

# The First International Conference on the Transition Away from Fossil Fuels

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Santa Marta, Colombia

Co-hosted by the Governments of Colombia and the Netherlands

Submission by the Indigenous Peoples Rights International

The Indigenous Peoples Rights International (IPRI) wishes to contribute to the call for submission for the First International Conference on the Transition Away from Fossil Fuels. Our submission is based on the lived experiences as well as the aspirations of Indigenous Peoples, especially those affected by extractive industries for fossil fuels and renewable energy development projects including mining of transition minerals.

## Barriers to Achieving a Just Transition Away from Fossil Fuels

### 1. Structural Inequalities and Extractivist Development Models

A major barrier to a just transition is the persistence of extractivist economic systems that have historically exploited Indigenous Peoples' lands, resources, and ecosystems. The transition to renewable energy risks reproducing the same patterns of exploitation if it continues to prioritize resource extraction, corporate profit, and centralized infrastructure over equity, rights-based and community-led development. This creates what many Indigenous leaders describe as “**green colonialism**”, where fossil fuel extraction is replaced by renewable energy and transition mineral extraction without transforming underlying power structures and extractive and exploitative economic system

### 2. Lack of Global Governance and Binding Frameworks for Fossil Fuel Phase-Out

Despite global commitments to address climate change, there is **no binding international framework governing fossil fuel production and phase-out**. The absence of supply-side governance allows continued expansion of fossil fuel extraction while undermining coordinated international action. Without clear global rules, effective regulatory and accountability mechanisms for corporations and governments wanting to dominate and slow down the transition, it not only risks but also worsens the irreversible impacts of climate change making the transition unsustainable and inequitable, with the burden falling disproportionately on Indigenous Peoples and vulnerable sectors including women.

### **3. Marginalization of Indigenous Peoples on access to renewable energy and in Climate and Energy Decision-Making**

While Indigenous Peoples' territories have many renewable energy development projects such as hydro-dams, solar and windmill farms; and geothermal plants, host Indigenous communities are often not provided access to the energy generated by these projects as they are intended for urban areas, industries, tourism-related infrastructures and services. Instead, host Indigenous communities suffer from land grabbing, evictions and destruction and degradation of water bodies, their livelihoods and food systems. This demonstrates the unjustness of the energy transition with Indigenous Peoples being further marginalized.

Likewise, Indigenous Peoples, including Indigenous Women, remain largely excluded from climate and energy governance processes at global, national, and regional levels, despite their critical role as ecosystem stewards. Their participation is often limited to consultation, rather than meaningful participation. Our rights as Indigenous Peoples, including our right to participate in decision-making as recognized by international instruments such as the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)*, are often overlooked.

### **4. Weak Recognition of Indigenous Land Rights and Failure to Implement FPIC**

Many Indigenous Peoples lack formal recognition of their lands, territories, and resources, resulting in displacement, loss of livelihood, and food systems, among others. A key driver of land grabbing on Indigenous lands and territories is the expansion of fossil fuel projects, renewable energy infrastructure, and mining for transition minerals. Even where consultation occurs, it does not meet the standards of **Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC)**, resulting in conflicts, land dispossession, and human rights violations, including violence against Indigenous Women and girls

### **5. Expansion of “Green Extractivism” for Transition Minerals**

The rapid increase in demand for minerals such as lithium, copper, cobalt, and nickel for renewable technologies has intensified pressure on Indigenous lands and territories. More than half of the minerals needed for the global energy transition are located on or near Indigenous Peoples' lands. Without the protection and security of Indigenous Peoples' rights to lands, territories, and natural resources, this expansion results in environmental degradation, water shortages, increased violence against Indigenous Women and girls, and disruption of Indigenous livelihoods and food systems.

### **6. Economic Marginalization and Lack of Access to Climate Finance**

Although Indigenous territories play a critical role in climate mitigation and biodiversity protection, Indigenous Peoples receive **less than 1% of global climate finance directly**. This financial exclusion prevents them from strengthening their resilience, developing community-led renewable energy initiatives, and participating meaningfully in transition planning.

## 7. Criminalization and Violence Against Indigenous Environmental Defenders

Indigenous leaders including Indigenous Women and communities who oppose both fossil fuel extraction and harmful energy transition projects, increasingly face criminalization, harassment, and violence. These attacks are exacerbated by inconsistent or absent national laws that protect the rights of Indigenous Peoples and weak governance. Such repression disproportionately impacts Indigenous People, especially Indigenous Women, violating their rights and undermining democratic participation necessary for a just and inclusive transition.

## 2. Key Solutions for Achieving a Just Transition

### 1. Transforming economic systems based on people's needs, rights and wellbeing; and sustainable and equitable use and governance of resources as the foundation of a just transition

The current economic model is extractive, unsustainable, and deeply inequitable. It leaves the majority of the world's population in conditions of poverty and marginalization while widening the gap between developed and developing countries. This inequality is reinforced through economic dominance and control over trade, investments, and technological advancement.

This system also drives excessive and wasteful energy demand, largely to sustain the economic power and consumption patterns of corporations and powerful countries. As a result, energy systems continue to prioritize profit and growth over human wellbeing, ecological balance, and social justice.

A fundamental transformation of the global economic system is therefore necessary. Such transformation must place people's needs, human rights including the rights of Indigenous Peoples and the sustainable and equitable use and management of resources at its core. Only through this shift can the energy transition become truly just, sustainable, and equitable.

### 2. Establish a Global Framework to Govern Fossil Fuel Phase-Out

**A global legally binding framework—such as a Fossil Fuel Treaty— is needed to coordinate the managed phase-out of fossil fuel production, end new exploration, and ensure an equitable transition. Such a framework should include financial mechanisms, technology cooperation, and governance structures that ensure Indigenous Peoples' participation and respect for human rights. Any binding framework governing fossil fuel production and phase-out shall include clear terms prohibiting the extraction and development of energy projects in the territories of Indigenous Peoples in Voluntary Isolation; and in biodiversity-rich areas and Indigenous Peoples' lands and territories without our Free Prior and Informed Consent as immediate actions. It shall also include clear provisions and resource allocation for the rehabilitation and restoration of mine-affected areas, and the proper compensation for affected**

**communities, including provisions for their sustainable livelihoods. Affected Indigenous Peoples shall be given back their lands, territories and water rights with allocated resources for ecological restoration and rehabilitation especially polluted and degraded lands, water bodies, forest; and proper compensation for the loss of their livelihood and food systems.**

### **3. Recognize and Secure Indigenous Peoples' Rights to Land, Territories, and Resources**

Legal recognition of Indigenous land and territorial rights is essential to prevent land grabbing for energy development, and allow communities control over decisions affecting their territories. Governments and the private sector such as energy companies and utilities must institutionalize **Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) as mandatory for plans and projects affecting Indigenous Peoples and shall intergrate it across all climate, energy, and mining policies, development plans, and projects.** The territories of Indigenous Peoples in Voluntary isolation shall also be recognized and demarcated for full and effective protection of the lands and resources.

### **4. Ensure Meaningful Participation of Indigenous Peoples as Rights-Holders**

Indigenous Peoples must participate fully and effectively in climate diplomacy, energy planning, and transition governance at all levels. Participation must move beyond consultation toward **decision-making authority, adequate representation including by Indigenous Women, youth, and Persons with Disabilities; and shared governance,** recognizing Indigenous Peoples as rights-holders to their lands, territories, and resources; rather than mere stakeholders.

### **5. Promote and support Community-Led Renewable Energy and Equitable Benefit-Sharing**

Energy systems should prioritize community ownership and equitable benefit-sharing rather than corporate profit. Indigenous-led renewable energy initiatives—such as solar, micro-hydro, and biogas projects shall be provided with finance and technical support. These types of projects demonstrate that decentralized energy systems can simultaneously improve livelihoods, including those of Indigenous Women, strengthen local economies, support energy sovereignty, and reduce emissions. Partnerships based on consent shall include binding and equitable benefit-sharing agreements for the use of the lands and resources of Indigenous Peoples as defined and determined by Indigenous Peoples, as well as environmental protection measures.

### **6. Support Sustainable Resource Governance Guided by Indigenous Knowledge and values**

Indigenous knowledge systems, values and governance practices have sustained ecosystems for generations under the leadership of Indigenous Women. These positive values, such as living in harmony with nature, sustainable use and management of resources for the common good shall guide the design and implementation of energy and climate solutions with the meaningful participation and leadership of Indigenous Women. Transition pathways should prioritize

ecological integrity, living in harmony with nature, biodiversity protection, sustainable resource management, leadership of Indigenous Women, cooperation, and solidarity instead of competition and control.

## **7. Ensure Direct Access of Indigenous Peoples to Climate Finance**

International climate finance mechanisms must provide **direct, accessible funding** to Indigenous Peoples and their institutions—including organizations and networks of Indigenous Women, youth, and Persons with Disabilities to strengthen resilience, inclusive and community-led solutions, renewable energy initiatives, ecosystem protection, and sustainable livelihoods for all.

## **8. Provide Reparations, Ecosystem Restoration, and Return of Lands, Territories and Water Rights**

A just transition must address the historical injustice caused by fossil fuel extraction. This includes restoring damaged ecosystems, returning lands and water rights to Indigenous Peoples, and providing both financial and non-financial compensation for loss of livelihoods, cultural heritage, and sacred sites.

## **9. Strengthen Protection for Indigenous Environmental Defenders**

Governments and international institutions must establish robust protection mechanisms to safeguard Indigenous environmental defenders and ensure accountability for attacks, harassment, criminalization and human rights violations. This includes adopting zero-tolerance policies to human rights violations relating to the energy transition, policy reforms against the criminalization of Indigenous Peoples exercising, asserting and defending their rights. Effective protection mechanisms should be allocated with sufficient financial and technical resources at the local, national, regional and global levels.

**In conclusion, a just transition is not simply a technological shift from fossil fuels to renewable energy. It requires a fundamental transformation of governance, power relations, and economic systems, grounded in social justice, ecological sustainability, energy sovereignty and respect for Indigenous Peoples rights, knowledge, and self-determination.**