



WECAN

Women's Earth & Climate Action Network, International

RESPONDING TO THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY

A CALL TO ACTION FOR PEOPLE AND PLANET



Released during the September 2022 Women's Earth and Climate Action Network Climate Justice Forum, held parallel to Climate Week and the UN General Assembly.

We are urging all governments to declare a Climate Emergency now and act accordingly. In 2018, the IPCC released a Special Report on the harrowing social and physiological impacts of 1.5°C global warming above pre-industrial levels.² Now, four years on, we are seeing the science and data come into effect with escalating climate disasters, record-breaking heat waves, and torrential flooding, plaguing communities worldwide.

Due to unequal gender norms globally, women and girls continue to be the most adversely impacted by climate change.³ Indigenous, Black and Brown women, women from low-income communities, and women from the Global South bear an even heavier burden of climate impacts and other crises due to the historic and continuing impacts of colonialism, racism and misogyny.

Women are often the primary caretakers of their families and communities, with women spending up to ten times more time on unpaid care work than men.⁴ As droughts, floods and other erratic weather events escalate, there is an increased burden on women holding responsibility for their families food, water, and energy needs.⁵

We are not separate from Nature- We are Nature, and we are Nature protecting itself. If we continue along this path of unraveling the web of life and carelessly burning the Earth in fossil fuels, we will be yet another species to disappear. What will our legacy be in seven generations?

**Casey Camp-Horinek,
Ponca Nation Environmental Ambassador
WECAN Board Member**

This has to be the decade of decisive climate action. That means trust, multilateralism and collaboration. We have a choice. Collective action or collective suicide. It is in our hands.

**António Guterres,
United Nations Secretary General¹**

¹ United Nations, “Secretary-General’s video message to the Petersberg Dialogue,” 2022, [\[LINK\]](#).

² IPCC, “Global Warming of 1.5°C. An IPCC Special Report on the Impacts of Global Warming of 1.5°C above Pre-Industrial Levels and Related Global Greenhouse Gas Emission Pathways, in the Context of Strengthening the Global Response to the Threat of Climate Change, Sustainable Development, and Efforts to Eradicate Poverty,” 2018, [\[LINK\]](#).

³ Women’s Earth and Climate Action Network, “Why Women”, 2022 [\[LINK\]](#).

⁴ Gaëlle Ferrant, Luca Maria Pesando and Keiko Nowacka, “Unpaid Care Work: The missing link in the analysis of gender gaps in labour outcomes,” 2014, [\[LINK\]](#).

⁵ Bernadette Vallely, “Gender and the Climate Change Agenda: The Impacts of Climate Change on Women and Public Policy,” 2010, [\[LINK\]](#).

In addition, women are primary leaders of frontline efforts to stop harmful extractive industries, and face additional risks of gender-based violence and threats as they fight to protect their communities and territories.⁶

Yet, within this context, women are simultaneously indispensable actors and leaders of just and effective solutions, demonstrating every day that they have unique and essential ideas and skills to uplift and protect our communities and Mother Earth.

Studies show that a one unit increase in a country's score on the Women's Political Empowerment Index was associated with a 11.51% decrease in the country's carbon emissions.⁷ Other research has shown that actively involving women in management and decision making surrounding local forests,⁸ and disaster planning and response lead to more successful programs and projects.⁹

It is clear that women are key to securing protections for people and the planet. Whether it's on the frontlines of resistance to fossil fuels, protecting and replanting forests, creating food sovereignty networks, or advocating for bold and transformative climate policies at international forums— women are leading the way!¹⁰

In April 2022, the IPCC released its latest report showing clearly that there is still time for action, but nations must cut emissions in half by 2030.¹¹ However, despite strengthening climate commitments, governments still fall woefully short from reaching the targets outlined in the Paris Climate Agreement that keep global warming below 1.5 degrees.¹²

Governments continue to support fossil fuel expansion and 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 that have not been proven effective in limiting emissions at the urgency and scale needed.¹³ The April IPCC report also made clear that all countries must now consider climate adaptation alongside mitigation, which is vital as we urgently push for governments to support loss and damage and climate finance for those most impacted by the climate crisis.¹⁴

⁶ Women's Earth and Climate Action Network, "Gendered and Racial Impacts of the Fossil Fuel Industry in North America and Complicit Financial Institutions: A Call to Action for the Health of Our Communities and Nature in the Climate Crisis," 2021, [\[LINK\]](#).

⁷ Zhike Lv, Chao Deng, "Does women's political empowerment matter for improving the environment? A heterogeneous dynamic panel analysis," *Sustainable Development* (27), 603–612, [\[LINK\]](#).

⁸ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, "Women in Forestry: Challenges and Opportunities," 2014, [\[LINK\]](#)

⁹ Bina Agarwal, "Does Women's Proportional Strength Affect Their Participation? Governing Local Forests in South Asia," *World Development* 38(1), 98-112, 2009, [\[LINK\]](#).

¹⁰ Women's Earth and Climate Action Network, "Women Speak: Stories, Case Studies, and Solutions from the Frontlines of Climate Change," 2022, [\[LINK\]](#).

¹¹ IPCC, "Climate Change 2022: Mitigation of Climate Change," 2022, [\[LINK\]](#).

¹² Climate Action Tracker, "Despite Glasgow Climate Pact 2030 climate target updates have stalled, Mid Year Update," June 2022, [\[LINK\]](#).

¹³ Friends of the Earth International et al., "Chasing Carbon Unicorns: The Deception of Carbon Markets and 'Net Zero,'" February 2021, [\[LINK\]](#).

¹⁴ Women & Gender Constituency, "Issue Brief: Loss and Damage," 2021, [\[LINK\]](#).

To confront the ever worsening crisis, support frontline communities, and accelerate a path forward, we need to have cross-cutting approaches and actions to secure a healthy and thriving planet for all generations. It is essential to collectively recognize, understand, and transform the dominant social constructs that are at the root of environmental degradation and interconnected injustices. 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 to a sustainable, globally-conscious paradigm of respect, restore and replenish grounded in climate justice frameworks.¹⁵

We know we can do better, and that we must act swiftly in the short window of time we have. The door is closing, and millions of lives are at risk as governments continue to delay on real climate solutions. Governments and financial institutions have no more excuses and must end their delusions with false solutions and incremental fossil fuel phase out plans. Science is telling us, we must act now.

In the era of Climate Emergency, we must be unwavering in our honesty and our fierce dedication to call for justice and action.

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We are at a choice point for humanity, and we need to uplift women who are leading the way with community-led solutions, strategies, policies, and frameworks to address the climate crisis. It is code red and we are drawing a red line to say no more sacrifice people and no more sacrifice zones. Governments and financial institutions must listen to the people. This is the time to unite together to build a healthy and just future for each other and the Earth.”

**Osprey Orielle Lake,
Executive Director, Women's Earth and Climate Action Network**

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¹⁵ Women's Earth and Climate Action Network, "Global Women's Assembly for Climate Justice: Framework Recommendations," 2022, [\[LINK\]](#).

A CALL TO ACTION FOR PEOPLE AND PLANET

The following action steps were produced parallel to the 2021 UN General Assembly, as part of the Call to Action¹⁶ from the “Global Women’s Assembly for Climate Justice: Solutions from the Frontlines and the Protection and Defense of Human Rights and Nature,” organized by the Women’s Earth and Climate Action Network (WECAN). The original Call to Action was collectively discussed and endorsed by 150 organizations, representing millions globally, and based on the tireless work, efforts, and frameworks¹⁷ of diverse global climate and social justice movements.

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. The Call to Action is grounded in the leadership, analysis, and frameworks of frontline communities and global feminist movements.

Given the lack of ambitious climate policies and programming, these action steps remain unfulfilled. At the 77th session of the United Nations General Assembly in 2022 and in the lead up to COP27, we are once again bringing forward this Call to Action, outlining transformative and concrete steps for governments and financial institutions to take toward achieving the global collective goal of a healthy and just planet for current and future generations.

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.¹⁸
- 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.¹⁹

¹⁶ Women’s Earth and Climate Action Network, “Climate Justice Now: Urgent Action Steps for Governments and Financial Institutions During UNGA, COP26, and Beyond,” 2021, [\[LINK\]](#).

¹⁷ Women’s Earth and Climate Action Network, “Global Women’s Assembly for Climate Justice: Framework Recommendations,” 2022, [\[LINK\]](#).

¹⁸ Karl Mathiesen, “Existing Coal, Oil and Gas Fields Will Blow Carbon Budget – Study,” The Guardian, September 23, 2016, [\[LINK\]](#).

¹⁹ “Rio Declaration on Environment and Development,” A/CONF.151/26 § (1992), 2, [\[LINK\]](#).

- Decentralize and democratize ownership of renewable and regenerative solutions. Invest in community-owned solar and wind, public green utilities and nationalized energy industries.²⁰
- 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.²¹
- Reject “net zero” schemes.²²
- Reject false solutions, such as fracked gas, nuclear energy, geo-engineering, bioenergy and biofuels,²³ 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.*²⁴

- 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.²⁵
- 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.²⁶

²⁰ The Next System Project and Oil Change International, “The Case for Public Ownership of the Fossil Fuel Industry,” April 2020, [\[LINK\]](#).

²¹ Feminist Coalition for a Green New Deal, “A Feminist Agenda for a Green New Deal: Principles,” 2018, [\[LINK\]](#).

²² James Dyke and Robert Watson, “Climate Scientists: Concept of Net Zero Is a Dangerous Trap,” April 22, 2021, [\[LINK\]](#).

²³ Global Forest Coalition, “Bioenergy,” 2021, [\[LINK\]](#).

²⁴ UN Women Watch, “Fact Sheet: Women, Gender Equality and Climate Change,” n.d., [\[LINK\]](#).

²⁵ Presidency of COP25, “Enhanced Lima Work Programme on Gender and Its Gender Action Plan,” wateDraft decision -/CP.25 § (2020), [\[LINK\]](#).

²⁶ Feminist Green New Deal Coalition, “Care & Climate Understanding The Policy Intersections,” April 2021, [\[LINK\]](#).

- 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.²⁷
- 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.²⁸ 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.
- 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.²⁹
- Phase out all agricultural practices that cause soil erosion, depletion and compaction.

²⁷“United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples,” 61/295 § (2007), [[LINK](#)].

²⁸International Union for the Conservation of Nature, “IUCN Director General’s Statement on International Day of the World’s Indigenous Peoples 2019,” August 9, 2019, [[LINK](#)].

²⁹United Nations Environment Programme, “Convention on Biological Diversity,” 2022 1972, [[LINK](#)].

- Oppose the commodification of forest carbon through carbon offset schemes. Forest offsets have been widely, scientifically discredited.³⁰

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.³¹
- 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.³² Climate change is a primary cause of food insecurity, even as our industrialized food system drives pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.³³ 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

³⁰ Alia Al Ghussain, “The Biggest Problem with Carbon Offsetting Is That It Doesn’t Really Work,” Greenpeace News (blog), May 26, 2020, [\[LINK\]](#).

³¹ UN Water, “Human Rights to Water and Sanitation,” 2021, [\[LINK\]](#).

³² Food and Agriculture Organization, “The Impact of Disasters and Crises on Agriculture and Food Security: 2021,” 2021, [\[LINK\]](#).

³³ Mbow, C. et al., “Food Security,” in *Climate Change and Land: An IPCC Special Report on Climate Change, Desertification, Land Degradation, Sustainable Land Management, Food Security, and Greenhouse Gas Fluxes in Terrestrial Ecosystems*, ed. P.R. Shukla et al. (In Press, 2019).

- Outlaw international trade agreements that determine seed “ownership” and “use.” Prohibit the global patenting of seeds.³⁴
- 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.³⁵
- 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.³⁶

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.

³⁴ Vandana Shiva, “Earth Democracy: Beyond Dead Democracy and Killing Economies,” *Capitalism Nature Socialism* 21, no. 1 (2010): 83–95.

³⁵ Ayesha Tandon, “Food Systems Responsible for ‘One Third’ of Human-Caused Emissions,” *Carbon Brief Blog* (blog), August 3, 2021, [\[LINK\]](#).

³⁶ World People’s Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth, “Universal Declaration of the Rights of Mother Earth,” April 22, 2010, [\[LINK\]](#).

- Rapidly phase out financing for existing fossil fuel projects. Require existing fossil fuel clients to publish plans 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.³⁸
- 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.

³⁷ “Universal Declaration of Human Rights” (1948), [\[LINK\]](#); United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; “Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights” (United Nations, 2011), [\[LINK\]](#).