WOMEN & GENDER CONSTITUENCY

WGC submission on just energy transition pathways and holistic approaches to just transitions, including socioeconomic, workforce, social protection and other dimensions, based on nationally defined development priorities

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Introduction

While we transition away from fossil fuels and towards renewable energy, we must also prevent exploitation and human rights abuses within renewable energy production and implementation. Every energy source requires human rights guardrails, and women's rights and land defenders have been persecuted for raising these related concerns around renewable energy. From the mining of critical minerals required for renewable energy, to questions of private sector ownership and labor rights, to questions of access and affordability for women and low-income communities, there are many justice considerations in the transition to renewable energy.

The exploitation of energy resources often takes place in Indigenous, peasant, Afrodescendant, and small-scale producer and artisanal fisherfolk territories. These resources rarely adequately benefit local communities, providing only marginal benefits that do not compensate for the environmental and social impacts of occupation and dispossession. The territories of these communities are exploited, and the communities themselves are denied access to and enjoyment of the energy produced. This racial capitalism interacts with and shapes local power dynamics, social relations, and institutions, establishing a hierarchy of which bodies and territories should be degraded to serve the commercial interests, economic growth, and rampant consumption of a few. Corporate green transitions, framed under the aim of net-zero emissions, have focused on a carbon tunnel vision, directing their efforts, policies, and national strategies towards reducing carbon emissions. This has ignored systemic linkages and the surpassing of planetary boundaries, as well as violations of the collective human rights and the rights of nature. This submission covers key areas of concern and focus for the Women and Gender Constituency, including transitional minerals and human rights, energy poverty, labor and care, false solutions, and energy financing and JET-Ps, before concluding with recommendations and calls to action for the dialogue.

Critical Minerals and Human Rights Violations

Governments and corporations, often in the Global North, frame minerals like lithium, cobalt, and nickel as "critical" for national security, economic competitiveness, and the development of clean energy technologies (EVs, solar panels, batteries). This framing centers the needs of industrialized nations and their transitions, not the needs of the people living in extraction zones—often Indigenous, rural, and/or marginalized communities in the Global South. In this context of high demand for clean energy, human and labour rights violations are found throughout these critical minerals supply chains, also often called transition minerals, affecting both workers in these industries and communities living in the vicinity of mining areas. Numerous examples across regional contexts demonstrate the danger of rights violations in the pursuit of these minerals.[1] This is why, as feminists, we question *for whom* these minerals are truly critical, and whose interests are really being served.

Advocates working around the global energy transition warn that the demand for minerals used in green technologies is fueling a new wave of extractivism. This shift, replicating systems of extraction for fossil fuels, often reproduces the same exploitative patterns, especially in the Global South. Additionally, women residing and working in extraction areas are more exposed to toxic pollution, suffer from reduced access to clean resources, and often endure heightened levels of harassment and violence, demonstrating that environmental injustice is inseparable from gender inequality. These rights defenders are routinely subjected to surveillance, criminalization, and intimidation. In order to reduce these risks, we advocate for a Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) underscored through the example of community-led action, which promotes civic participation, linguistic justice, and gender equity. The FPIC reflects the broader struggle for self-determination, particularly in indigenous territories where development projects are often imposed without community approval. Despite progress, communities continue to face threats from extractive industries and are often met with criminalization for defending their land and rights. This highlights the urgent need for legally binding protections and regulatory mechanisms that uphold FPIC as a non-negotiable standard. Ensuring that affected communities receive information in their own languages and through inclusive, participatory processes, is essential. Genuine, horizontal dialogue and the active presence of marginalized voices in decision-making spaces are not only ethical imperatives but necessary steps toward achieving a just transition pathway.

Gendered Injustices of Energy Poverty and Labor

Energy poverty is a critical gender justice issue; it disproportionately affects women due to gendered income inequality, economic injustice and barriers to accessing resources, and the fact

[1] As an example, in Southeast Asia, Amnesty International illustrated how the extraction of critical minerals—particularly nickel—has severely impacted health and access to land in local communities. Mining operations have led to widespread pollution, with residue even settling on rooftops, directly affecting residents' well-being. Moreover, the fencing off of traditionally used lands for collecting medicinal plants has disrupted not only environmental access but also cultural and ancestral health practices. These actions reflect a deeper loss, severing communities from their land-based knowledge systems. Another example in respect to the transition mineral mining and processing, such as of quartz, metallurgical-grade silicon and polysilicon, lithium, steel, copper, nickel and aluminium, relies on state-imposed forced labour in the Uyghur Region, where representatives of affected workers call for full disengagement from the region. In a similar vein, a recent report on the Gulf region highlighted the way that companies and investors are systematically relying on the severe exploitation of migrant workers to competitively deliver green energy projects.

that women perform a disproportionate amount of domestic and care work that energy is critical for, including cooking in the home and other household tasks. Energy poverty remains a critical challenge across many regions, particularly in areas where outdated infrastructure, inefficient heating systems, and limited access to clean and affordable energy persist. Households facing energy poverty often spend a disproportionate share of their income on basic energy needs or are forced to live in homes without infrastructure for temperature regulation (heat or air conditioning). There are also immense health impacts, such as respiratory impacts from indoor air pollution. A focus on clean cooking as a site of gendered impacts is important, though energy poverty and its intersections with gender injustice reach far wider and must encompass decision-making power, many energy technologies, resource governance and consent, and beyond.

Energy poverty is not only reflected in the methods available for cooking, but also in heating, water and sanitation, education, etc. It is a situation of inequality that further discriminates against migrant women, women with disabilities, and women living in poverty. It is a situation that undermines their rights and autonomy, multiplying the threats of gender-based violence. There is a high risk of increasing energy poverty in marginalized communities if transitions are not fair, if it is not taken into account that renewable energies and climate technologies also perpetuate gender stereotypes and replicate discriminatory systems. Despite its significant social and environmental impacts, energy poverty is frequently underdefined in countries' legislation and inadequately measured, making it difficult to design targeted, effective interventions. Procedural justice is a key pillar of just transition. Energy poverty, when decision-makers ignore the needs of the energy-poor and create policies that impact them negatively, is in-and-of-itself a procedural injustice.[2] Additionally, policy efforts must intentionally work to erode gendered barriers to accessing jobs in the renewable energy sector to ensure this transition benefits all.

Renewable energy systems and energy communities present a significant opportunity to address both energy poverty and energy insecurity. However, the lack of regulatory clarity, insufficient access to financing, and limited local capacity can hinder a more generalized adoption, particularly in rural and underserved areas. Local participation, gender-transformative approach, and social equity within energy communities development align with the principles of a Just Transition. When supported by enabling policies and practical tools, these communities can empower residents to take ownership of their energy futures, reduce the number of women and girls in all their diversity who are exposed to energy vulnerable situations, and contribute to broader climate justice and feminist goals.

JETPs

JETPs have been lauded as key financing mechanisms to accelerate the just transition in the global South, and we continue to see their promotion and proliferation. However, JETPs inhibit just transition and energy justice outcomes at the national level, and perpetuate colonial patterns of harm and extraction that maintain existing political, economic, and social inequities between the Global North and South. Co-opting the label of just transition, JETPs in their current form risk becoming instruments that perpetuate global inequities under the guise of climate action. For JETPs to achieve genuine climate justice and advance energy justice within recipient countries, they would require fundamental reforms to both their structure and financing.

[2] Stojilovska, A. (2021). Energy poverty and the role of institutions: Exploring procedural energy justice – ombudsman in focus. *Journal of Environmental Policy & Planning*, *25*(2), 169–181. https://doi.org/10.1080/1523908x.2021.1940895

Feminists demand that the failure of JETPs to deliver energy justice be addressed and that partnerships to guarantee the just energy transition of the global South be guided by and responsive to the needs and priorities of the global South partners. Crucially, feminists demand an end to debt-based financing for the energy transition of the global South, as such financing can never be labelled "just". Rather, the global North countries must address their historical responsibility for colonialism and climate change through reparations.

Energy trading system

Carbon markets and energy trading systems are increasingly central to national and international climate strategies. However, without deliberate integration of just transition principles, these mechanisms risk exacerbating inequalities, marginalizing affected communities, and reinforcing extractive economic models. Market-based tools like carbon markets and energy trading systems shape who pays and who benefits from the energy transition. The patterns of international trade are anticipated to become more closely tied to the transition towards a greener global economy. Trade and industrial policies reflecting climate commitments will affect trade flows, especially in goods and services related energy efficient products and renewable energy production.

International trade plays a critical role in accelerating climate action and transforming the global energy system, especially in relation to key commodities essential for shifting away from fossil fuel dependence. As global energy patterns change in an effort to cut greenhouse gas emissions, including global commitments to phase out fossil fuels, this will lead to a drastic reduction in fossil fuel demand over the coming decades.[3] This transition poses serious challenges for developing countries' economies that currently depend on fossil fuel exports, as they will need to diversify their economies, develop new income streams, and compete with industrialized countries already leveraging the growth of the global renewable energy markets. Without supportive and inclusive trade policies, these countries risk being left behind in the energy transition, deepening global inequalities, and undermining the principles of a just transition.[4]

Militarisation

Energy exports are not a neutral form of trade. Coal, fossil gas, crude oil, and other energy sources can be used to power and sustain life, but also to entrench and commit flagrant human rights violations, as is the case in Palestine, where energy is used as a tool of oppression to sustain

[3] For example, under the IEA's Net Zero Emission (NZE) scenario, the share of global energy demand met through fossil fuel import could drop from around 25% today to below 10% by 2050.

[4] Another emerging trade policy is the Border Carbon Adjustments (BCAs), which is designed to address the risk of carbon leakage by imposing a charge on goods imported from regions with lower environmental standards. An example of this is the EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM). However, a problem with BCAs is that they are likely to have a disproportionate impact on developing economies. For instance, CBAM does not consider historical emissions and hence is inherently unfair as it penalizes Global South countries while they use cheaper fuel such as coal, whilst not supporting the decarbonization efforts of Global South developing countries. Rich countries generate more income in taxes, whilst developing countries bear the price of decarbonization. With generally higher emission intensity sectors like steel and aluminium, when faced with increased costs of decarbonization and administrative demands, such as measuring carbon content, it will make it harder for smaller enterprises in developing countries to compete globally. Furthermore, by applying the same punitive measures to all countries, BCAs violate the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities.

Israel's settler-colonial regime of illegal occupation, genocide, and apartheid.[5][6] The weaponisation of energy - whether through cutting power supplies to civilian populations or targeting energy infrastructure - demonstrates how deeply intertwined energy systems are with geopolitical power. Currently in Gaza, 2.1 million people have no access to power, according to the UN OCHA. The consequences of this are deadly, as it means hospitals and water sources are unable to provide the means for survival.

The military sector, including military practice exercises and the execution of war, together with the production and transport of weapons and munitions, requires and consumes vast quantities of fossil fuels. It contributes to 5.5% of the global GHG emissions, yet reporting emissions remains voluntary and opaque under the UNFCCC. Studies demonstrate that increased military spending systematically crowds out investment in renewable energy and green innovation.[7] Over centuries, energy concerns have played a pivotal role in initiating and conducting conflict, and renewable energy is no different from traditional fossil fuels in this sense. Violence and conflict are by intention present in regions that hold the mineral resources for producing renewable energy technologies, such as in Sudan and the DRC.[8][9] The same complex machinery of militarisation and destruction is the one fueling the ongoing genocide in Palestine, particularly in Gaza, that profits the Israeli military-industrial complex and its economic industry.[10]

"Greening" the military – transitioning military infrastructure towards renewable energy – is a false solution that does not confront the underlying violence of the industry. Whether powered by fossil fuels or solar panels, fighter jets and bombs are still weapons of war and counter to the vision of a just transition. There can be no just transition when living under conflict, occupation, and genocide. It is essential to understand the contradictions embedded in climate action discourses if countries' efforts aim to address the root causes of the climate emergency. For this, it is imperative to understand how imperialism, colonialism, racism and patriarchy connect to both energy systems and military power structures. As feminists, we support the call for a Global Energy Embargo for Palestine, a forceful act of international solidarity in which workers, trade unions, activists, and civil society come together to demand that there be an end all crude oil and refined

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[5] https://www.alhaq.org/advocacy/20931.html

[6] Israel's genocide, illegal occupation and apartheid are powered by oil, fossil gas and coal, which fuel its electricity grid, its arms industry, its AI infrastructure and its military vehicles. Israel depends on crude oil and refined oil imports to run its fleet of fighter jets, tanks and other military vehicles and operations, as well as the bulldozers that demolish Palestinian homes and olive groves to make way for illegal Israeli settlements. The sale of gas funnels billions into the Israeli economy, allowing it to continue its genocidal campaigns.

[7] According to the latest figures released by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), global military spending increased to $2.7 trillion in 2024, marking the highest level recorded.

[8] https://www.iisd.org/system/files/publications/green-conflict-minerals.pdf

[9] The *EU Memorandum of Understanding on Sustainable Raw Materials Value Chains with Rwanda*, which enables conflict minerals to enter EU energy supply chains, and talks between the president of the DRC and the USA to provide minerals in exchange for military support illustrate that the renewable energy transition of the global South is being fuelled by conflict and violence in the global South.

[10] The recent Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967 by Francesca Albanese, indicates that the "military-industrial complex has become the economic backbone of the State." This arms trade is sustained by a vast global network: over 1,600 companies are involved in supplying, financing, producing, and transporting weaponry for Israel. Lockheed Martin's F-35 and F-16 fighter jets—pivotal to the Israeli air force—have significant carrying and firepower capacities, including GBU-31 Joint Direct Attack Munitions (JDAM) and unguided MK-84 2,000-pound bombs. Energy is used as a weapon of war and collective punishment. These flows of capital, technology, and weaponry between the global arms industry and Israel not only perpetuate systematic violence against Palestinians but also reinforce the same extractive, profit-driven systems that undermine human rights, environmental justice, and global peace.

products exports to Israel, demonstrating its seriousness towards addressing the genocide and climate change.

Conclusion: A Horizon of Feminist Energy Justice

Energy underpins all aspects of our lives, things we all rely on - how we get from one place to another, how we grow our food, how we access health care, and more. The Women and Gender Constituency encourages an intersectional and cross-sectoral approach that recognizes the interconnected nature of energy to all other sectors and aspects of Just Transition, including in these dialogues. We must not see energy through narrow understandings of only JET-Ps or investments in renewable energy, but rather through a whole systems change approach that centers the rights-based considerations of energy production, implementation, distribution, access, and use.

The Women and Gender Constituency encourages investment in decentralized, democratized, community-centered energy solutions. By prioritizing deep and thoughtful processes of consultation and consent, including FPIC, communities can determine what energy solutions will actually work for them in their context. Rather than asking communities to conform to one-size-fits-all solutions driven by corporate interests, inclusive decision-making processes will ensure that benefits - in terms of finance, jobs, and energy access and affordability - reach all. Alternative models of energy ownership, such as cooperatives and other community-controlled and centered models, challenge the private sector's chokehold on our energy access and ensure stronger decision-making power from community leaders, including women. There are already powerful and plentiful examples of these energy systems thriving at a local, community, and regional level, including in the Gender Just Climate Solutions uplifted by the Women and Gender Constituency. Feminist energy justice is a critical pillar of a global gender-just transition and can be a vehicle for powerful social and economic transformation. **Power - pun intended - to the people!**