

# ECO

## NO CLIMATE JUSTICE WITHOUT HUMAN RIGHTS

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*Editorial: Andres Fuentes*

## Burning the Dead Elephant in the Room

ECO has been listening to the high-level opening speeches yesterday and today with interest, and is very happy to hear several countries and leaders naming oil, gas and coal as the cause of our crisis. When the COP26 decision finally mentioned the fossil fuel elephant, it opened a door that cannot be closed.

It's true. Digging up and burning dead rainforests is a path to disaster. Digging for oil, gas, and coal is what has gotten us into the deep hole we're in. ECO is excited to hear these words in the High Level Segment.

But ECO has questions, and ECO has worries. Saying there's an elephant in the room doesn't help get the elephant out of the room if all you do is lie and say that it's a very clean elephant.

It is worrying to hear some leaders opening this COP27 with dishonest weasel words (like "abated") about how

their oil and gas is somehow better than anyone else's. ECO knows that burning just the oil, gas and coal in developed, operating fields and mines now will take the world beyond 2°C, let alone 1.5°C.

The reality is that around 80-90% of the emissions from the oil and gas supply chain come when the oil and gas is burned, not before – so when companies and countries try to distract focus onto the emissions elsewhere in the supply chain, they're distracting attention onto only 10-20% of the climate pollution.

The dash for gas in Africa is not clean, and it is not a path to prosperity. It is fossil fuel colonialism, digging deeper into disaster.

Stop pretending the elephant in the room can be burned cleanly. It's time to stop burning elephants. No more fossil fuels.

## Dear World Leaders of the South

Dear World Leaders of the South,

ECO heard Barbados Prime Minister Mottley say: "Ask the peoples of the world to hold us accountable and ask us to act in your name and ask us to save this earth and the peoples of this earth". We have been, but often we find we are speaking in empty rooms.

We heard from the continent of Africa and the Small Island States the horrible tradeoffs that they must make when they are faced with devastating impacts as they shoulder the burden of the costs to support their people and rebuild, recover whatever can be recovered. Hear them, wealthy polluters who still peddle false solutions - what if you had the choice between feeding

your communities and schooling your children. What would you do? Who will you turn to?

We heard the anguish. We want you to know if no one else in that big room heard you - we, your citizens and your people of the world — we heard and will amplify.

We heard very clearly that this year must deliver finance to address loss and damage. So let's play the "end my sentence game" where one person adds to another, and see if that helps with the reception in the hall.

"Loss and damage is not an abstract topic of endless dialogue, it is our daily experience . . ." ". . . we need to leave this conference with a solution on

financing of L&D."

And you may ask, how? Well, "How do companies make US\$200 billion in profits in the last 3 months and not expect to contribute at least 10c to a Loss and Damage fund." "How come the Global North borrows at interest rates between 1-4%, whilst the Global South at 14%?". And just to be sure that it is not lost in translation, loans are not the solution, grants are.

Heed the words of the UNSG: "Loss and damage can no longer be swept under the rug. It is a fundamental question of climate justice. . . The answers are in our hands and the clock is ticking . . . we are on a highway to climate hell with our foot still on the accelerator."

# Looking to Host? Australia Needs to Step it Up

Australia announced its intention to bid for COP31 in conjunction with the Pacific Islands. This is a great opportunity to bring the focus of the international community to some of the world's most vulnerable countries – the Pacific Small Island Developing States. But the bid will not automatically provide a fig leaf to cover Australia's less than stellar climate record. It is now time for Australia to establish its climate bona fides by stepping up to take responsibility for its actions.

Australia has been missing in action at COP for the best part of the last decade, the conga line of fossil fuel companies, particularly gas, came to a crescendo in Glasgow where you could not tell the difference between the Australian pavilion and that of the gas industry. A change of government in Australia in May has bought a change in rhetoric — but will it be matched by action?

A visit to the Australian Pavilion in this COP shows an increased focus on First Nations, as well as a removal of fossil fuel branding. This is a welcome step. But, while domestically the landscape has changed, Australia must step forward at this COP. Of keen interest will be whether Australia supports the loss and damage provisions being argued by civil society. Also, will it phase out fossil fuels in the near term, especially in the Australian context including billions in current subsidies. Watch this space.

In the Pacific, we see some of the most climate change impacted communities, with sea level rise threatening to make entire countries uninhabitable in the near term.

Communities are already being displaced and already forced to relocate as a result. Key economic sectors such as agriculture and tourism are being brought to their knees by frequent and intense tropical cyclones, floods and droughts, as decades of development gains are rolled back in a matter of hours. The climate crisis is deepening the social, economic inequalities and inequities, pushing many vulnerable groups and communities further to the periphery.

ECO is of the view that Australia must go even further to make up for its many years of foot dragging at the UNFCCC. Australia can begin this by championing just transition in the Pacific region in the lead up to COP 31. This should include a moratorium on new coal development in the region, as well as the provision of new finance for adaptation and economic diversification for its Pacific partners. Is it too much to dream of a Pacific that is declared a fossil fuel non-proliferation zone? Not so, if Australia is serious about sticking to the 1.5 degree goal enshrined in the Paris Agreement.

The joint bid for COP31 needs to pave the way to close the massive gap between what is currently the largest per capita emitter on the planet — Australia — and the most vulnerable group of nations in the world. This joint bid will also bring into sharp focus the need for transformational change to drive climate policy ambition and implementation in developed countries. It is literally a life or death case for Pacific Island States.

## It's Time to Show Parties What Green Really Looks Like!

### African feminists stand in their power to reclaim green at COP27

*ECO is happy to share this part of our publication with the Women and Gender Constituency (WGC) to help amplify their voice. This article reflects the views of the WGC.*

Green, a colour long recognized and embraced by African people as a symbol of the abundant and natural wealth of Africa, and symbol of her sovereignty and unity across the continent. Green is also the colour of nature's boundless forests and landscape.

Yet today, without a sense of irony, those who have led the destruction of our environment, through greed and plunder, are the ones who claim to care about it the most. Positing false and dangerous solutions as progress, hiding their ongoing exploitation and accumulation with green logos, green empty press statements, and green taglines.

It is in this spirit of reclamation and resistance, that African feminists have come to COP27 to affirm our place and stake in the future that we want. To reclaim our green: to say

no to false solutions that displace our communities that rely on unproven and harmful technologies, and that sell us an "industrial revolution."

Today we wear green to make one thing clear: we have real solutions that must be scaled and resourced, and we must stop greenwashing false ones. Especially when we hear phrases like "this is an implementation COP," we are taking back our green, our dignity, our sense of being, our identity, and our life.

In this COP we are "Standing in our power!" reaffirming the words of sister Wangari Mathai

*"In the course of history, there comes a time when humanity is called to shift to a new level of consciousness, to reach a higher moral ground. A time when we have to shed our fear and give hope to each other. That time is now."*

— Wangari Maathai

# We Can't Afford to Exclude Civil Society from COP27

ECO is confused about some stories that have been coming from all sides since delegates started arriving at COP27. These stories are from civil society observers, activists, and experts who paid for their tickets and booked their hotels. Or did they?

There are numerous instances of civil society observers being asked to pay 2x or even 5x the price of their booking and then being kicked onto the streets when they couldn't pay. Why? Because apparently being an activist is expensive. But don't worry! You can save hundreds of dollars or euros a night, you only need to change your mind and become a tourist, instead of participating in the Conference. Just go to the beach, relax and keep your mind

off stressful issues like the climate crisis and loss and damage. Hence, ECO is wondering - is the UNFCCC badge really free? Is this COP inclusive only for those who are able to pay more? What will happen when more people arrive next week? Will this continue?

We remember the letter which the Egyptian Hotel Association sent to hotels in Sharm-el-Sheikh earlier this year, although COP Presidency denied any government involvement in it during a meeting with observer constituencies (ECO has seen this signed and dated letter in its original Arabic). Describing the event as a "unique tourism opportunity", the letter mentioned minimum prices for hotel rooms during the conference — a five-

star hotel would cost at least \$500 and two-star hotels would start from \$120. Can this be inclusive? ECO doesn't think so.

ECO appeals to the Egyptian Presidency and the UNFCCC to make sure that we are all on the same page here. COP observers have the right to a safe, secure and accessible accommodation, at the prices agreed to when reservations were confirmed, and not to be left out on the streets. The Secretariat must work with Parties and Observers to ensure that all future COP host countries and cities know that this must never be allowed to happen again. Civil society observers should be encouraged to participate at COP, not punished for it!

## The Closing Window to 1.5; MWP is Part of the Response

Since delegates have been very busy preparing for the COP, they might have missed the latest scientific evidence that shows how far we are from meeting the temperature goal the world committed to in 2015, in Paris. Allow ECO, dear readers, to summarize the key findings of the UNFCCC Synthesis Report and the UNEP Emissions Gap Report, both released last week.

The Synthesis Report clearly states that compared to 2019 levels, by 2030 the current NDCs will reduce global emissions by only 3.6%. Yes, you read that right. It pains ECO to compare this to the 43% emissions reductions by 2030 from 2019 levels recommended by the IPCC. Why? Because current NDCs have no plan for a staggering 39% gap of emissions reductions required. Or in other words, by 2030, current NDCs can only realize 8.37% of the emissions reductions that has been recommended by IPCC from the 2019 levels. How much

our politicians listen to science? 8.37%. Yep, no kidding, 8.37%. Imagine letting a country being run by someone with an approval rating of 8.37%, forget counting the fate of all of humanity.

And there's more. The report also says that we are on track to almost exhausting the entire 1.5°C carbon budget to 2050 by 2030! For those who like details, here they are: In the context of the carbon budget consistent with 50% likelihood of limiting warming to 1.5°C (500 Gt CO<sub>2</sub>), cumulative CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in 2020–2030, based on the latest NDCs, would likely use up 86% of the remaining carbon budget, leaving 14% for the next 20 years. Do you really want to leave this problem for future generations to try to sort out? (if they even make it, of course...)

The UNEP Emissions Gap report reinforces these grim statistics and puts forward a clear message: only an urgent system-wide transformation can avoid

climate disaster. We missed the time to do an "incremental change", we need a whole-of-economy transformation and we needed it "yesterday". In other words, they are plainly saying that we have failed to take the opportunity presented for a smooth transition. Rough ride ahead.

Dear delegates, we heard that you aim to have text on the Mitigation Work Programme (MWP) ready by Friday, the 11th. Oh wait! Friday is also Decarbonization day and, as Sigmund Freud said, there are no coincidences. ECO hopes that by Friday you can come up with a MWP that lasts through 2030 and includes a sectoral approach to decarbonization through which we can deliver on a Just Energy Transformation that will keep 1.5°C within reach. Such a programme should also create the right technical and financial incentives for countries to sharply reduce emissions within this decade and avoid ruining the future of our children and grandchildren.

# Adaptation Ambition: Think Local, act Locally

Too little, too slow says the recent Adaptation Gap Report. And despite the overwhelming urgency for action and support, the first round of workshops on the Global Goal of Adaptation (GGA) ended with so little, oh so slowly.

There is a reason.

At the best of times, ECO finds it hard to convey what is happening in our communities and the ecosystems we inhabit to these national and international platforms. Yet everybody knows that most often, adaptation means people coping with the consequences of climate breakdown on their own, with families and neighbours. Evidence is that the most effective adaptation efforts are community based, by a few thousand people dealing collectively with their unique circumstances, vulnerabilities and capacities.

But at the 4th workshop on the Global Goal for Adaptation on Saturday, discussions were still firmly centred on international and national affairs. No surprise there, it is the United Nations. But ECO insists the role of national systems in bridging the local to global nexus must not be underestimated. The GGA must reinforce existing foundations of adaptation action in countries, such as National Adaptation Plans and related monitoring, evaluation and learning systems, to channel finance to the appropriate levels and truly accelerate adaptation actions.

The institution should not get in the way of strengthening resilience, reducing vulnerability and enhancing adaptive capacities if efforts are best planned, executed and evaluated locally. Because of its denial of the centrality and diversity of local adaptation, the workshops of the Glasgow Sharm El Sheikh work

programme this half year have singularly failed to agree on ways of boosting 'the understanding of the global goals on adaptation, adaptation action and support, and all the learning, monitoring and evaluating and communicating and messaging' entailed. Unless it recognises where the action really is, it will be defining and counting a fantasy of international action. Intimations of a different way came from Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples' Platform at Saturday's workshop promoting the inclusion of knowledge from those groups in national communication and reporting, and Saleemul Huq's intervention on locally led adaptation and support from a couple of parties.

Opportunities offered by adherence to the Principles for Locally-led Adaptation can improve both reporting and processes towards more effective adaptation action. A truly ambitious GGA will improve the capacity of and give local institutions and communities decision-making powers over adaptation actions. It will encourage vulnerable and marginalised individuals to meaningfully participate in and lead adaptation decisions. It will make processes transparent and accountable downward to local stakeholders. By doing this, the GGA can promote collaboration across sectors, initiatives and all scales, ultra-local to global, to ensure that different initiatives and different sources of funding are supporting each other.

This is the transformation that is needed. With the gap constantly widening, developed countries need to deliver on their COP26 funding promises now. That won't be enough but it is a start. In the meantime, is COP ready to admit that adaptation solutions lie elsewhere - and put the local forward as a global goal

## The Global Protection Shield: a Costly Distraction?

Today in the high-level statements, Germany made a €170 million commitment to the Global Protection Shield, a joint initiative between the G7 and the V20. The fact that the G7 and the Climate Vulnerable Forum have chosen to announce this initiative at COP27 is recognition that the poorest and least responsible need help, but that opening sentence highlights the inadequacy of this initiative. This is one member of the G7, and the V20 don't have any choice as no other substantial finance contributions to pay for loss and

damage is on offer.

The global shield aims to build on the "Insuresilience" Initiative to deliver innovative insurance products to compensate people for climate impacts. But insurance isn't affordable for the people who really need it, doesn't cover all of the losses these people are facing and if it is going to operate long term, it needs robust domestic insurance markets. It may be an appropriate modality for some climate costs, but it is totally inadequate to the scale of the losses currently being experienced.

For example, Pakistan is facing consecutive heat followed by flood emergencies with losses at a catastrophic scale. This is something that insurance markets are just not resilient enough to withstand as was experienced in Germany in 2021 when the government was forced to step in following the catastrophic flooding in the Ahr valley. Loss and damage finance needs to be new and additional; it needs to be grant-based and delivered at a scale commensurate to the needs of impacted people and not limited by what markets can tolerate.

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