robust due diligence processes to implement Free, Prior, and Informed Consent in the affected territories of Indigenous communities. There must be adherence to FPIC in all policies.

⁴⁹ United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner. (September 21, 2011). *Extraction of natural resources a key cause of abuse of indigenous peoples' rights - UN expert*. [\[LINK\]](#); Open Society Justice Initiative. (April, 2017). *Strategic Litigation Impacts: Indigenous Peoples' Land Rights*. [\[LINK\]](#)

⁵⁰ Carmona, R., Reed, G., Ford, J., et. al. (October, 2022). Recognition of Indigenous Peoples in Nationally Determined Contributions. IWGIA. [\[LINK\]](#)

⁵¹ Carmona, R., Reed, G., Ford, J., et. al. (October, 2022). Recognition of Indigenous Peoples in Nationally Determined Contributions. IWGIA. [\[LINK\]](#)

⁵² United Nations. (September 13, 2007). *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. [\[LINK\]](#)

4. **Support Indigenous-Led Initiatives:** Ensure Indigenous People have access to climate financing for climate projects and initiatives.
5. **Ensure Participation:** Promote the meaningful participation of Indigenous Peoples in decision-making processes at all levels regarding climate programs and policies.

Centering Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health in Climate Policy

Connecting Biodiversity Protection and Climate Action

The protection of biodiversity is a critical component of effective climate action and should be an integral part of governments' NDCs.⁵³ The World Wildlife Fund's 2022 Living Planet Report revealed that there has been a 69% decline in species populations since 1970.⁵⁴ Maintaining biodiversity is necessary for our natural world to remain healthy and sustain thriving global ecosystems, which are essential to mitigate and adapt to climate change. By integrating biodiversity protection into NDCs, governments can strengthen their efforts to meet climate targets and enhance overall climate resilience.

How current NDCs may contribute to Biodiversity Loss

While the majority of countries include some mention of the impacts of land use, land-use change and forestry (LULUCF)⁵⁵, only 32% of NDCs outline targeted policies to reduce deforestation.⁵⁶ Notably, low- and middle-income countries are leading in efforts toward biodiversity protection and preservation.⁵⁷

While more countries increasingly acknowledge the importance of nature in climate plans, not all fully consider the delicacy and complexity of natural ecosystems, which can lead to unintended negative consequences. For instance, many countries have implemented reforestation initiatives that establish plantations with single, non-native species rather than fostering diverse, native ecosystems.⁵⁸ This approach can lead to a decline in native flora and fauna, an increase in invasive species, and can exacerbate climate change drivers.⁵⁹ Infrastructure projects aimed at ultimately reducing carbon emissions such as hydroelectric dams, can pose significant trade-offs and

⁵³ Bakhtary, H., Haupt, F., Elbrecht, J. (July, 2021). NDCs - A Force For Nature? WWF UK. [\[LINK\]](#)

⁵⁴ Alkemade, R., Alpizar, F., Benham, C., et. al. (2022). Living Planet Report 2022 - Building a Nature-Positive Society. WWF and Zoological Society of London. [\[LINK\]](#)

⁵⁵ United Nations Climate Change. (n.d.). *Land Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF)*. [\[LINK\]](#)

⁵⁶ Seddon, N., Sengupta, S., Garcia-Espinosa, M., et. al. (2019). Nature-based Solutions in Nationally Determined Contributions. *International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources and University of Oxford*. [\[LINK\]](#)

⁵⁷ Seddon, N., Sengupta, S., Garcia-Espinosa, M., et. al. (2019). Nature-based Solutions in Nationally Determined Contributions. *International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources and University of Oxford*. [\[LINK\]](#)

⁵⁸ Global Forest Coalition. (2022). *The End of False Solutions: Moving Towards Rights-Based and Gender-Transformative Solutions to Climate Change*. [\[LINK\]](#); Schulte, I., Bakhtary, H., Siantidis, S., et. al. (August, 2020). #NDCsWeWant: Enhancing NDCs for Food Systems Recommendations for Decision-Makers. WWF Germany & WWF Food Practice. [\[LINK\]](#)

⁵⁹ Jeschke, J., Bacher, S., Blackburn, T., et. al. (October, 2014). Defining the Impact of Non-Native Species. *Conservation Biology*. [\[LINK\]](#); Moyano, J., Dimarco, R., Paritsis, J., et. al. (March 26, 2024). Unintended consequences of planting native and non-native trees in treeless ecosystems to mitigate climate change. *Journal of Ecology*. [\[LINK\]](#)

challenges, including diverting natural water flows and restricting access to water for animals and humans who rely on waterways, making their overall impact contentious.⁶⁰ Furthermore, hydroelectric dams have been proven highly susceptible to the impacts of the climate crisis. According to a 2021 study, by 2050, 61% of all global hydropower dams will be situated in regions with very high or extreme risks of flooding and/or drought.⁶¹ As droughts and flooding intensify, hydroelectric infrastructure will become less effective, reliable, and secure.⁶²

Additionally carbon offsets from forests,⁶³ have been widely discredited.⁶⁴ For instance, 90% of rainforest offset credits certified by Verra, a leading carbon standard, are “phantom credits,” meaning they can be bought but do not actually represent real carbon emission reductions.⁶⁵

A holistic approach to NDCs, including biodiversity protection, is necessary for climate actions that reduce greenhouse gas emissions while allowing ecosystems and their inhabitants to thrive.

Recommendations:

1. **Protect Forests:** Impose national moratoriums on the logging and burning of all old-growth and mature forests, and immediately halt the burning of forests to produce cropland or pastureland for ruminative livestock.
2. **Incorporate the Global Biodiversity Framework:** Consider the guidelines agreed to in the Global Biodiversity Framework and how these can integrate into national climate plans and strategies.
3. **Stop the Commodification of Nature:** Oppose the commodification of forest carbon through carbon offset schemes.
4. **Promote Food Sovereignty and Security:** Promote regenerative agricultural practices that support food sovereignty and security while phasing out all agricultural practices that cause soil erosion, depletion, and compaction.
5. **Advance Biodiversity Education Programs:** Implement programs to educate community members about native species to effectively drive community-led reforestation efforts and ensure that restoration activities support local biodiversity.

⁶⁰ Shinn, L. (June 1, 2022). Renewable Energy: The Clean Facts. NRDC. [\[LINK\]](#)

⁶¹ Opperman, J., Camargo, R., Laporte-Bisquit, A. (2022). Using the WWF Water Risk Filter to Screen Existing and Projected Hydropower Projects for Climate and Biodiversity Risks. *Water*. [\[LINK\]](#); Hirsheimer, B. (February 24, 2022). New Study: US Hydropower Threatened by Increasing Droughts Due to Climate Change. *WWF*. [\[LINK\]](#)

⁶² Hirsheimer, B. (February 24, 2022). New Study: US Hydropower Threatened by Increasing Droughts Due to Climate Change. *WWF*. [\[LINK\]](#); Klemm, J., Simonov, E. (April 6, 2022). 10 reasons why hydropower dams are a false climate solution. *International Rivers*. [\[LINK\]](#); NOAA, NIDIS., Drought.gov. (n.d.). *Drought Impacts on Energy Production*. [\[LINK\]](#); Union of Concerned Scientists. (March 5, 2013). *Environmental Impact of Hydroelectric Power*. [\[LINK\]](#)

⁶³ Lakhani, N. (September 19, 2023). Revealed: top carbon offset projects may not cut planet-heating emissions. *The Guardian*. [\[LINK\]](#); Boyd, R. (May 16, 2022). Why Forest Carbon Offsets Aren't a Substitute for Slashing Emissions. *NRDC*. [\[LINK\]](#); Klemm, J., Simonov, E. (April 6, 2022). 10 reasons why hydropower dams are a false climate solution. *International Rivers*. [\[LINK\]](#)

⁶⁴ Song, L. (May 22, 2019). An Even More Inconvenient Truth. *ProPublica*. [\[LINK\]](#); Greenfield, P. (January 18, 2023). Revealed: more than 90% of rainforest carbon offsets by biggest certifier are worthless, analysis shows. *The Guardian*. [\[LINK\]](#)

⁶⁵ Greenfield, P. (January 18, 2023). Revealed: More than 90% of Rainforest Carbon Offsets by Biggest Certifier Are Worthless, Analysis Shows. *The Guardian*. [\[LINK\]](#)

- 6. Support the Rights of Nature:** Globally support implementing the Universal Declaration on the Rights of Mother Earth, which details the legal rights of nature to exist, thrive, and evolve.⁶⁶

Phasing Out Fossil Fuels and Ending False Solutions

Fossil Fuel Impacts on Communities and the Climate

In 2023, the outcome from the UNFCCC COP28⁶⁷ marked a milestone as countries agreed for the first time to “[transition] away from fossil fuels in energy systems.”⁶⁸ Despite this outcome, the 2023 Production Gap Report exposed a troubling reality: “governments, in aggregate, still plan to produce more than double the amount of fossil fuels in 2030 than what would be consistent with limiting global warming to 1.5°C.”⁶⁹ The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) warns that emissions from existing fossil fuel infrastructure alone “would exceed the remaining carbon budget for 1.5°C.”⁷⁰

Fossil fuels, such as coal, oil, and gas, remain among the largest drivers of the climate crisis, accounting for over 75% of greenhouse gas emissions and nearly 90% of carbon dioxide emissions.⁷¹ The ongoing production and use of these fossil fuels have caused severe global impacts, including extreme weather events, rising sea levels, food insecurity,⁷² adverse health impacts, and economic instability.⁷³

The process of extracting and producing fossil fuels results in the pollution and degradation of air, water, and land, and can contribute to human and Indigenous rights violations. Furthermore, communities continue to be negatively impacted by fossil fuels through land grabs,⁷⁴ harms toward environmental land defenders,⁷⁵ and violations of the right to Free Prior and Informed Consent.⁷⁶ For example, in Peru, oil contamination has severely damaged essential resources like crops, water, and culturally sacred sites. A 2019 study revealed that 45.9% of children in Peru living around river basins affected by fossil fuels have dangerously high arsenic levels, and 25.6% have elevated mercury levels.⁷⁷ Despite this, the government continues to move forward with a new 30-year fossil fuel contract.⁷⁸

⁶⁶ International Rights of Nature Tribunal. (April 22, 2010). *Universal Declaration of the Rights of Mother Earth*. [\[LINK\]](#)

⁶⁷ COP28 refers to the UN Climate Change Conference, held in Dubai. At this conference over 150 Heads of State and Government came together to advance global efforts to combat climate change.

⁶⁸ UNFCCC. (n.d.). *Outcome of the first global stocktake*. [\[LINK\]](#)

⁶⁹ Achakulwisut, P., Lazarus, M., Grant, N., et. al. (November, 2023). Phasing down or phasing up? *SEI, Climate Analytics, E3G, IISD, UNEP*. [\[LINK\]](#)

⁷⁰ IPCC. (n.d.). *AR6 Synthesis Report*. [\[LINK\]](#)

⁷¹ United Nations. (n.d.). *Causes and Effects of Climate Change*. [\[LINK\]](#)

⁷² Lindwall, C. (October 24, 2022). What are the Effects of Climate Change? *NRDC*. [\[LINK\]](#)

⁷³ WECAN. (2024). *The Gendered and Racial Impacts of the Fossil Fuel Industry in North America and Complicit Financial Institutions*. [\[LINK\]](#)

⁷⁴ Greenpeace. (2024). *Fossil Fueled Human Rights Violations*. [\[LINK\]](#)

⁷⁵ Global Witness. (December 11, 2023). *Land and environmental defenders protect our planet - but they cannot halt climate change without access to justice*. [\[LINK\]](#)

⁷⁶ Birss, M., Marshall-Hallmark, P., Poirier, C., et. al. (August, 2023). Areas Where the Free, Prior, Informed Consent of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities Have Not Been Obtained. *Friends of the Earth*. [\[LINK\]](#)

⁷⁷ United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner. (June 28, 2021). *Peru: Clean up oil pollution in indigenous communities before allowing more drilling, UN experts urge*. [\[LINK\]](#)

⁷⁸ Silva, R. (July 6, 2017). Block 192 - past, present and future. *Chambers and Partners*. [\[LINK\]](#)

Governments have a responsibility to ensure and protect human and Indigenous rights, as well as the health and well-being of their communities. Thus, a phaseout of fossil fuels is necessary for achieving climate goals while also supporting thriving populations.

Misguided Approaches: False Solutions in the NDCs

Despite the urgent need for effective climate action, many NDCs continue to integrate what has been termed “false solutions” that fail to address the core sources of the climate crisis.

False solutions to the climate crisis are strategies or approaches that appear effective, but ultimately fail to address the underlying root causes of the problem, or can even worsen it. These so-called solutions provide an ineffective approach to maintaining business-as-usual and delay immediate actions required for meaningful and sustainable progress.⁷⁹ Examples include carbon capture and sequestration,⁸⁰ carbon offset schemes,⁸¹ and Nature-based Solutions,⁸² which all fail to prevent further climate chaos.⁸³ In some cases, these solutions enable the continued use of fossil fuels or provide ways for fossil fuel companies to maintain their operations without making substantial reductions in their emissions.⁸⁴ For a deeper analysis, please refer to the report, “The Need for Real Zero Not Net Zero: Shifting from False Solutions to Real Solutions and a Just Transition.”⁸⁵

False solutions include technologies such as carbon capture and storage (CCS),⁸⁶ geoengineering,⁸⁷ and biofuels,⁸⁸ which are often included in NDCs and presented as viable pathways.⁸⁹ According to the Clean Air Task Force (CATF), out of 42 countries polled in their assessment, 14 included the use of carbon capture, utilization and storage, 16 included plans to use hydrogen or other low-carbon fuels, and 11 demonstrated nuclear energy as a priority measure for reducing emissions.⁹⁰ These technologies and false solutions frequently divert resources and attention from more impactful and proven long-term strategies.⁹¹ For instance, CCS, while promising to capture carbon emissions, does not eliminate the underlying problem of fossil fuel reliance and can lead to increased fossil fuel extraction.⁹² In fact, “79% of the global carbon capture capacity

79 Timothy Q. Donaghy, Noel Healy, et al. (June, 2023). Fossil fuel racism in the United States: How phasing out coal, oil, and gas can protect communities. *Energy Research & Social Science*. [\[LINK\]](#)

80 Lakhani, N. (August 29, 2024). US leads wealthy countries spending billions of public money on unproven 'climate solutions'. *The Guardian*. [\[LINK\]](#)

81 Song, L., Temple, J., Burke, D., et al. (April 29, 2021). The Climate Solution Actually Adding Millions of Tons of CO₂ into the Atmosphere. *ProPublica*. [\[LINK\]](#); Cames, M., Füssler, J., Lazarus, M. (March, 2016). How additional is the Clean Development Mechanism? Analysis of the application of current tools and proposed alternatives. Study prepared for DG CLIMA. *DG Clima*. [\[LINK\]](#)

82 Lahiri, S., Martinez, V. (October 10, 2023). “Nature-based solutions” - another false, corporate pathway in the great greenwashing of the climate and biodiversity crisis. *Global Forest Coalition*. [\[LINK\]](#); Lakhani, N. (September 19, 2023). Revealed: top carbon offset project may not cut planet-heating emissions. *The Guardian*. [\[LINK\]](#)

83 Amorelli, L., Gibson, D., Gilbertson, T. (April, 2021). Hoodwinked in the Hothouse. *Climate False Solutions*. [\[LINK\]](#)

84 Lindwall, C. (2023). The Promise and Pitfalls of Net-Zero Pledges. *National Resource Defense Council*. [\[LINK\]](#)

85 Estrada, M., Lake, O. (n.d.). The Need for Real Zero Not Net Zero: Shifting from False Solutions to Real Solutions and a Just Transition. WECAN. [\[LINK\]](#)

86 Oreskes, N. (March 1, 2024). The False Promise of Carbon Capture as a Climate Solution. *ScientificAmerican*. [\[LINK\]](#); Center for Biological Diversity. (n.d.). *Carbon Capture and Storage is a False Solution for the Climate and Our Communities*. [\[LINK\]](#)

87 Jones, N., Verkuijl, C., Cabré, M., et al. (June, 2023). Connecting the dots: Mapping references to fossil fuel production in national plans under the UNFCCC for the 2023 Global Stocktake. *SEI*. [\[LINK\]](#); Lawrence, M., Schäfer, S., Muri, H., et al. (September 13, 2018). Evaluating climate geoengineering proposals in the context of the Paris Agreement temperature goals. *Nature Communications*. [\[LINK\]](#)

88 Amorelli, L., Gibson, D., Gilbertson, T. (April, 2021). Hoodwinked in the Hothouse. *Climate False Solutions*. [\[LINK\]](#)

89 Jones, N., Verkuijl, C., Cabré, M., et al. (June, 2023). Connecting the dots: Mapping references to fossil fuel production in national plans under the UNFCCC for the 2023 Global Stocktake. *SEI*. [\[LINK\]](#); Lawrence, M., Schäfer, S., Muri, H., et al. (September 13, 2018). Evaluating climate geoengineering proposals in the context of the Paris Agreement temperature goals. *Nature Communications*. [\[LINK\]](#)

90 Davis, S. (April, 2022). NDC Assessment: How Do Advanced Low-Emission Energy and Climate Technologies Factor into Nationally Determined Contributions. *Clean Air Task Force*. [\[LINK\]](#)

91 Lakhani, N. (August 29, 2024). US leads wealthy countries spending billions of public money on unproven 'climate solutions'. *The Guardian*. [\[LINK\]](#)

92 Center for International Environmental Law. (n.d.). *Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS): Frequently Asked Questions*. [\[LINK\]](#)

sends captured CO₂ to an [Enhanced Oil Recovery]⁹³ project.⁹⁴ Additionally, geoengineering approaches, such as solar radiation management, carry significant risks and uncertainties without addressing the fundamental issue of greenhouse gas emissions.⁹⁵

At this critical point in time, governments should prioritize solutions that directly address the root causes of the climate crisis, rather than relying on unproven and risky technologies. Integrating false solutions into NDCs allows governments and polluting industries to continue business-as-usual practices. True progress requires a commitment to reducing emissions at their source, transitioning away from fossil fuels and investing in sustainable, equitable solutions that offer genuine benefits for the environment and communities vulnerable to climate change.

Planning for an Immediate Fossil Fuel Phase-Out

The International Energy Agency reported that global demand for fossil fuels is expected to peak before 2030, driven by the growing adoption and demand for clean energy technologies.⁹⁶ The evidence is clear: governments must plan now for an immediate fossil fuel phase-out. Various agencies and researchers have outlined transition pathways to eliminate fossil fuels while staying within the 1.5°C limit, underscoring the feasibility of a sustainable shift.⁹⁷

Countries' NDCs must clearly reflect a strong commitment to this transition, incorporating phase-out targets and policies that promote and incentivize the adoption of equitable, renewable energy systems and sustainable infrastructure. According to a 2024 analysis, out of the 20 largest fossil fuel-producing countries,⁹⁸ only one provided pathways or targets to decrease fossil fuel production.⁹⁹ The analysis also highlights that seven of these countries have significant economic dependence on fossil fuels, which is why it is crucial to enhance investments in energy diversification strategies and renewable energy alternatives.¹⁰⁰

Continuing to invest in and develop new fossil fuel projects only leads to further environmental degradation and exacerbates the already worsening climate crisis. These projects perpetuate the reliance on dirty energy sources while inflicting harm on local ecosystems, contributing to pollution and negatively impacting public health. It is essential to shift focus away from expanding fossil fuel infrastructure and toward equitable and sustainable energy solutions protecting both the planet and communities.

93 Enhanced Oil Recovery (EOR) includes injecting CO₂ into depleted oil or gas reservoirs to further production and extend the field's life; Castle, W.F. (2002). Air separation and liquefaction: recent developments and prospects for the beginning of the new millennium. *International Journal of Refrigeration*. [\[LINK\]](#)

94 Oil Change International. (November 30, 2023). *Carbon Capture's Publicly Funded Failure*. [\[LINK\]](#)

95 Union of Concerned Scientists. (December 4, 2020). *What is Solar Geoengineering? How does it work, what are the risks, and why should we study it?* [\[LINK\]](#)

96 Cozzi, L., Gould, T., Bouckaert, S., et. al (2023). *World Energy Outlook*. International Energy Agency. [\[LINK\]](#)

97 Jacobson, M. (January 21, 2020). 100 Percent Clean, Renewable Energy and Storage for Everything. *Stanford*. [\[LINK\]](#)

98 These countries include China, the United States, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Canada, Australia, India, Indonesia, Iran, United Arab Emirates, Iraq, Qatar, Norway, Brazil, Kuwait, Algeria, South Africa, Poland, Germany, and Türkiye.; Jones, N., Parra, P. (June, 2024). How the Transition Away From Fossil Fuel Production Can Be Included in New Climate Commitments and Plans. *IISD*. [\[LINK\]](#)

99 Jones, N., Parra, P. (June, 2024). How the Transition Away From Fossil Fuel Production Can Be Included in New Climate Commitments and Plans. *IISD*. [\[LINK\]](#)

100 Jones, N., Parra, P. (June, 2024). How the Transition Away From Fossil Fuel Production Can Be Included in New Climate Commitments and Plans. *IISD*. [\[LINK\]](#)

Recommendations:

1. **Set Ambitious Targets:** Establish clear, science-based targets for phasing out fossil fuel use and transition to renewable energy sources. This includes increasing the rate of annual renewable energy additions across the power sector and all end-use sectors.¹⁰¹
2. **Stop Fossil Fuel Expansion:** Enforce policies that place a moratorium on new fossil fuel exploration, drilling, and extraction projects. Instead, provide incentives for investments in renewable energy infrastructure and technologies.
3. **Adopt Stricter Environmental and Human Rights Standards:** Strengthen regulations to ensure existing fossil fuel projects adhere to stringent environmental and social standards and implement robust monitoring and enforcement mechanisms to prevent non-compliance.
4. **Foster the Remediation of Frontline Communities:** Use health and environmental impact assessments to focus cleanup efforts and funding toward restoration and remediation projects.
5. **End all Public Subsidies to Fossil Fuels and False Solutions:** Redirect funding currently allocated to fossil fuel and false solution subsidies toward renewable energy projects, public transportation, and energy efficiency programs.

Advancing a Just Transition and Investing in a Healthy Future

What is a Just Transition

For decades, labor organizers and, more recently, climate justice groups have been urging governments and financial institutions to stop investing in extractive industries and instead invest in a Just Transition. The International Labour Organization (ILO) defines the Just Transition as “greening the economy in a way that is as fair and inclusive as possible to everyone concerned, creating decent work opportunities and leaving no one behind.”¹⁰²

This framework offers guidance for the shift from polluting, extractive economies to sustainable, local, and equitable economies.¹⁰³ A Just Transition additionally focuses on integrating principles,

¹⁰¹ End-Use Sectors refer to the segments of the economy where energy is consumed for specific needs and/or services. These sectors include residential, commercial, industrial, transportation uses, among others.; Adegbulugbe, A., Fenhann, J., Konstantinaviciute, I., et. al. (2007). Energy supply. In Climate Change 2007: Mitigation. Contribution of Working Group III to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. IPCC, Cambridge University Press. [\[LINK\]](#)

¹⁰² International Labour Organization. (July 9, 2024). *Climate change and financing a just transition*. [\[LINK\]](#)

¹⁰³ International Trade Union Confederation. (March, 2015). *Climate Justice: There Are No Jobs On A Dead Planet*. [\[LINK\]](#)

strategies, and practices that prioritize frontline communities and workers in building new economies that align with the local community's needs and the surrounding ecosystems. Adopting Just Transition principles includes, but is not limited to, a regenerative economy that promotes ecological resilience and restoration, a reduction of resource consumption and waste,¹⁰⁴ building a circular economy, upholding human and Indigenous rights, and promoting transformative economic frameworks not based on Gross Domestic Product (GDP), such as the practice of Buen Vivir.¹⁰⁵

A circular economy is an economic model that prioritizes sustainability and equity by minimizing waste and maximizing resource utilization through closed-loop systems. This approach focuses on the design of products and processes that facilitate and encourage reuse, repair, remanufacturing, recycling, and other methods that move away from wasteful linear consumption patterns.¹⁰⁶

Additionally, a Just Transition requires economic models and processes that do not exploit and unjustly extract transition minerals, namely lithium, cobalt, copper, and nickel,¹⁰⁷ from low-income countries, ensuring that the Transition to renewable energy does not further perpetuate ecological and social harms. As demand for critical minerals is expected to triple by 2030,¹⁰⁸ it becomes imperative to develop and implement fair and equitable sourcing practices, while also ensuring that countries hosting these resources benefit from projects by centering economic and social rights.¹⁰⁹

Roughly translating to “good living” in English, Buen Vivir derives from the Quechua term Sumak Kawsay.¹¹⁰ This concept, rooted in Indigenous knowledge systems, encompasses the well-being of individuals within their environment and communities. Buen Vivir emphasizes harmony between people and nature, ensuring that individual needs are balanced with those of the community and the natural world.¹¹¹

Indigenous Sovereignty and Leadership in a Just Transition

To develop equitable pathways toward a Just Transition, governments must ensure that Indigenous communities are included in climate policies and solutions. Many studies demonstrate that Indigenous peoples' knowledge and cultural practices are instrumental in environmental

104 Climate Justice Alliance. (n.d.). *What Do We Mean By Just Transition?* [\[LINK\]](#)

105 Villalba, U. (2013). *Buen Vivir Vs Development: A Paradigm Shift in the Andes?* Routledge Taylor and Francis Group. [\[LINK\]](#); Balch, O. (2013, February 4). *Buen vivir: the social philosophy inspiring movements in South America.* *The Guardian.* [\[LINK\]](#)

106 Schröder, P. (December 11, 2020). *Promoting a Just Transition to an Inclusive Circular Economy.* Chatham House. [\[LINK\]](#); Ellen Macarthur Foundation. (n.d.). *What is a circular economy?* [\[LINK\]](#); EPA. (n.d.). *What is a Circular Economy?* [\[LINK\]](#)

107 IRENA. (n.d.). *Critical Materials.* [\[LINK\]](#)

108 UN. (n.d.). *The UN Secretary-General's Panel on Critical Energy Transition Minerals.* [\[LINK\]](#); IEA. (n.d.). *Implications - Demand for critical minerals for clean energy technologies is set to increase rapidly in all IEA scenarios.* [\[LINK\]](#)

109 Climate Action Network International. (April, 2024). *Civil Society Recommendations for the United Nations Secretary-General's Panel on Critical Energy Transition Minerals.* [\[LINK\]](#)

110 Villalba, U. (2013). *Buen Vivir Vs Development: A Paradigm Shift in the Andes?* Routledge Taylor and Francis Group. [\[LINK\]](#)

111 Balch, O. (February 4, 2013). *Buen vivir: the social philosophy inspiring movements in South America.* *The Guardian.* [\[LINK\]](#)

stewardship, community-led solutions and energy projects, and addressing the climate crisis.¹¹² Furthermore, Indigenous communities must not be excluded from Just Transition policies, and instead should be central to decision-making regarding equitable energy policies, food sovereignty, eco-housing solutions, and regenerative and just renewable energy projects.¹¹³

According to *Indigenous Principles of Just Transition*, a Just Transition must also actively work to preserve and revitalize Indigenous languages and traditional knowledge and honor Indigenous traditions and customs, while upholding Indigenous Peoples' rights, sovereignty, and self-determination over ancestral lands and resources.¹¹⁴

In addition to acknowledging Indigenous Peoples' significant contributions to advancing a Just Transition, countries must also ensure that Indigenous communities are able to access the benefits of this Transition, including equitable employment opportunities, fair revenue generation, capacity building and a dependable energy supply.¹¹⁵

Incorporating the Care Economy in a Just Transition

A Just Transition requires the recognition, understanding, and transformation of the dominant social constructs that lie at the root of gender inequality and climate change, which leads to resource extraction and the exploitation of unpaid labor.¹¹⁶

To transform society equitably, there must first be a reimagining of work and the economy, the perceptions of which have historically undervalued and exploited the contributions of women in all their diversity. This is strongly reflected in care work or the care economy, which includes childcare, care for the elderly, education, healthcare, and domestic services provided in paid and unpaid forms within formal and informal sectors. Care work also expands further to include care for the environment by those who work directly with it, for example, growing food and caring for the land, which is also predominantly taken on by women.¹¹⁷

Reimagining work emphasizes developing a green workforce, helping those successfully transition out of fossil-fuel-reliant industries, and providing robust social protections that compensate individuals for their care work so no one is left behind during the transition.¹¹⁸

112 Novak, R., Laramie, M., et.al. (2023). Fifth National Climate Assessment, Chapter 16. Tribes and Indigenous Peoples. NCA5. [LINK](#); Redvers, N., Aubrey, P., Celidwen., et. al. (2023). Indigenous Peoples: Traditional knowledges, climate change, and health. *PLoS Glob Public Health*. [LINK](#); Recio, E., Hestad, D. (April 22, 2022). Indigenous Peoples: Defending an Environment for All. *IISD*. [LINK](#)

113 Laboucan-Massimo, M., Rickerby-Nishi, F., Demeris, N., et. al. (n.d.). Just Transition Guide - Indigenous-Led Pathways Toward Equitable Climate Solutions and Resiliency in the Climate Crisis. *Sacred Earth Solar*. [LINK](#)

114 Indigenous Environmental Network. (2017). *Indigenous Principles of Just Transition*. [LINK](#)

115 Laboucan-Massimo, M., Rickerby-Nishi, F., Demeris, N., et. al. (n.d.). Just Transition Guide - Indigenous-Led Pathways Toward Equitable Climate Solutions and Resiliency in the Climate Crisis. *Sacred Earth Solar*. [LINK](#)

116 Lake, O., Quaid, K. (n.d.). Prioritizing Care Work Can Unlock a Just Transition for All. WECAN. [LINK](#)

117 Lake, O., Quaid, K. (n.d.). Prioritizing Care Work Can Unlock a Just Transition for All. WECAN. [LINK](#)

118 Climate Justice Alliance. (n.d.). *Justice Transition - A Framework for Change*. [LINK](#)

Importantly, care jobs are green jobs and can contribute to a shift away from a production-based society reliant on resource extraction and consumption. For example, in the UK it is estimated that the average job in health and care is associated with 26 times fewer emissions than a job in manufacturing and nearly 1,500 times fewer emissions than a job in oil and gas.¹¹⁹ As governments seek to phase out fossil fuel-based economies, a care economy is a viable alternative that supports emission reductions and principles of a just transition.

Just Transition in the NDCs

In recent years, global leaders have begun advancing efforts toward a Just Transition. At COP27, nations established the UNFCCC's Just Transition Work Program, which aims to explore pathways that integrate a Just Transition in order to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement.¹²⁰

Incorporating Just Transition principles into NDCs strengthens public support for climate policies and ensures the equitable distribution of benefits.¹²¹ Currently, 38% of NDCs and 56% of Long-Term Strategies (LTS) explicitly include these principles to some extent;¹²² however, in order to achieve a truly inclusive Just Transition, all governments must work together to foster international collaboration and support.

To effectively implement Just Transition frameworks, governments must act domestically and internationally. Part of a Just Transition includes acknowledging and addressing the responsibility of higher-income countries for their historic energy use, greenhouse gas emissions, and exploitation and degradation of land, as well as their current levels of energy use, pollution, and resource consumption.

Financing a Just Transition

Agreed to in the 1992 UNFCCC Treaty, Common But Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR) establishes that “the global nature of climate change calls for the widest possible cooperation by all countries and their participation in an effective and appropriate international response, in accordance with their common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities and their social and economic conditions.”¹²³

In terms of NDCs, the concept of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities helps to ensure that each country's climate commitments are equitable and reflective of historical responsibilities as well as the ability to contribute resources, financial support, technologies, and other mechanisms to

¹¹⁹ Diski, R. (November, 2022). A Green and Caring Economy. *Women's Budget Group*. [\[LINK\]](#)

¹²⁰ UNFCCC. (2023). *Work programme on just transition pathways referred to in the relevant paragraphs of decision 1/CMA.4*. [\[LINK\]](#)

¹²¹ Climate Justice Alliance. (n.d.). *Justice Transition - A Framework for Change*. [\[LINK\]](#)

¹²² Bahru, J. (November 16, 2023). Delivering the Paris Agreement in the Asia-Pacific region: Integrating just transition policies in the NDCs and LT-LEDS. *UNFCCC*. [\[LINK\]](#); Lee, S. (August, 2022). Issue Brief: Just Transition. *UNDP*. [\[LINK\]](#)

¹²³ Climate Nexus. (n.d.). *Common But Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities (CBDR-RC)*. [\[LINK\]](#)

promote a more balanced and just approach to global climate action.¹²⁴ By providing this support, low- and middle-income countries have the opportunity to pursue sustainable development pathways without having to depend on fossil fuels and other extractive industries. High-income countries must enhance their overall contributions to ensure that all economies can effectively participate in achieving global climate goals and undergo a Just Transition.

For example, an illustration of how a high-income country must advance its NDC is provided by a 2024 analysis, which describes how the United States would need to significantly enhance its climate commitments. Currently, the United States NDC sets “an economy-wide target of reducing its net greenhouse gas emissions by 50-52 percent below 2005 levels in 2030.”¹²⁵ As the U.S. prepares its 2025 NDC, an analysis provided by US Fair Share researchers shows that “the minimum annual international finance to begin to reach the US fair share comes to \$106 billion for international mitigation support and \$340 billion for international adaptation and loss & damage support, for a total of \$446 billion.”¹²⁶ This analysis takes into account the historical emissions of the US and its capacity to contribute to climate finance to achieve these goals.¹²⁷

Wealthy nations must be responsible for their fair share of climate finance. Wealthier nations have the potential to generate needed financing by reallocating funds from fossil fuel subsidies, holding major polluters accountable, and reforming existing financial systems.¹²⁸ These measures must be equitable to prevent placing undue burdens onto low-income and low-middle-income individuals within each country.¹²⁹

Climate justice advocates emphasize a significant financial obligation that must be addressed—identifying a “climate debt” of at least \$5 trillion annually from high-income to low-income countries.¹³⁰ This reflects a biophysical and monetary debt of past and current emissions, while also accounting for future costs and damages that low-income countries will face due to worsening climate impacts.¹³¹ The financial strain caused by climate debt can delay the necessary energy transition by impeding renewable energy infrastructure development and preventing low- and middle-income countries from accessing the funds needed to invest in clean energy solutions and technology.¹³²

This climate debt underscores the urgent need for adequate financing. Several studies suggest that the annual finance needed for mitigating and adapting to climate change ranges from USD

¹²⁴ UNFCCC. (n.d.). *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*. [\[LINK\]](#); Climate Nexus.(n.d.). *Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities (CBDR-RC)*. [\[LINK\]](#)

¹²⁵ UNFCCC. (2022). *The United States of America Nationally Determined Contribution – Reducing Greenhouse Gases in the United States: A 2030 Emissions Target*. [\[LINK\]](#)

¹²⁶ Lucas, N. et. al, (September, 2024). *United States Fair Share Nationally Determined Contribution*. [\[LINK\]](#)

¹²⁷ Lucas, N. et. al, (September, 2024). *United States Fair Share Nationally Determined Contribution*. [\[LINK\]](#)

¹²⁸ World Bank Group. (June 15, 2023). *Trillions Wasted on Subsidies Could Help Address Climate Change*. [\[LINK\]](#); Black, S., Parry, I., Vernon-Lin, N. (August 24, 2023). *Fossil Fuel Subsidies Surged to Record \$7 Trillion*. IMF. [\[LINK\]](#); World Bank Group. (June 15, 2023). *Detox Development: Repurposing Environmentally Harmful Subsidies*. [\[LINK\]](#)

¹²⁹ Athanasiou, T., Holz, C., Kartha, S. (August, 2022). *Fair Shares - Lessons from Practice, Thoughts on Strategy*. *Climate Equity Reference Project*. [\[LINK\]](#); S&P Global. (n.d.). *Climate Finance in Lower-Income Countries*. [\[LINK\]](#)

¹³⁰ Women & Gender Constituency. (July 26, 2024). *Feminists demand wealthy countries #PayUp their climate debt!* [\[LINK\]](#)

¹³¹ Batut, C., Kaiser, J., Surun, C., et. al. (June 24, 2024). Executive summary of the report on climate debt. *Institut Avant-Garde*. [\[LINK\]](#); Boitan, I., Marchewka-Bartkowiak, K. (December, 2022). *Climate change and the pricing of sovereign debt: Insights from European markets*. *Research in International Business and Finance*. [\[LINK\]](#); Clements, B., Gupta, S., Liu, J. (September, 2023). *Settling the Climate Debt*. *International Monetary Fund*. [\[LINK\]](#)

¹³² Auteri, M., Mele, M., Ruble, I., et. al. (June, 2024). *The double sustainability: The link between government debt and renewable energy*. *The Journal of Economic Asymmetries*. [\[LINK\]](#)

\$2.3 - US\$10 trillion, noting that there needs to be larger investments from high-income countries, many of whom have contributed considerably more to the climate crisis.¹³³ Additionally, studies highlight the significant discrepancies surrounding loss and damage financing. For instance, the projected economic cost of loss and damage by 2030 is estimated to be between USD \$290 and \$580 billion a year for low-income countries alone.¹³⁴ By 2050, this cost is expected to increase to over USD \$1 trillion.¹³⁵

Recommendations:

1. **Develop National Just Transition Plans:** Each country should develop a national Just Transition plan as part of its NDC, including specific measures for social dialogue, economic diversification, worker training, and social protections.
2. **Engage Stakeholders:** Governments should engage workers, businesses, and local communities in the development and implementation of Just Transition plans to ensure that their needs and perspectives are included.
3. **Invest in Green Jobs:** Provide funding and incentives for the creation of well-paying jobs in renewable energy, energy efficiency, and other sustainable sectors.
4. **Support Worker Transition:** Establish apprenticeship programs to train and educate workers, enabling them to transition to new green jobs.
5. **Promote Community Resilience:** Fund community-led development projects that enhance local resilience to climate impacts and create sustainable livelihoods.
6. **Analyze and Create Equitable NDCs:** High-income countries should identify what their fair share for climate action is as well as the climate finance that is necessary to begin to compensate for their contribution to the climate crisis. Low- and middle-income nations should identify what additional mitigation, adaptation, and loss and damage strategies they could take on with additional climate finance.
7. **Decentralize Energy Infrastructure:** Implement publicly owned, decentralized energy systems managed by public entities or community cooperatives. This enhances energy security, resilience, and transparency by spreading out energy generation, reduces dependency on centralized grids, and prioritizes accessibility and affordability over profit.¹³⁶

¹³³ Alayza, N., Larsen, G., Waskow, D. (May 29, 2024). What Could the New Climate Finance Goal Look Like? 7 Elements Under Negotiation. *World Resources Institute*. [\[LINK\]](#); UNFCCC Standing Committee on Finance. (2021). *UNFCCC Standing Committee on Finance: First report on the determination of the needs of developing country Parties related to implementing the Convention and the Paris Agreement*. [\[LINK\]](#); World Bank Group. (March 13, 2023). *What You Need to Know About How CDRs Estimate Climate Finance Needs*. [\[LINK\]](#); OECD. (n.d.). *Finance and investment for climate goals*. [\[LINK\]](#)

¹³⁴ Mechler, R., Bouwer, L., Schinko, T., et al. (2019). Loss and Damage from Climate Change. *SpringerLink*. [\[LINK\]](#); Heinrich Böll Stiftung. (n.d.). *Unpacking finance for Loss and Damage*. [\[LINK\]](#)

¹³⁵ Mechler, R., Bouwer, L., Schinko, T., et al. (2019). Loss and Damage from Climate Change. *SpringerLink*. [\[LINK\]](#)

¹³⁶ Just Energy. (December 12, 2023). *Decentralization and Energy: What It Means for Our Future*. [\[LINK\]](#); Cooper, J. (April 6, 2023). Decentralization and the Energy Transition. *EE Power*. [\[LINK\]](#)

Conclusion

The climate crisis represents a critical global challenge that necessitates immediate and comprehensive action. Current NDCs fall short of fulfilling the Paris Agreement's objectives, fail to address the full-scale of the climate emergency, and will propel the average global temperature catastrophically past the 1.5°C threshold.

The recommendations listed in this guidance document emphasize the need to actively integrate a holistic climate justice framework into the NDCs that include women's leadership, Indigenous rights, biodiversity protections, a fossil fuel phase-out, and the principles of a Just Transition. The NDCs should also promote the participation of the communities most impacted by climate change at all levels of the decision-making process, integrate gender and Indigenous rights considerations, leverage local knowledge and expertise, and foster equitable access to resources. Respecting and engaging the populations most vulnerable to the climate crisis not only enhances the effectiveness of climate policies and actions but also ensures that all voices and concerns are addressed. Additionally, the recommendations call for rejecting false solutions and implementing a full phase-out of fossil fuels, urging governments to prioritize genuinely sustainable and equitable approaches to meet the Paris Agreement's goals.

Governments need to urgently strengthen their NDCs to include ambitious emission reduction targets, fossil fuel phase-out strategies, robust adaptation, mitigation, and loss and damage plans within a Just Transition framework as well as measures to address social inequalities, historic exploitation, and environmental degradation. Only by adopting a holistic and inclusive approach can governments enhance the effectiveness of their climate actions and contribute to a sustainable and just future for all.



Published by the Women's Earth and Climate Action Network (WECAN) International.

WECAN is a solutions-based, multifaceted 501c3 non-profit organization established to engage women worldwide in policy advocacy, on-the-ground projects, trainings, and movement building for global climate justice. WECAN is based in the San Francisco Bay Area, California.

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