



Submission to SBSTA 52 on Ocean Dialogue from Leave it in the Ground Initiative (LINGO), Texas Environmental Justice Advocacy Services (TEJAS) and South Durban Community Environmental Alliance (SDCEA)

March 28, 2020

We would like to thank you for the opportunity to provide input to the SBSTA 52 dialogue on oceans and climate change. Our comments and proposals focus on how to increase the synergies between the work on oceans and on climate change *mitigation*. Our key proposal is:

Oil and gas that is under the ocean today, should stay there, to protect the climate.

Global fossil fuel reserves exceed the available carbon budget for a 2° temperature rise by a factor of 4 to 7¹ and research has shown that existing oil and gas fields and coal mines can take us past the 2°C mark.² In the face of global fossil fuel reserves many times greater than what can be extracted and the further increase of mitigation ambition towards 1.5°C enshrined in the Paris Agreement, it is an urgent task to identify those areas where fossil fuel extraction can easily be foregone. The recent UNEP Production Gap Report has called on governments to address this task.³ Fossil fuel reserves in the ocean, and especially in the deep sea are a low-hanging fruit from that perspective, because extracting their oil, especially where exploration has not started, is a decade-long and very expensive undertaking with heavy ecological and climate impacts and uncertain financial returns.⁴

1 IPCC (2014). AR5 Synthesis Report. http://ar5-syr.ipcc.ch/topic_futurechanges.php

2 Oil Change International (2016) The Sky's Limit: Why The Paris Climate Goals Require A Managed Decline Of Fossil Fuel Production. Oil Change International, September 2016. http://priceofoil.org/content/uploads/2016/09/OCI_the_skys_limit_2016_FINAL_2.pdf

3 van Asselt, Harro, et al. "The Production Gap: The Discrepancy between Countries' Planned Fossil Fuel Production and Global Production Levels Consistent with Limiting Warming to 1.5° C or 2° C-2019 Report." (2019). <http://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/30822>

4 LINGO (2016) The low-hanging fruit: Fossil fuel exploration and climate change. Leave it in the Ground Initiative (LINGO). Report, November 2016. <http://leave-it-in-the-ground.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Exploration-and-Climate-LINGO.pdf>

Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJ) are an obvious starting place to prohibit all oil and gas exploration and extraction and for a particular ABNJ - Antarctica - such a measure is already in place through the Madrid Protocol. Marine protected areas (MPAs) are another one. Finally, taking the seas of whole nations off the oil and gas map is a process which has already been started by pioneer countries such as New Zealand, France, Belize and Costa Rica. These efforts should be recognized and further countries should be encouraged to consider similar policies. Reduced marine pollution (impacts of seismic testing on marine wildlife, accidental oil spills such as the Deepwater Horizon disaster and routine impacts of the offshore oil and gas industry during normal operations) would be a co-benefit of such a strategy.

We therefore propose that SBSTA emit the following recommendations:

1. **All Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (ABNJ)** shall be declared a **no-go zone for oil and gas extraction**, in order to support climate change mitigation efforts and protect their ecosystems from the impacts of the offshore oil and gas industry. This commitment could for example be formalized by the BBNJ process.
2. Invite countries to evaluate ocean protection measures such as **moratoria and bans on new offshore oil & gas exploration and extraction permits** within their jurisdictions as a contribution to climate change mitigation, following the lead of pioneer nations.
3. Create a **registry for** countries to report **marine protected areas with oil and gas potential that will not be pursued** as contributions to climate change mitigation, establishing guidelines for the quantification of these contributions.⁵ This would also mark an important step towards the implementation of existing commitments that prohibit extractive industry activities and mining in protected areas.⁶

These measures can contribute significantly to achieving the mitigation ambition of the Paris Agreement by excluding sea areas from fossil fuel extraction and avoiding the resulting emissions.

⁵ The USA, Canada and Mexico have already created precedents of this approach. See White House (2016) United States-Canada Joint Arctic Leaders' Statement. December 20, 2016, Office of the Press Secretary. <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2016/12/20/united-states-canada-joint-arctic-leaders-statement> and Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, México (2016) PRESIDENT ENRIQUE PEÑA NIETO DESIGNATED FOUR NEW PROTECTED AREAS AND FIVE SAFEGUARD ZONES. Press Release. 06 December 2016. <https://embamex2.sre.gob.mx/hungria/index.php/en/news/press-releases/613-13th-conference-of-the-parties-to-the-united-nations-convention-on-biological-diversity>

⁶World Conservation Congress (2000) Resolution 2.82 Protection and conservation of biological diversity of protected areas from the negative impacts of mining and exploration. Amman, 4–11 October 2000. https://cmsdata.iucn.org/downloads/wcc_2000_en.pdf and World Conservation Congress (2016) Motion 26 - Protected areas and other areas important for biodiversity in relation to environmentally damaging industrial activities and infrastructure development. Hawai'i 2016. <https://portals.iucn.org/congress/motion/026>



Who we are

LINGO works on climate change, particularly on the transition from a fossil fuel based to a 100% clean energy based world economy, keeping fossil fuels in the ground.

South Durban Community Environmental Alliance (SDCEA) is a non-governmental coalition of 19 community and environmental organizations concerned with environmental justice and sustainable development in South Africa.

Texas Environmental Justice Advocacy Services (TEJAS) is dedicated to providing community members with the tools necessary to create sustainable, environmentally healthy communities by educating individuals on health concerns and implications arising from environmental pollution, empowering individuals with an understanding of applicable environmental laws and regulations and promoting their enforcement, and offering community building skills and resources for effective community action and greater public participation.