

# Climate Justice Now: Urgent Action Steps for Governments and Financial Institutions During UNGA, COP26, and Beyond

## **A Call to Action from the Global Women's Assembly for Climate Justice:**

**Solutions from the Frontlines and the Protection and Defense of Human Rights and Nature**

*An inclusive space across identities and the gender spectrum*

September 25 - 30, 2021

## **To Country Leaders, Policymakers and Financial Institutions:**

**The science is clear: we must keep global warming below 1.5°Celsius to preserve a liveable planet for ourselves and future generations.<sup>1</sup>**

We are speaking out on behalf of growing, diverse movements for global climate justice.

We are speaking out in recognition of the sacred interdependence of all life on Earth, and with the knowledge that business-as-usual economic models predicated on fossil fuel extraction have ushered in an era of unprecedented planetary distress, in which life as we know it is perilously threatened.

This call to action is necessary in that the new IPCC Sixth Assessment Report affirms that climate change is unequivocally caused by humans and issues the dire warning that current government commitments will not keep global warming below 1.5° Celsius.<sup>2</sup>

We call on governments and financial institutions at COP26 and beyond to steadfastly commit to keep global warming below 1.5° Celsius, as stated in the Paris Agreement, via policies that simultaneously prioritize social, racial and economic justice for all.<sup>3</sup> As the COVID-19 pandemic has tragically demonstrated, our current global system entrenches many structural inequities in access to power, resources, opportunities and well-being that determine the life prospects for people around the world. It has never been more clear that the global climate response must address these inequities.

In order to do this, we are calling for a transformation of how we relate to the natural world and to one another. We must transition from an extractivist, colonial paradigm of exploit, extract and decimate to a sustainable, globally-conscious one of respect, restore and replenish. Consumption needs to be reduced as we prioritize circular economies and regenerative systems.

We must rapidly halt the extraction of oil, gas, and coal and end all deforestation while building a new economy predicated on community-led solutions. As we herald in sustainable, democratic and

equitable governance paradigms, we need to prioritize the leadership and well-being of women, gender non-conforming people, Black and Brown communities, and Indigenous peoples who are disproportionately impacted by climate change, but also lead the frontlines of systemic solutions. Moreover, we must redress the historical and current harms of racialized labor and resource exploitation. It is also vital to ensure dignified conditions of work and care for all.

We must also recognize the inalienable rights and invaluable traditional knowledge of Indigenous Peoples, and follow their environmental justice leadership in all climate solutions. We are calling for the protection of biodiversity, seed sovereignty, and food security, as well as for respect for the rights of nature, including the forests, oceans, rivers and lands upon which all life depends.

False solutions, such as natural gas, dangerous nuclear power plants, mega-dams, geo-engineering, bioenergy, forest offsets, carbon trading schemes, and carbon capture and storage have no place in any climate action plan.<sup>4</sup> Rather, it is imperative that governments and financial institutions adopt Just Transition policies and frameworks.<sup>5</sup>

We call on all governments to respect the right of freedom of expression and peaceful protest, and to immediately halt the criminalization of land defenders, whose efforts are central to a climate-just world.

We are calling for action from both governments and the financial sector, as these entities work in tandem and each one enables the actions and policies of the other. Accordingly, this document includes both Action Steps for Governments and Action Steps for Financial Institutions.

**We Can Act Now. We Must Act Now.**

## Action Steps for Governments

### 1. End Fossil Fuel Expansion and Rapidly Accelerate a Just Transition to 100% Renewable and Regenerative Energy

*It is imperative that governments align their actions with the Paris Agreement target of keeping global warming at or below 1.5° C. To do so, policymakers must immediately halt the extraction, expansion, and burning of fossil fuels, and implement a Just Transition to a 100% renewable and regenerative economy and social system.*

- Commit to a binding international emissions reductions plan that limits global temperature rise to below 1.5°C, in line with the IPCC Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C and the 2021 IPCC Sixth Assessment Report.
- Prohibit new permits and leases for fossil fuel companies.<sup>6</sup>
- Divest public funds from coal, oil and gas corporations. End all subsidies and insurance allowances to oil, gas and coal projects.

- Implement the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities in all climate finance.<sup>7</sup>
- Decentralize and democratize ownership of renewable and regenerative solutions. Invest in community-owned solar and wind, public green utilities and nationalized energy industries.<sup>8</sup>
- Support fossil fuel workers to find new employment in renewable energy, transport and land use sectors.
- Ensure dignified conditions for all care workers. Care work, from childcare to healthcare, is an undervalued and underpaid sector that disproportionately employs women and women of color. At the same time, it is a crucial backbone of our economic and social system, and plays a key part in the transition to a renewable, regenerative economy.<sup>9</sup>
- Reject “net zero” schemes.<sup>10</sup>
- Reject false solutions, such as fracked gas, nuclear energy, geo-engineering, bioenergy and biofuels,<sup>11</sup> carbon capture and storage, and forest offsetting.

## 2. Promote Women’s Leadership and Gender Equity

*Due to unequal gender norms, women and gender non-binary people are disproportionately impacted by climate change and fossil fuel extraction. At the same time, they are crucial leaders in the transition to a just, renewable future. Countless studies have shown that when women hold positions of leadership at all levels, entire communities and nature benefit.<sup>12</sup>*

- Ensure women’s full and equal participation in all aspects of climate policy and finance.
- Realize the Paris Agreement principles that all climate actions must respect human rights, including the promotion of gender equity. Use the UNFCCC Lima Work Programme on Gender and its Gender Action Plan to guide activities.<sup>13</sup>
- Acknowledge the unique and essential roles, responsibilities, solutions, needs, and desires of women in climate change mitigation efforts.
- Uplift the leadership and solutions of diverse identities across the gender spectrum.
- Given the crucial role of women, and particularly women of color, in the care economy, their rights and well-being must be respected and upheld.<sup>14</sup>
- Learn from and respect Indigenous women’s traditional ecological knowledge as central to climate solutions.
- Honor women’s rights to self-determination in all contexts, from the right to make reproductive choices to the choice of where and how to live and work.

### 3. Protect the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

*The traditional ecological knowledge of agriculture, seeds and biodiversity held by Indigenous communities is indispensable for confronting climate change, even as Indigenous Peoples are disproportionately harmed by fossil fuel development, deforestation, extractive industries and climate impacts. In every step of the Just Transition, the rights of Indigenous Peoples must be upheld and the leadership of Indigenous Peoples respected.*

- Uphold all treaties with Indigenous Peoples and immediately halt the violation of treaty rights. Defend Indigenous Peoples' rights to inhabit traditional lands undisturbed by industrial projects and extractive industries.
- Respect and implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the principle of Free, Prior and Informed Consent in all cases.<sup>15</sup>
- Prioritize Indigenous Peoples' decision-making power at the national and international levels.
- Learn from and follow Indigenous and Traditional Ecological Knowledge.
- Invest in Indigenous People's global leadership to protect and promote healthy relationships with life-sustaining ecosystems.

### 4. Protect Forests and Biodiversity

*The maintenance of healthy forests and robust biodiversity is crucial to the fight against climate change. Globally, the stewardship of forests and biodiversity lies heavily in the hands of women, local communities and Indigenous Peoples.<sup>16</sup> The success of forest and biodiversity conservation depends on immediately halting all deforestation and respecting women's leadership, local use rights and traditional ecological knowledge.*

- Impose a global moratorium on the logging and burning of all old growth forests.<sup>17</sup>
- Immediately halt the burning of forests to produce cropland or pastureland for ruminative livestock.
- Set forestry management targets that are in line with the UN Convention on Biological Diversity.<sup>18</sup>
- Phase out all agricultural practices that cause soil erosion, depletion and compaction.
- Oppose the commodification of forest carbon through carbon offset schemes. Forest offsets have been widely, scientifically discredited.<sup>19</sup>

## 5. Preserve Oceans and Freshwater and Address Water Security

*Earth's oceans and the hydrological cycle are gravely threatened by climate change. Governments must act now to halt the greenhouse gas emissions, pollution and human exploitation that are destabilizing the water systems fundamental to all life on Earth.*

- Recognize the human right to sufficient, safe, clean, affordable, and physically accessible water.<sup>20</sup>
- Outlaw water privatization. Water should be a free, public good everywhere.
- Implement natural ecological water treatment methods.
- Protect vulnerable and threatened fisheries and coral reefs in marine sanctuaries (Marine Protected Areas).
- Clean up the plastic, sewage and trash in the world's oceans, streams, rivers, and freshwater systems.
- Recognize Integrated Water Resource Management for better understanding of the value of water.

## 6. Promote Food Security and Food Sovereignty

*Hotter temperatures, changing precipitation patterns and extreme weather events are already causing global disruptions to food production and storage.<sup>21</sup> Climate change is a primary cause of food insecurity, even as our industrialized food system drives pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.<sup>22</sup> For this reason, we must promote the holistic management of our food system, both to mitigate climate change and prevent hunger and malnutrition. Gender disparities in access to land, water, credit, technology and tenure rights inhibit women's food security. At the same time, women farmers feed the world, and play key roles in maintaining food security. In affecting deep changes to our agricultural system, we must center the leadership of women, Indigenous Peoples and smallholder farmers.*

- Support decentralized, “people-run” economies, natural, non-genetically modified foods, and cyclical and sustainable agro-ecological farming practices.
- Outlaw international trade agreements that determine seed “ownership” and “use.” Prohibit the global patenting of seeds.<sup>23</sup>
- Reject false solutions such as climate-smart agriculture, soil sequestration programs, Ag-NBS (Nature Based Solutions), and payments for environmental services (PES).
- Support communities with skills and financing to take increasing ownership of their local agricultural sovereignty.
- Reduce the production and consumption of industrial meat and dairy products. Industrial animal agriculture produces a third of global greenhouse gas emissions.<sup>24</sup>
- Support Indigenous communities to maintain their traditional food practices.

## 7. Protect the Rights of Nature

*The Rights of Nature is a groundbreaking legal framework that recognizes natural systems, such as rivers, forests, mountain ranges and water bodies, as rights-bearing entities with an inviolable claim to protection and preservation. Although the Rights of Nature is new to our legal system, it is based on traditional knowledge from Indigenous Peoples about how to live in harmony with the natural laws of the Earth.*

- Recognize the Rights of Nature in law and practice.
- End the commodification, financialization and exploitation of all ecosystems such as forests, grasslands, deltas, rivers and wildlife preserves.
- End market-based mechanisms that purport to protect ecosystems, but actually promote the industrial and monocultural destruction of biodiverse regions and hotspots. These include carbon offset schemes.
- Based on the Universal Declaration of Rights of Mother Earth legal framework, acknowledge that nature in all its life forms has the right to exist, persist, maintain and regenerate its vital cycles.<sup>25</sup>

## Action Steps for Financial Institutions

*By removing support from harmful projects and re-directing resources into climate solutions, financial institutions can be agents of positive change. In order to maintain 1.5° C of global warming, financial institutions must align their actions with the ambitious emissions pathway set forth in the Paris Agreement and commit to respect human rights and the rights of Indigenous Peoples at every turn.*

- Halt financing to any project that would explore new fossil fuel reserves, expand fossil fuel extraction, or build new fossil fuel infrastructure.
- Rapidly phase out financing for existing fossil fuel projects. Require existing fossil fuel clients to publish plans by COP26 to phase out fossil fuel operations on a timeline aligned with SR1.5 pathway 1. Decline financing to companies that refuse to publish such plans.
- Deny loans to any company or project that fails to comply with a No Deforestation, No Peatland, No Exploitation (NDPE) policy at a corporate group level.
- Require all investee companies to uphold human rights in accordance with the International Bill of Human Rights, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.<sup>26</sup>
- Conduct direct consultations with Indigenous, frontline, and local communities in decision-making processes in areas where operations impact those communities.
- Refuse financing to projects involving false solutions or “net zero” carbon accounting, including carbon capture and storage, nuclear power production and bioenergy.

- Acknowledge and redress the role of one's financial institution in perpetrating past and current gendered and racialized harms against women and the climate.
- Invest in and facilitate a Just Transition. Fund dignified, green jobs, and care jobs at every level, especially in community-owned and democratically managed ventures.
- Invest in community-led solutions, such as regenerative agricultural, energy, and forestry ventures, led by Global South, frontline and Black, Brown and Indigenous communities and women.

## **For the Earth and All Generations,**

Action Center on Race and the Economy

Adéquations

African Climate Reality Project

Akina Mama wa Afrika

Aksi! for gender, social and ecological justice

Almaa organization

Amazon Watch

Anthropocene Alliance

Aube Nouvelle pour la Femme et le Développement

Bangladesh indigenous women's network

BankTrack

Blue Planet Project

Bronx Climate Justice North

Businesses for a Livable Climate

CA Businesses for a Livable Climate

CADIRE CAMEROON ASSOCIATION

Call to Action Colorado

CAMEROON GENDER AND ENVIRONMENT WATCH

CatholicNetwork US

Centre for Ecological Governance and Gender Initiatives (CEGGI)

Church Women United in New York State

Clean Energy Action

CLEAR Environmental

Climate 2025

Climate Action Rhode Island-350

Climate Crisis Policy

Climate Finance Action

ClimateMama

CO Businesses for a Livable Climate

CODEPINK Women for Peace, Golden Gate Chapter

Coherence Lab

Collectif Sénégalais des Africaines pour la Promotion de l'Education Relative à  
l'Environnement (COSAPERÉ)  
Collective Future Fund

Divest Invest Protect  
Dogwood Alliance

Earth Action, Inc.  
Earth Guardians  
Empower our Future - Colorado  
Extinction Rebellion San Francisco Bay Area

Fondo Lunaria Mujer

Gallifrey Foundation  
Girl Power Foundation Uganda  
Global Exchange  
Global Witness  
Grassroots Global Justice Alliance  
Green Education and Legal Fund  
GreenFaith  
Grupo Para o Desenvolvimento da Mulher e Rapariga

Heinrich Böll Foundation Washington, DC  
Honor the Earth

IndiGenius Global  
Indigenous Climate Action  
Indigenous Human Rights Defenders and Corporate Accountability Program (IHRDCAP)  
Institute for Policy Studies Climate Policy Program  
International Convocation of Unitarian Universalist Women  
International-Curricula Educators Association

Juventud Unida en Acción

Kaiāulu.earth

Latinas for Climate  
Love Care Home

MADRE  
Manbha Foundation  
Mawu Energy  
Mid-Ohio Valley Climate Action



## Movement Rights

Naireeta Services Private Limited  
National Sudanese Women Association  
New Mexico Climate Justice  
New Mexico Interfaith Power and Light  
North American Climate, Conservation and Environment(NACCE)  
North Bronx Racial Justice  
North Country 350 Alliance  
North Range Concerned Citizens  
Nuclear Information and Resource Service

Oil Change International  
Older Women's Network Europe

Pacific Environment  
Participatory Research Action Network- PRAAN  
PEREMPUAN AMAN (The Association of Indigenous Women of the Archipelago AMAN)  
Phil Berrigan Memorial Chapter Veterans For Peace, Baltimore, MD  
Physicians for Social Responsibility Pennsylvania  
Ponca Nation  
Power Shift Network

Rachel Carson Council  
RapidShift Network  
Regional Centre for International Development Cooperation (RCIDC)  
Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary : JPIC / NGO GO  
Réseau Enfants de la Terre  
RGIC  
Rural Girl Woman Challenge Foundation Uganda (RUGWOFCU)

San Francisco Public Bank Coalition  
Schenectady Neighbors for Peace  
SFBSP-BURUNDI  
Sisters of Charity Federation  
Sisters of Charity of Nazareth Congregational Leadership  
Small Business Alliance  
Social Housing Green Deal  
Solar Sister  
Solarize Albany County  
Spirit of the Sun  
Support for Women in Agriculture and Environment (SWAGEN)  
Synergy of Congolese Women's Associations  
System Change Not Climate Change

Texas Campaign for the Environment  
The Chisholm Legacy Project  
The Climate Reality Project\_Brazil  
The Green House Connection Center  
The Movements Trust  
Tree Uganda Academy (TUA)  
Tulele Peisa Inc.

UNFA  
Unite North Metro Denver  
United Methodist Women  
UU Congregation of Binghamton, Green Sanctuary

VIVAT International

Wall of Women  
Women's Climate Congress  
Women's Earth Alliance  
Women's Earth and Climate Action Network (WECAN)  
Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO)  
Womenvai  
WoMin

Zero Hour  
Zero Waste Antigua Barbuda

1 Million Women  
1000 Grandmothers for Future Generations  
350PDX

## Endnotes

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