Mind the GAP

The Gender Action Plan (GAP) has been a critical driver of progress and action on gender responsive climate change, and there is an urgent need to renew GAP now.

Civil society present at COP25 wants to remind governments of their responsibility to deliver a robust GAP to drive just and effective climate solutions. We are not here to let governments trade off between rights and resources, and we expect them to uphold their human rights commitments and gender equality. We, the people, the rights holders, demand our duty bearers to engage in good faith towards getting an ambitious new GAP.

ECO is disappointed to see governments play politics, create obstruction, and act in what seems like a poor procedural manner that is delaying potential action on the GAP. There is a real lack of political will to actually #ActOnTheGAP, to make certain that the new GAP will ensure momentum, and to achieve a decision on the new GAP now at COP25 and not in the future. This is not the leadership we need from governments on gender equality in this process.

ECO reminds Parties that if they leave here with no decision, they will have lost a critical moment to invest and scale up a gender responsive climate solution. Governments don’t seem to be acting in the name of advancing women’s human rights and gender equality.

There are thousands of women environmental rights defenders and activists, and billions of women who face constant threats and risks to their lives to protect the environment, their land, and their resources. Particularly Indigenous women across the world are relying on governments to deliver a GAP.

ECO calls on ministers to do what their delegations were not willing to do: deliver at the end of the week a GAP that truly contributes to addressing the gender inequalities at the core of the climate crisis.

Putting People at the Centre of Article 6

Over the last week, we’ve heard a lot about Article 6, and a lot of it has been very technical, including critical rules for ensuring global emissions are reduced globally, preventing double-counting, and what share of proceeds should go to the Adaptation Fund, amongst others. And ECO has been pleased to see an increasing number of Parties (Tuvalu, Switzerland, Mexico, Costa Rica, followed by Australia, Canada, the EU, New Zealand and Norway) talking about the critical role of human rights in successful and fair climate action. But missing from all of this are the human stories about what these rules mean to people who are being impacted - every day - by projects that fail to integrate human rights, were given a “sustainable development” stamp, and have resulted in destructive outcomes. We cannot ignore these people.

Never fear, ECO is here to help. This Human Rights Day, we’re sharing the story of the communities impacted by the Alto Maipo hydroelectric project. Since we aren’t in Santiago, you won’t be able to visit the Cajon del Maipo, just 50km from the former COP25 venue, where you could have witnessed the devastating impacts of this so-called “clean” hydro project. So, ECO will help paint a picture. Currently under construction on the Maipo River, which provides water for 7 million people in the Santiago metro area, Alto Maipo is a run-of-the-river project that is blasting tunnels through the Andes, creating fissures in the glaciers, and polluting local communities with dust, light and noise. In a water-stressed country, it is drying up the Alto Maipo River, which is currently running at 50%, and it threatens the livelihoods of thousands of people who rely on the watershed for fishing, tourism, and recreation. In short, Alto Maipo is violating people’s rights to food, water, adequate housing, and a healthy environment, among others. And there was no adequate consultation. Surely, ECO must be misremembering: how can this project be considered clean? How could it have been registered under the “Clean” Development Mechanism?

ECO wants to remind Parties of these human stories (this is but one of many), and the people behind them whose lives are too often on the line, as they sit in the halls of IFEMA, isolated from the real-world impacts of their decisions. Advocates calling for human rights, social and environmental safeguards, community consultation, and independent grievance redress in Article 6 are doing so because there are real people and real lives at stake. As Marcela Mella, a community member who’s been fighting the Alto Maipo project shared with ECO, “We have lived the devastating impacts of carbon markets in Chile. If Article 6 fails to substantively protect human rights and environmental integrity, it would condemn other communities to suffer harmful impacts similar to those that we have endured as a result of the CDM-registered Alto Maipo project.”

As the saying goes, “insanity is doing the same thing repeatedly but expecting a different result.” ECO certainly hopes that Parties will learn from the experience of the Kyoto Protocol and ensure decisions related to Article 6 integrate human rights to ensure the Paris Agreement doesn’t turn insane.
Why Do We Need the Escazu Agreement?

Increasing climate ambition during this COP25 is one of the most anticipated results. This ambition must be effectively brought to action; in addition to climate finance and mitigation commitments, we need social conditions that facilitate implementation and ensure that those most affected by climate change benefit from climate responses.

It is in this context that the ratification of the Escazu Agreement takes on a fundamental importance. This agreement arises from the need to have a binding framework in Latin America and the Caribbean that recognizes the human right to a healthy environment and protects the access rights that make possible its effective implementation: the right of access to information, right of access to public participation in decision-making processes, and the right of access to justice in environmental matters. The Agreement is also particularly important as it explicitly recognizes the importance of protecting environmental defenders. Latin America is the most dangerous region for activists and local and Indigenous leaders who defend the rights of their communities and their land. According to Global Witness, in 2018, 51% of the reported 164 murders of environmental defenders were carried out in this region alone.

This legal and institutional framework can help ensure that climate commitments, such as NDCs, are developed in a participatory and democratic manner. This helps promote social inclusiveness while guaranteeing the effective implementation of the measures contained therein.

Its importance is reinforced by the fact that many of the CDM projects implemented in the region have contributed to rights violations of local communities and of Indigenous Peoples. Projects such as wind parks in Oaxaca, Mexico, and dams in Central America or the Andes, have adversely impacted Indigenous communities that have been forced from their territories and have lost livelihoods. In extreme cases, they have even been the target of assassinations.

The Escazu Agreement has been signed by 21 nations and only ratified by 5 so far – with 2 additional countries announcing yesterday that they would seek to speed up the ratification process. Yet, ratification requires 11 countries for the Agreement to enter into force; so 6 more parties must complete the process to ensure that the protections afforded by the Agreement come into action. Why are countries waiting to ratify? In light of climate emergency and the social, economic and environmental vulnerability prevailing in Latin America and the Caribbean, we cannot wait any longer for this. To protect people, we urge all signatories to accelerate the ratification of the Agreement, and we urge the Chilean Presidency to lead these regional efforts by initiating the ratification process of the Escazu Agreement as a matter of urgency.

CDM: Reserving the Right to Wreck the Planet

Week 2 at COP is “rumours week”, and delegates turn into gossip-producing machines when it comes to predicting deals. One rumour in particular has made ECO’s heart skip a beat: let’s put all the old junk CDM credits in a reserve and only allow countries to use them if they don’t meet their NDC target.

If it was up to ECO, the 861 million remaining CDM credits would be long gone and rules would be adopted to ensure an ambitious, fair, and equitable transition into the post-2020 era. The 4 billion CERs that risk flooding the Paris market would certainly guarantee that they will not be used in the future. The idea of a reserve simply postpones that issue, creating significant uncertainty for the market, and does nothing to improve the situation.

ECO knows 4 Parties hold nearly 70% of the remaining CDM credits: China (355 million CERs), India (89 million CERs), South Korea (62 million CERs), and Brazil (72 million CERs). ECO’s watchful eyes and ears will be on ministers this week (and their advisors as they try to explain to them what the f*** a carbon market is). Don’t be fooled; whether you call it a reserve, a fund, or a carbon market emergency bunker, it won’t change the fact that the credits placed into it are junk, old, and will do nothing but undermine climate action. Going forward, they should not be used, and they should not be bought.

Voices of the Indigenous Causus

ECO is pleased to share our platform with the Indigenous People Causus to amplify their unique and individual voice.

Being an Indigenous ally is no easy job, but neither has it been easy navigating the COP space as an Indigenous person this past week, having microphones cut off during the march, being lectured by non-Indigenous people or tokenised for our Indigenous songs and regalia. Indigenous people are key leaders in the climate space, and it is imperative that our allies can effectively support Indigenous participation and leadership, so that we can move quickly towards the milestones that we so desperately need to reach.

Climate change is often contextualised within degrees of warming, scientific formulas, or articles, but if we re-lens climate change we can look back to its source. Colonisation has been the catalyst for redefining human relationships to land and water under the premise of ownership. This has allowed for centuries of land, water and human exploitation, namely within Indigenous territories and to the detriment of Indigenous peoples. Shifting these relationships is one of the most underrated climate solutions here at COP25. Doing this requires almost a complete reassessment of one’s deeply held beliefs about worth and status; about rights and responsibilities, about reciprocity.

As an Indigenous woman from the far north of New Zealand, it helps me to be grounded in the concept of ‘whakapapa’, a term which derives from the Indigenous language of Aotearoa/New Zealand. Whakapapa means to understand who we are in relation to our ancestors, our grandchildren; our primal ancestors who are the personifications of our environment. Whakapapa reminds us that we are part of a web of life, that all things are interconnected, that our responsibilities extend out from us to the ecosystems within which we exist, and that they in turn have a responsibility towards us.

Being a good ally starts here, with whakapapa. Understanding who you are in relation to your ancestors, your grandchildren and your
natural environment. In doing so you understand how your presence may have enabled or disabled the thriving of local ecosystems - which includes Indigenous peoples. Being a good ally means:

Understanding that ecosystems have existed before the arrival of colonisation: This means that Indigenous peoples have evolved in co-dependence with the environment and have special expertise within particular local boundaries. This also means understanding colonisation, how your presence has and continues to disrupt how this ecosystem normally functions.

Understanding that in an ecosystem power and energy are constantly moving and can never be held in one place: This means decentralising power from places where it would normally sit, in particular, supporting Indigenous sovereignty and decision making. This looks like destabilising western monopolies on knowledge and recognising that Indigenous peoples have their own knowledge systems that are equally valuable and legitimate.

Understanding that you are one part of a wider system that interacts not only laterally, but across all dimensions, with all life: This means decolonising our ideas of superiority and ownership over land, water, and Indigenous peoples. Each knows how to thrive and interact when barriers are removed. This also means taking responsibility for how people show up within a space, not being harmful by imposing or dominating over Indigenous peoples, and not asking Indigenous peoples to take on the labour of educating.

Being an ally means understanding that interdependence is a necessary part of thriving: This means being in community and good relationship with all things, under the premise that we are all obligated and responsible for one another. In particular this means sharing the burden that has fallen on Indigenous People to stand alone for Indigenous rights and the rights of the earth.

The climate solutions that we want to see amongst our homes and communities have to start here and now, in how we treat each other. As you move through the week, we ask that you carry these offerings with you, to stand in solidarity with Indigenous peoples.

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**Grab’n Go – Brazil’s Massive Scheme to Legalize Land-Grabbing and Raise Emissions**

Kill, invade, cut, burn it down. Repeat. The sad fate of Brazilian forests at the hands of gangs of land-grabbers have just gotten another hit from President Jair Bolsonaro, who never tires of inventing schemes to replace the forest with pasture and soybean plantations. Today, as ministers gather in Madrid to make the decisions that should steer us towards a safer climate, Brazil’s far-right leader is scheduled to sign an executive order that may legalize millions of hectares of invaded land in the Amazon. That means more deforestation and of course massive emissions: up to 6.5 billion tonnes by 2020.

Land-grabbing, or grilagem, in Portuguese, is the single most important driver of emissions in Brazil. It consists of invading public lands, shooting everybody in the way, chopping down the rainforest and burning it to clear the way for cattle – then using the pasture to fake a land title, selling it and moving to the next forest. The process is done by well-funded gangs, often under the eyes of or with open support from politicians. Deforestation makes up nearly half of Brazil's emissions; in 2019, 35% of Amazon deforestation happened on invaded public land.

Since it is a criminal activity, ECO readers might think the right way to address the problem would be through law enforcement. But President Bolsonaro, who has a very particular sense of law and order, has an easier way around it: the act to be signed today might just forgive land-grabbers for their past crimes and allow their fake titles to be legitimized at no, or very little cost. Of course, when squatters find out that crime pays, they will have no qualms about invading more public land to make more money and claim more government mercy in the future.

At immediate risk are 19 million hectares that had already been designated for land tenure regularization in the Amazon. Up to 1.6 million hectares could be clear-cut by 2027, which would dump 6.5 billion tons of CO2 in the atmosphere.

But the sky is the limit for president-sanctioned environmental crime: 44% of the Brazilian Amazon is public land, such as Indigenous lands or undesignated forests. Bolsonaro’s aggressive pro-development speeches have encouraged criminals to move into those lands – as the murder of two Guajajara tribesmen this week tragically shows.

Yesterday in Madrid, Brazil made the bizarre move of opposing the mention of “climate emergency” in the COP25 decision text. The decision to legalize massive illegal deforestation today might help explain that.

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**Presidency’s Text Proposals: the Good, the Bad, the Missing**

The COP Presidency's text for the principal decisions from COP25 is now into its second iteration, and the contours and fault lines are becoming clearer.

The text must clearly and unambiguously convey the collective will from all Parties to raise ambition on confronting the climate emergency, including through the communication over the coming months of NDCs that close the emissions gap to 1.5°C.

The current text has some good language on enhancing ambition, including in the recognition of the role of oceans, and on the need for a just transition to protect workers and communities. Guidance is also needed on the timeline for next year, with an invitation to submit in the first quarter, and a cut off date of September 1 for the Secretariat’s aggregate assessment of the impact of the NDCs submitted by then.

It will be important to get a strong reference to pre-2020 shortfalls that doesn’t let developed countries off the hook, without undermining the drive to strengthen efforts in post-2020.

Finally, there must be no declaration of completion of the Paris Agreement Work Programme (PAWP) until parties agree on Common Time Frames for post-2030 contributions. Lack of agreement on this would leave a gaping hole in the PAWP, and in the long-term environmental integrity of the Paris Agreement.
Time for Countries to Step Up and Follow the Leadership of the CVF to Protect Rights

From the Maldives to Costa Rica, Senegal to the Marshall Islands, communities and Indigenous peoples of countries that are members of the Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF) live on the front lines of climate impacts. More so than any other governments, members of the CVF are very much aware of the unprecedented threat that inaction on climate change poses for human rights - not just for people under their jurisdiction, but for all nations. Rising sea levels, warming temperatures and changing weather patterns already undermine the realization of a wide range of human rights including the rights to life, water, food, adequate housing, culture, and self-determination. These impacts further reinforce existing structural discrimination and violence. Moreover, inadequate support and mitigation policies by the largest emitters exacerbate these impacts further with every additional delay. That is why CVF has also been championing the 1.5°C limit.

Instead of withdrawing in despair, these countries have risen to the challenge and demonstrated unmatched leadership by developing climate policies that are in line with the best available science. Since its creation, the CVF has championed ambitious climate policies by placing human dignity at the core of its ambition.

This leadership was on display again when the Marshall Islands, just shortly before the COP25, communicated a Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) truly in line with the objectives and principles of the Paris Agreement to contribute to keeping temperature increase below 1.5°C, by implementing rights-based climate action. And their leadership does not end there. On the first day of the COP25, President Heine of the Marshall Islands called, on behalf of all 48 CVF members, for the establishment of a UN Special Rapporteur for Human Rights and Climate Change, pledging US$50000 to support this work. From supporting governments with the development of rights-based climate policies, to helping frontline communities identify effective remedies to deal with climate impacts; the need for such a Special Rapporteur is obvious and the task awaiting it crucial.

That the most impacted countries have had to resort to pledging their scarce tax-payers’ money to accelerate the establishment of such a mandate should be a wake up call for developed and main emitting countries to take responsibility and fulfill their international commitments to cooperate for the universal realization of human rights.

We welcome the leadership of the CVF and call upon other countries to follow its leadership by developing rights-based NDCs in line with the goal of keeping temperature increase below 1.5°C, and to commit to the establishment of a Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and Climate Change in 2020.

The Facts on the Ground for L&D Finance

ECO keeps hearing about “finance that’s available for loss and damage” under the Sendai framework via disaster risk reduction (DRR), humanitarian assistance, and the SDGs. ECO calls bollocks on this idea. The amount of finance available for loss and damage is COMPLETELY INADEQUATE when compared to the scale of loss and damage being suffered.

According to the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) there is already a serious funding shortfall for both disaster response and long-term disaster risk reduction and development. In 2019, 40 percent of all humanitarian funding went to just two protracted emergencies – Yemen, and the Syrian region. These emergencies are not going away, and given that climate change is a key driver of conflict, these kinds of emergencies are only likely to intensify. So, expecting the global DRR and humanitarian pots to accommodate a growing financial burden as loss and damage accumulates is wishful thinking.

Let’s look at a case by case basis at this “there’s already finance for loss and damage” bollocksy bollocks:

When Hurricane Marie caused loss and damage worth 226% of Dominica’s annual GDP in one storm, they got an insurance payout from the Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Facility, undertook a successful humanitarian fundraising drive, and received World Bank loans. Adding all of this together - and ignoring how incredibly unfair it is for countries to be forced to take loans in such situations - Dominicans and the Dominican Government were still left with 70% of the cost to pay themselves. When Cyclone Pam devastated Vanuatu, wiping out US$600 million, or 64% of GDP in a matter of hours, Vanuatu only received approximately $50m in humanitarian assistance, and a measly $1.9m insurance payout. Subsistence farmers and fisher people were left to foot the bill.

When Cyclone Winston smashed into Fiji, despite bilateral funding, a UN appeal, and loans, $1.2 of the $1.4b in loss and damage was left to foot the government and people of Fiji to cover.

There is demonstrably not enough finance for loss and damage. If developed countries don’t agree here in Madrid that we need more finance for loss and damage, that it should come on top of already existing (and inadequate) adaptation aid, and humanitarian finance, and that it should come from new sources of finance with a deadline for making a recommendation to the COP, then they will be violating their human rights obligations to the most vulnerable people. They will be demonstrating that their stated concerns are no more than crocodile tears. You will be held to account. The world is watching.
Today we have a special star for Fossil of the Day! The United States (US) managed to get its name on three fossil awards in one day! This country is really making its best effort to be the worst for future generations and vulnerable communities worldwide.

The US is doing great at getting its name down in history as the frontrunner in destroying planet Earth. Is it possible that it is hiding a Planet B somewhere, or is it just enjoying leading the world peeps to mass suicide?!

In fist place: The US

Today, we award the first fossil to the US for insisting on staying in the process just to block money, while refusing to pay its fair share for causing all the loss and damage so painfully felt by poor and vulnerable people worldwide through droughts, heatwaves, hurricanes, fires and other extreme weather events.

We're here in the halls of power, and the table is set. Despite leaving the Paris Agreement, the US is inviting itself to have a seat at the table, while making it clear they have no intention of paying the bill. The US is trying to bully other countries into letting them stay on the board of the loss and damage Executive Committee, a core institution in the Paris Accord.

Meanwhile, Southern Africa faces its worst drought in 35 years. Eleven million people are facing climate induced starvation.

But what is the US even doing here at the table - it did boast about leaving the Paris Accord, didn't it? They have been leading a pack of blockers, part of the "rich boys club." If these countries follow the US example, they'll be forcing those hardest impacted to foot the bill. To that we say: "If you are going to leave, then you get out of the way..."

In second place: The US and Australia

The second fossil of the day award goes to the US and Australia for witholding their pledges to the Green Climate Fund (GCF)

Back in November, a handful of countries doubled their contributions to the GCF, but guess what? Most contributor countries were not up to the challenge. Two of them even forgot their responsibility to provide adequate and sufficient funding for poor countries: the US and Australia simply decided to turn their back and withhold their pledges, snubbing all the scientists and people in the streets who are sounding the alarm on the climate emergency.

Other countries, including Canada, Japan, Switzerland, Netherlands, Belgium, Italy, Austria, and Portugal, so far have not delivered double the dough or paid for the pollution they created! (We're looking for countries to at least double their first GCF contribution, in line with their fair share). So will ministers arrive to the party empty-handed tomorrow? What manners, soiled with dirty fossil fuels! Or will they come up with the goods, and top-up?

As a reminder, ambitious GCF contributions are key to support vulnerable communities adapting to climate change, and to create the right conditions for enhanced ambition in 2020.

In third place: The US and Canada

The third fossil of the day goes out to the US and Canada!

Hey Canada! You put a good show with your progressive positions, pushing for human and Indigenous rights here at COP25, all while violating these same rights back home! Yes you, fingers are pointed at you, for recklessly approving fossil fuel infrastructure projects that are not in line with the Paris Agreement, such as the TMX pipeline.

US friends, of course, are completely out of tune with science and are moving ahead with dirty projects such as fracking in the Permian Basin. No wonder you were called out as the worst countries in the Production Gap Report.

In the age of climate emergency, the US and Canada need to keep fossil fuels in the ground and respect Indigenous rights and sovereignty. This includes for Canada rejecting the Teck Frontier Mine, the largest tar sands surface mine ever proposed.

Hey, Danish parliament, wow! Now that’s what we can call climate leadership. They agreed on a Climate Law that is binding for current and future governments, and is in line with the 1.5°C temperature limit. Basically, Denmark turned science into law!

This law is really cool – it encourages global cooperation, and enables Denmark to be a climate leader at the international level and deliver on commitments.

The story is not finished yet. Denmark set the target of reducing GHG emissions by 70% in 2030. Denmark agreed not to play the game of carbon trade to ensure complete environmental integrity.

Each sector is targeted with a strategy, including agriculture, transport and construction. These strategies are set annually in a “Climate Action Plan” based on an independent climate council, which will monitor to ensure that targets are being met through action. The Minister of Climate has a duty to act on Climate Council recommendations.

Denmark, thank you for setting a great example to follow!
ECO is CROSS and PUZZLED: Where’s the Ambition on Phasing out Fossil Fuels?

When Energy Ministers meet today, ECO hopes to hear real talk about ambitious plans to phase out fossil fuels and accelerate the transition to a socially just, renewable energy economy. Because we need to get moving on that now to limit warming to 1.5 degrees – and that’s a matter of life and death for many people. ECO presents a little puzzle to get you warmed up for a robust dialogue on ending the fossil fuel era.

ACROSS:
3. New wind and solar already cost _____ to build than coal and gas plants in most regions.
8. We chant “Make _______ pay!” because corporations must be held accountable for their role in driving the climate crisis.
10. This shale play in Argentina is the biggest fracking project outside North America. In English, it translates to “dead cow.”
11. To 2050, nearly 50% of new oil development in this country could rely on subsidies. This same country is the largest current expander of oil and gas extraction.
13. This Anglo-Dutch oil company is on trial for a bribery scheme that cost the Nigerian people USD 1.1bn, and in a civil case over the execution of the Ogoni Nine.
16. First Nations are calling on this government to #RejectTeck, and stop the largest tar sands mine.
18. The fastest and cheapest way to avoid energy-related emissions especially among the high-consumption class. Hint: Rhymes with efficiency.
19. This country was the first in the world to prohibit licensing for oil and gas exploitation and extraction.
21. ____-grid renewables, not centralized fossil fuel power plants, are the most effective way to deliver energy access to rural areas.
22. _____Knew about climate change for decades, yet fueled a colossal denial machine to block meaningful action.
23. The ______ Gap report shows countries are planning to extract 120% more oil, gas & coal in 2030 than is compatible with 1.5°C.
24. UN Sec. Gen. António Guterres says this type of plant should no longer be built anywhere.

DOWN:
1. This Russian company could be responsible for unlocking the most new oil and gas production to 2050, from projects sanctioned over the next five years.
2. This country’s Commission on Human Rights says 47 “Carbon Majors” could be legally liable for human rights harms resulting from the climate crisis.
4. This multilat. dev. bank is the first to commit to phase out fossil fuel fin.
5. In the next five years over 200 of the world’s biggest companies could write off USD 250bn in _____ fossil fuel assets.
6. Indigenous leaders demand a moratorium on new industrial projects in the Sacred Headwaters of this South American rainforest.
7. The International Trade Union Confederation was key to getting these two critical words into the Paris Agreement.
9. Type of energy we need to have 100% use of by 2050.
12. For Inuit living in the _____, ice and glacial loss is not just a matter of physical changes, but a threat to lives and livelihoods.
13. A recent report has found that just 10-30% of fossil fuel _____ could pay for a global green energy transition.
14. A firefighters’ union in this country recently called on the government to urgently phase out fossil fuels.
15. Global investment in energy _____ stagnated in 2018, yet this “first fuel” is one of the quickest ways to save emissions and money.
17. Where most fossil fuels need to stay, with “the”.
20. This G20 country spent an average of USD 5.2bn of public money financing coal from 2016 to 2017.

Answer key available on the CAN News app or at eco.climatenetwork.org