

# ECO

## THE GLOBAL DAY FOR CLIMATE JUSTICE ISSUE

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## An End To Empty Promises On Nature And Forests?

Unlike the food options at the venue, the Glasgow initiatives include an astonishing array of new announcements to scale up forest and “nature” climate action. Yay! Amazing, right? But, hold on... doesn't this sound familiar?

Let ECO look back for a moment at all the forest climate initiatives of the last decades and see if they worked at all. Wait! Don't get us wrong. ECO does so in the spirit of increasing understanding of the blockages, rules, and perverse incentives created by the UNFCCC system, and not because it doubts the good intentions of current or past initiatives.

**Way back in 2007, at COP 14 in Bali, REDD+** was agreed and hailed as the new pathway to prevent deforestation and forest degradation and save the world's great primary tropical forests. Well... it hasn't.

**In 2014 the New York Declaration on Forests announced an ambitious programme to “cut natural forest loss in half by 2020 and strive to end it by 2030”.** But the first 5-year review expressed deep dismay that the initiative had failed to curb loss and damage to Earth's irreplaceable primary tropical rainforests and that the annual rate of global deforestation had increased by 43%.

And let's not forget the 2018 **Katowice declaration on “Forests for**

**Climate”** (what happened to that anyway?).

ECO wonders what's really going on here... Does the UNFCCC remember how long ago civil society urged the adoption of forest definitions that differentiated between primary, secondary, natural, and plantation forests? It was 2008. To this day, the UNFCCC sees no difference between a primary forest, and a monoculture of trees.

And don't even get ECO started on the current LULUCF accounting rules that don't differentiate between the condition of ecosystems and incentivise the destruction of forests for bioenergy while being counted as zero emissions in the energy sector.

ECO also sees with increasing concern that many biodiversity and sustainable development goals could be severely compromised if certain unsustainable climate mitigation and land-based Carbon Dioxide Removal (CDR) measures are deployed at a very large scale in the name of reaching “net zero” by 2050.

ECO wonders why Parties have such a hard time understanding why these looming risks need to be dealt with in this Convention. That's right, some STILL seem to question why the UNFCCC should have to deal with biodiversity issues when we have the CBD for that!

ECO will put it simply: **biodiversity lowers the risk of ecosystems releasing**

**gigantic amounts of GHGs into the atmosphere and supports the health and resilience of human societies at the forefront of climate impacts.** Protecting and restoring biodiversity and ecosystem integrity is absolutely critical if we are to keep global warming to 1.5°C AND to adapt to the inevitable climate impacts we are already experiencing due to past inaction.

Nonetheless, protecting and restoring nature does not provide fossil fuels with a “get out of jail” free card: in order to keep 1.5°C within reach, this must be done **alongside** and not **instead of** a rapid and urgent phase-out of fossil fuels.

Nature is a key part of the solution, but it can also become a HUGE part of the problem if Parties fail to acknowledge these crucial interlinkages. **The UNFCCC must therefore understand true climate ambition as reaching the 1.5°C goal in a way that helps reverse, rather than accelerate, the 6th mass extinction and biodiversity crisis in the next decade.**

So, how will all these good intentions and commitments be reflected in COP decisions? And what changes will be made to the way the UNFCCC treats forests and other natural ecosystems? ECO will be closely watching the formal outcomes of COP26 to find out if, finally, Parties start shifting from promises to real climate and biodiversity action.

# A Fair Share Fossil Phase Out

In his opening remarks this week, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said “our addiction to fossil fuels is pushing humanity to the brink. We face a stark choice: Either we stop it — or it stops us”.

ECO sees this as yet more evidence that the world needs to tackle fossil fuels head on. The challenge is to do so in a fair way, rather than just crashing the economies of both fossil dependent and fossil-export dependent countries.

That is where the new report of the Civil Society Equity Review, endorsed by more than 200 civil society organisations from around the world, comes in. *A Fair Shares Phase Out: A Civil Society Equity Review on an Equitable Global Phase Out of Fossil Fuels* highlights the terrible truth driven home by the *Production Gap* reports: we’re on track to produce more than twice as much fossil fuels as are compatible with 1.5°C. But it doesn’t stop there. The report also shows that while wealthy country pledges fall far short of their “fair shares”, developing countries are, for the most part, making pledges that approximately correspond to their “fair share”.

Developing countries, as it turns out, must do far more than their fair shares if we’re to stabilise the climate system. To that end, they’ll need far more support than is currently on offer. Moreover, this support will have to take into account their capacity limitations as well as their dependence on fossil fuels, which often spans their entire economies.

Enter the challenge of “supply-side equity”, where *Fair Shares Phase Out* finds substantial differences between fossil-fuel-extracting countries, both with regards to how dependent their economies are on fossil extraction and with respect to their financial capacity to transition away from extraction dependence. Recognising these differences helps identify which countries should phase out extraction first and fastest

(those with more capacity and less dependency) and which ones will need international support if they’re to follow along.

Key recommendations from *A Fair Shares Phase Out* include:

- The wealthiest polluters must contribute their “fair share” and deliver on long overdue commitments and cut domestic emissions deeper and faster while supporting less wealthy nations by providing climate finance for technology, adaptation and, of course, loss and damage.
- Recognising fossil fuels as key contributors to the climate crisis and creating new pathways and international platforms to urgently end their expansion, phase out production.
- Prioritising international cooperation with fossil fuel dependent countries that are least able to adjust by providing resources and technical support for renewable energy systems, a just transition for workers and communities as well as economic diversification and transformation;
- Strengthening the building blocks of a fair share phase out, including a First Movers Club of countries committed to end financing and extraction of fossil fuels, a registry of global fossil fuel reserves to increase transparency and accountability, a commission dedicated to exploring international legal instruments such as a fossil fuel non-proliferation treaty to equitably align production with 1.5°C;
- Changing the rules of global trade, investment, finance and technology to increase “policy space” for governments expediting emergency policies.

That’s just for starters. ECO seeks true leadership from the wealthy countries who still produce fossil fuels. They must be the first to phase out their production. Sadly, their actions indicate an intention to move in just the opposite direction.

## Fossil of the Day

### First Prize goes to Brazil

First place in today’s Fossil of the Week goes to Brazil, for its ghastly and unacceptable treatment of indigenous people. On Monday, indigenous activist Txai Suruí, was lauded for her powerful conference speech telling world leaders about the impact climate change is already having on her tribe.

Unfortunately, this didn’t go down too well back home where she was publicly criticized by Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro, for “attacking Brazil”, prompting online trolls to heap abuse on the 24 year-old. Worse still, she was allegedly subjected to bullying from a Brazilian government environment ministry official, who towered over her saying she “shouldn’t bash Brazil”. Worryingly, days later, another Brazilian state representative, with ties to the rural lobby, was detained by conference security for trying to intimidate Indigenous women.

Such despicable behaviour is well documented in Brazil; invasions of Indigenous lands have skyrocketed; wildcat gold mining is polluting waterways, intimidation is rife and they have a vice-president who justified denying freshwater to COVID-hit villages because “the Indians drink from the rivers”. We could go on to talk about rainforests and deforestation but think you get the idea.

Bolsonaro didn’t bother to go to Glasgow, preferring to visit his ancestral home in Italy and hang out with a far right-leader instead.

That was actually a good thing as it allowed the country’s diplomats to come ready to compromise and even subscribe to deals on methane and forests.

### Second prize goes to Australia

Today we are pleased to announce another first for Australia. They are the first country to bag a fossil awards hat trick. And this prestigious gong is presented to mark their truly unbelievable performance on Energy Day.

Whilst 190 countries were powering past coal, 100 dutifully had their pens poised to sign the global methane pledge and 20 countries agreed to stop funding international fossil fuel projects, what were our antipodean comrades doing?

Well, sometimes bad things do come in threes, apparently. The world’s number one exporter of gas and number two exporter of coal were setting themselves up for number three with plans to become a huge exporter of oil. These busy bees decided to invite consultation on ten new areas for offshore petroleum exploration, extolling the economic benefits this would bring to the land down under.

What these drongos fail to understand is that there’s no economy on a dead planet. Do the right thing; sign up, pledge and announce plans - for a renewable future. Strewth!