

# WOMEN & GENDER CONSTITUENCY

**WGC submission on Ensuring support for people-centric and equitable just transition pathways  
with a focus on the whole-of-society approach and the workforce  
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## **I. Introduction**

The climate crisis, in conjunction with the surpassing of several planetary boundaries, leads us to reconsider production and consumption systems based on an extractivist, colonial, racist and patriarchal logic. The devastating effects of this logic fall disproportionately on marginalized groups in conditions of systemic inequality based on their gender, sex, race, Indigenous identity, ethnicity or nationality. The disproportionate environmental burdens of fossil fuel extraction, processing and combustion overwhelmingly fall on those people, racially labeled as non-white people, who live in formerly colonized territories.<sup>1</sup>

Current approaches to the energy transition are characterized by green extractivism by global North countries of strategic resources and minerals from global South countries, and extensive human rights abuses within the mining and processing sectors. Fossil fuel extractivism being replaced by a colonial 'green' extractivism, will result in a transition that is not just and that violates the rights of people and nature.

A just, full, feminist and equitable phase-out of fossil fuels also requires questioning and dismantling the infinite growth-centered models that have brought us to the brink of ecological collapse. An urgent and planned reduction in the intensity of material and energy consumption is needed, therefore, the prioritization of policies of sufficiency is key. This recognition is essential to guaranteeing the right to a healthy, safe, and sustainable environment for all.

For rapid decarbonisation, it is imperative to reduce destructive and unnecessary forms of production by focusing economic activity on ensuring the needs and well-being of communities

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<sup>1</sup> [Report of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, E. Tendayi Achiume - Ecological crisis, climate justice and racial justice \(2022\)](#)

and the ecosystems they inhabit. Examples<sup>2</sup> include divesting from fossil fuels industries, arms industry and the military, planned obsolescence, fast fashion, border security, and large parts of the financial industry, which will have to be scaled down.

For all actors and segments of society to be included in the just transition, governments must take urgent action to address gender-based violence. Gender-based violence is one of the most prevalent human rights abuses in the world, with one-third of women and girls globally experiencing some form of violence in their lifetimes.<sup>3</sup> A just transition will not be possible as long as gender-based violence prevails, as this form of abuse prevents women, girls and gender-diverse people from being integrated as active participants in society and hinders their ability to exercise agency. When guaranteed their full human rights, women not only impact their local environments but create ripples of positive change for a just transition that lift entire communities across the globe.

Women are disproportionately responsible for the vast majority of the world's unpaid, undervalued and invisibilized domestic and care work, which overlaps closely with natural resource management, including firewood collection for cooking and water management for home care. Care work, including child care, elder care, cooking, cleaning, land stewardship and beyond, is the work that makes all other work possible. It is the invisible scaffolding of our current fossil fuel-based economy, and it risks being the scaffolding of any future energy economy if gender justice is not baked into its core. Conceptualization of the workforce in a just transition must include many workers who are historically left out of such definitions, including domestic and care workers. Without recognition of and valuing domestic and care work, we will not have a gender-just transition.

## **II. International cooperation**

International cooperation which includes resource mobilization, finance, capacity-building and transfer of technology, is key to realizing the just transition globally, as stressed in the Convention under Article 7.2.

International cooperation must be understood as a means for countries in the South and the North to flourish from the base of Common But Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities (CBDR-RC) and self-determination, whereby countries that historically have contributed the most to the climate crisis must fulfill their responsibility to provide the trillions needed to transition to a low-carbon economy. Studies note that cumulative emissions by the global North exceed their fair share of the global carbon budget<sup>4</sup>. This represents a form of appropriation of the atmospheric commons, which has been framed in the language of 'climate debt' and 'climate coloniality'.

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<sup>2</sup> [Reyes, E. \(2024\). What is degrowth?](#)

<sup>3</sup> [International Rescue Committee. What is gender-based violence – and how do we prevent it? \(2023\)](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Compensation for atmospheric appropriation \(2023\)](#)

In the same vein, international cooperation must respect international humanitarian law and prevent territorial occupation for the construction of infrastructure and the supply of energy resources. This international cooperation, which seeks to address the climate emergency through coordinated efforts centered on people and nature, cannot be complicit in fuelling atrocities by supplying fossil fuels to enable continued violence and oppression. Examples of such complicity include companies and countries such as the United States, Azerbaijan, Germany, Kazakhstan/Russia, Gabon, and Brazil,<sup>5</sup> among others, that continue to fuel Israel's war machine by financing and supplying oil for war, despite the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruling in January that Israel is committing plausible genocide<sup>6</sup>, that Palestinians in Gaza have plausible rights under the Genocide Convention, and in July that the occupation of Palestinian territory is illegal.<sup>7</sup>

International cooperation needs to be critically reflected to go beyond imports or unilateral trade agreements. Unfair and discriminatory trade rules must be reviewed, reflected and transformed so they do not serve the hegemony of capital and the North. Trade relations perpetuate colonial dynamics of dependency and unequal exchange, as resources from the global South, such as raw materials, energy, land and labor, embodied in products and services, are appropriated to serve the energy demands and the “green” transition of the North. Such trade relations undermine the aim of just transitions by directing these resources away from the needs of communities and the development of sovereign models in the South. Unfair rules and agreements also push countries from the South into resorting to increased extractivist exports and applying austerity measures to pay illegitimate foreign debts, trapping them in a vicious circle that reinforces economic and commercial subordination. This exploitative dynamic has gendered impacts, as women in all their diversity, especially racialised and impoverished women, are the shock absorbers of austerity policies that reduce public spending on social infrastructure.

International cooperation includes mobilizing funding and other relevant resources that respond to the contextual needs of different regions and do not perpetuate cycles of inequity. This will be developed further in sections III-VI Finance below.

Initiatives such as the Just Energy Transition Partnerships (JETPs) raise concerns about creating new dependencies and entrenching the debt burdens of global majority countries. They also advance the interests of private financiers, and initiate the privatization and liberalization of energy sectors within recipient countries while blocking process transparency. It is crucial that funding be directed towards publicly owned infrastructure rather than private ventures, emphasizing public financing and ownership over privatization, and that money comes in the form of grants and not loans.

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<sup>5</sup> [New Research Updates on Companies and Countries Supplying Oil Fueling Palestinian Genocide Amid ICJ Rulings \(2024\)](#)

<sup>6</sup> [International Court of Justice. Summary of the Order of 26 January 2024 \(2024\)](#)

<sup>7</sup> [International Court of Justice. Summary of the Advisory Opinion of 19 July 2024 \(2024\)](#)

Just trade relations are particularly important for technology transfer and related licensing and patents. Article 3.5 of the UNFCCC states that “*Measures taken to combat climate change, including unilateral ones, should not constitute a means of arbitrary or unjustifiable discrimination or a disguised restriction on international trade.*” This principle is crucial in ensuring that trade measures support, rather than undermine, the just transition by being fair and transparent. The UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights has highlighted that international intellectual property laws and norms can negatively affect the advancement of science and equitable access to its benefits in various ways and that states should take appropriate measures to avoid its negative effects.

### III. Technology

In recent years, some technologies have been popularized and marketed as positive mechanisms to achieve zero net emissions, even though they are unproven and dangerous technological distractions. Examples of these dangerous distractions or false solutions<sup>8</sup> include geoengineering (such as solar radiation management and ocean fertilization), carbon capture and storage (BECCS), nature-based solutions (NbS), hydrogen, among others. Dangerous distractions act as a smokescreen as they allow emissions to continue while profits from fossil fuel extraction grow. These dangerous distractions give a false illusion of climate action when in reality they contribute to worsening the climate emergency, delaying substantive action and also enabling Human Rights violations. They often involve usage of land in ways that replicate the same extractive and colonial system as fossil fuel expansion, therefore only moving us from one extractive system to another.

While technology has a critical role to play in responding to the ecological crisis, it must not be implemented on the basis of systemic racism and thus at the expense of groups marginalized by race, ethnicity, gender, nationality, among other intersecting identities. It is therefore important to frame just transitions under the understanding that “one-size-fits-all” technological solutions are not suitable for the diverse contexts in which the transition needs to happen, stressing the need for an international framing that centers on territory-based experiences, care, and justice principles.

Existing climate finance and technology mechanisms are not fully supporting developing countries in building and strengthening their capacities for research and innovation. Although efforts have been made to identify the technology needs of these countries, significant gaps remain. Often, these needs are met with solutions that increase debt burdens or involve importing technologies that may not be culturally appropriate or respectful of local and ancestral knowledge. The JTWP must avoid advocating for top-down, market-oriented technology solutions. Instead, it should

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<sup>8</sup> Examples of these dangerous distractions can be seen and tracked in the [Map of False Solutions to the Climate Crisis in Latin America and the Caribbean](#), a community-based compilation of geographic data identifying the threat of False Solutions to climate change, produced by the Latin American and Caribbean Platform for Climate Justice and the Global Campaign for Climate Justice.

prioritize supporting domestic innovation—both endogenous and indigenous—that reflects the diverse needs and priorities of local communities. This approach is more likely to ensure higher adoption rates and more sustainable outcomes.

The IPCC, in its Sixth Assessment Report (AR6) Working Group II on Vulnerabilities, highlights a crucial challenge in current climate action: the unequal distribution of benefits across regions and social groups. This inequity is particularly stark in the realm of climate technology, where access for local communities remains uneven, exacerbating gender-differentiated impacts. Women and LGBTQIGnC, Indigenous Peoples, youth, and people with disabilities are frequently excluded from the decision-making processes that determine how climate technologies are deployed, implemented, and transferred.

There is an urgent need for the JTWP to intensify support for and strengthen the technology mechanism. By doing so, it can help create and nurture enabling environments where developing countries can develop and transfer climate technologies that are gender-responsive, human and nature-centered, and tailored to the unique challenges and needs of communities. Without such inclusive approaches, there is a significant risk that only a select group or specific regions will benefit from the advantages of climate technology, leaving the most vulnerable populations behind.

Expanding the scope of climate technology finance is essential. Ensuring access to technology is only the first step. To guarantee effective adoption and use, it is crucial to build and strengthen the capacities and knowledge of frontline communities. Finance should not only facilitate access to climate technology for global majority countries but also be directed toward ensuring technological sovereignty so these communities can use, adapt, and apply the technology effectively. Comprehensive climate finance must cover all aspects—access, utilization, and adaptation—ensuring that climate technology serves all communities equitably and fosters a truly just transition.

#### **IV. Finance**

The current climate finance landscape, dominated by loans and skewed towards private investment, perpetuates colonial cycles of debt, denominated in foreign currencies, and dependency for vulnerabilised territories, particularly in the Global South. This exacerbates and maintains gender disparities, roles and discrimination in the access and use of domestic financial resources, undermining the ability of governments to finance climate policies and provide gender-responsive public services and social protections that fulfill human rights.<sup>9</sup>

The aim of financing the just transition must not be to change communities to fit the needs of the finance system but rather to change the finance system to meet the needs of people. Market and investor interests cannot be prioritized above life and over the well-being and survival of the

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<sup>9</sup> [WGC submission on work to be undertaken under, as well as possible topics for the dialogues under the UAE Just Transition Work Programme \(2024\)](#)

people. Financing the just transitions requires coherent work guided by the principle of CBDR-RC.

Climate finance for the just transition should ensure that funds are distributed equitably and prioritize marginalized communities, including those most affected by the transition to a low-carbon economy. It should also allocate funds to retrain workers transitioning from fossil fuel industries, ensuring they have access to new opportunities in climate-friendly sectors, and ensuring equal opportunity across genders. Furthermore, finance should be used to build up social dialogue and community-led decision-making processes around climate finance allocation and enhance social protection.

Structural changes are necessary to move towards transitions that do not perpetuate the multiple crises we currently inhabit. Calls to transform the international financial architecture are becoming ever louder and stronger, in parallel to clear demands towards restructuring trade systems, introducing transparent and progressive taxation and canceling illegitimate debts. These calls are strengthened by the rejection of austerity measures which perpetuate the exploitation of domestic and care work, shifting away social spending from public services and social infrastructure - key towards a truly just transition. The previous are ways to ensure greater fiscal space to respond to systemic transformation centered on communities and nature.

Other proposals<sup>10</sup> that emerge from advocates, activists, and scholars are capping fossil fuel extraction through a legally binding system, extraction would progressively reduce, ensuring that most fossil fuels remain in the ground, respecting planetary boundaries, and maintaining ecological integrity. In parallel, such proposals call for implementing a progressively rising fee on resource and energy use, directly charging industries involved in extraction. This fee would make polluting industries pay while generating significant revenue to support the transition to a sustainable economic paradigm and address the owed reparations to the South.

To address the needs and priorities of global majority countries for achieving a just transition to low-carbon and climate-resilient sustainable development, and to confront increasingly catastrophic loss and damage, a sufficient quantum of public finance has to be provided as the substantive core of the NCQG. The overwhelming majority of this quantum must be delivered in the form of grants.<sup>11</sup>

Financing transitions towards life instead of the reproduction of capital and exacerbating destruction requires the divestment of harmful practices and sectors. Parties must end fossil fuel subsidies and redirect military spending, which reached an all-time high of USD 2.4 trillion in 2023.<sup>12</sup> Escalating military spending accelerates the climate crisis because it positively correlates with an increase in greenhouse gas emissions, does not lead to a reduction in conflict and war, and diverts resources from important investments in climate justice and human needs.

## V. Capacity Building

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<sup>10</sup> For further details see [“Cap and Share as a mitigation and Climate Finance Solution” \(2023\)](#) from Equal Right, [“Degrowth for multilateral activism” \(2024\)](#) from Reyes, E.

<sup>11</sup> [Submission on behalf of the Women and Gender Constituency \(WGC\) on the Ad Hoc Work Programme \(AHWP\) on the New Collective Quantified Goal \(NCQG\) in 2024 \(2024\)](#)

<sup>12</sup> [IPCC AR6 WG III Chapter 4 \(2022\)](#)

International cooperation on capacity building is another essential component of achieving a just transition within and between countries. This comprises the exchange of good practices, including via technical assistance, sharing of tools and assessment of tendencies to determine the impact of climate policies on society, with a focus on marginalized groups. This also encompasses the exchange of best practices on policy design and implementation to address climate and socioeconomic issues simultaneously, as well as guidelines for citizen engagement and social dialogue and freedom of association for a just transition.

## **VI. Critical Minerals**

The expansion in the exploitation of critical minerals, such as lithium and cobalt, for corporate green transition at exorbitant rates is driving pollution, disproportionate use, dispossession, displacement, and violence against local populations. This particularly affects women in all their diversity, especially Afro-descendant and Indigenous women, whose relationship is closely linked to the care and protection of ecosystems, water and their management. These industries are also currently typified by egregious human rights violations. For example, the mining of critical minerals, in particular cobalt, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has resulted in an estimated 200,000 people living in conditions of modern-day slavery, characterised by abuses such as human trafficking, child labour and sexual violence.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, essential components in almost all the world's solar panels (polysilicon and metallurgical-grade silicon) are produced using state-imposed forced labor by the native Uyghur, Turkic and Muslim-majority peoples in the Uyghur region of China.<sup>14</sup>

Existing fossil fuel extractivism is being compounded by so-called green extractivism in the service of a corporate energy transition that benefits the countries of the North. Consequently, instead of reducing the gap between rich and poor countries, this increases ecological debt and further widens racial sacrifice zones. This makes the global South once again the source of strategic resources to sustain the status quo of the global North - and the dumping ground for the polluting and obsolete waste generated - to materialize a new industrial revolution that pushes us to the edge of planetary boundaries. This dynamic embeds the countries of the global South in particular at the bottom of the global value chain.

Such an approach to transition challenges neither current power structures nor old ways of thinking. This trend of 'green' colonialism masks deep inequalities and injustices that disproportionately affect people and communities that have contributed little to climate change. It also ignores collective human rights and the rights of nature.

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<sup>13</sup> [Democratic Republic of the Congo: Industrial mining of cobalt and copper for rechargeable batteries is leading to grievous human rights abuses \(2023\)](#)

<sup>14</sup> [Supporting a just transition through sustainable and ethical production of green technologies \(2024\)](#)

There is a need to prioritize safeguards and resource mobilization for environmental, land and human rights defenders, Indigenous communities, and communities impacted by critical mineral mining, processing and extraction. Mechanisms and processes to ensure human rights, gender equity, and Indigenous rights, including guaranteeing the right to Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC), are necessary when investors, governments, and private sectors seek to develop projects that may affect Indigenous communities, lands, territories, and resources.<sup>15</sup>

For justice for the communities and countries where critical minerals are found, governments must urgently cooperate to implement measures that reduce demand equitably, protect human and nature rights, and directly address unequal exchange between countries. The Women & Gender Constituency supports the Civil Society Recommendations for the UNSG's Panel on Critical Energy Transition Minerals<sup>16</sup> and strongly urges governments to adopt all forthcoming recommendations from the CETM panel.

## **VII. Procedural Justice and Social Dialogue**

Though understandings of a just transition vary widely depending on context, circumstances and region, at its core, the concept requires consideration of the needs of those affected by the transition and their participation in the creation of the policies and structures that will impact their lives. Achieving a people-centric, gender-just and equitable just transition requires people on the ground to be engaged in decision-making for the world they want to see. Fair and inclusive processes where rights holders, community members and all interested, affected or relevant parties are enabled to influence and participate meaningfully in decisions, public engagement, social dialogue and procedural justice are vital to ensuring that any transition is truly just.

When considering who needs to be engaged in just transition processes, it is important to note that narrow definitions of just transition that limit the concept solely to formalized workers working in highly polluting sectors will prove a barrier to comprehensive engagement by a) failing to engage with the breadth of workers, including informal, precarious and care workers, who will also be impacted by just transition policies, and b) overlooking the imperative of broad and deep system change and failing to address issues of economic injustice and inequalities.<sup>17</sup> All of those impacted by the transition must be part of co-designing policies, with special attention paid to the inclusion of marginalized or vulnerabilised groups, including Indigenous Peoples, women and gender diverse people, young people, people with disabilities, workers and local communities. Strategies and levers for governments to enable procedural justice in a feminist just transition include, but are not limited to:

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<sup>15</sup> [Securing Indigenous Peoples' Right to Self-Determination: A Guide on Free, Prior and Informed Consent \(2023\)](#)

<sup>16</sup> [Civil Society Recommendations for the UNSG's Panel on Critical Energy Transition Minerals \(2024\)](#)

<sup>17</sup> [Landscapes of \(In\)justice: Reflecting on Voices, Spaces, and Alliances for Just Transition \(2023\)](#)



- Strengthening social dialogue, and freedom of association, and collective bargaining processes and rights.
- Incorporating a gender-responsive approach to social dialogue, prioritizing participation of women and gender-diverse people in social dialogue institutions and including gendered issues and perspectives as standard in topic discussions under social dialogue for just transition.
- Ensuring that all social partners have the financial and human resources, as well as the necessary information to effectively engage in and influence processes.
- Intentional outreach to, resources allocated to, and work done with marginalized or vulnerabilised groups, including women and gender diverse people, to ensure that their perspectives are obtained and their voices heard.
- Recognising and addressing gender-based violence as a fundamental barrier for women, girls and gender-diverse people to effectively participate in society and act as agents of change.
- Creation and maintenance of solidarity funds and capacity building for marginalized groups and communities via long standing social engagement processes.
- Creation and maintenance of spaces co-owned by communities for engagement on specific issues, such as popular assemblies.
- Creation and maintenance of ongoing spaces for exchange between residents, migrants, refugees and governments, such as panels and commissions, social dialogues, citizen and popular assemblies, and of opportunities for auditing and providing input into budgeting, planning and policy processes, e.g. participatory budgeting.
- Enhancing resident, migrant and refugee participation in processes across sectors beyond the energy sector to include housing, agriculture, transport and others.
- Equal and unrestricted access to information by the public and the opportunity for residents, migrants and refugees to bring forward evidence.

With regards to proper participation in the Just Transition Work Programme, procedural justice and proper participation of civil society remain sorely lacking. The WGC, alongside our constituency colleagues in ENGO, YOUNGO and TUNGO, have [consistently advocated for](#) the creation of institutional arrangements for participation in and the integration of the observer constituency groups in the JTWP, including via the establishment of its advisory body. The establishment of such arrangements remains a priority issue for feminists.

## VIII. Conclusion

Feminists demand that the transition away from an extractive, fossil-fuel-based economy be gender-just. Structural and systemic inequalities embedded in extractivist, colonial, racialised, militarized and patriarchal economies must be dismantled together with the infinite growth-centered models that have brought us to the brink of ecological collapse. An urgent and planned reduction in the intensity of material and energy consumption is needed.

The second dialogue cannot shy away from the macro and structural transformations that are required to achieve the desired transitions. Financing truly just transitions requires multiple measures such as the transformation of the international financial architecture, restructuring of trade systems, the introduction of transparent and progressive taxation, canceling illegitimate debts and the rejection of austerity measures. State investment must be reinvigorated in a care-centered economy and aligned with multilateral action. A gender-just transition that truly serves workers' and communities' needs demands that work must be recognised not just as jobs carried out in the formalized, waged sector, but as the market and non-market work that all people engage in to sustain life, take care of each other and the planet.

The Women and Gender Constituency will continue to work with our fellow observer groups on pushing forward the agenda for a comprehensive, fast, feminist and fair society and economy-wide transformation away from extractive economies.